

А. Шнитке - Симфония № 2
A. Schnittke - Sinfonie № 2

A Commentary on the First Movement
of Alfred Schnittke's Symphony No. 2

by

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23 September 2007

Note to reader

A detailed knowledge of musical notation is not required to understand this commentary. The written score of the first movement of Schnittke's Symphony No. 2 is composed of a series of geometrical "blocks" which can be seen in the same way that we see shapes painted on a canvas. The greater part of the movement comprises only a small number of basic shapes which are repeated over and again in a symmetrical pattern. We don't have to *read* the individual musical notes, only *observe* the large-scale shapes that the groups of notes make. This is not an essay in music theory which speaks of scales and chord layouts and suchlike; terminology is basic and kept to an absolute minimum. The simple terms that I *do* use – "super-block", "block", "mini-block" and "time corridor" – are wholly my own and apply to the explication of this symphony only.

The Symphony No. 2 is written for a large orchestra of one hundred instruments and a chamber chorus. The symphony includes some musical instruments that are relatively uncommon to a standard symphony orchestra, such as the celesta, vibraphone, electric guitar, and bass guitar.

Extracts from the musical score come from a photographic reprint of Schnittke's handwritten manuscript (UE 17 188, Universal Edition).

Alfred Schnittke, Symphony No. 2

Alfred Schnittke, Jewish-Catholic-German-Russian composer, born 1934, died 1998. The Second Symphony had its premiere in London on April 23, 1980.

INTRODUCTION

1. **Preface.** I am no music scholar, only someone for whom the music of Alfred Schnittke has meant much over the years. What follows is not an analysis of the musical form using terminology understandable only to musicians and music scholars. The symphony has a “narrative” and this is a thematic analysis. I examine the structure of the work in order to further understand the “meaning” that I hear in it. I am undertaking this task because I believe that Schnittke’s Symphony No. 2 is perhaps the single greatest piece of music that I have heard. Somehow it means more to me than all of the other music that I love. This symphony works on me like a narcotic, it has a shamanistic power to induce visions. This commentary starts from the premise that Alfred Schnittke is among the greatest of composers, as securely integrated in the “great tradition” as Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, and Shostakovich.

2a. **Catholic Mass.** The six movements of the Symphony No. 2 make use of choral texts. These choral parts correspond to specific sections of the Catholic Mass: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei. These are the sections of the Mass most often used by composers for concert masses. (In Schnittke’s symphony, the Credo is broken down into two movements, III. Credo and IV. Crucifixus.) This streamlined structure of the Catholic Mass was first used for a concert mass by Bach in his Mass in B Minor. In the eighteenth century, composers such as Bach and Mozart took religious music out of the church and into the concert hall. The two most famous concert hall masses are probably Bach’s Mass in B Minor and Beethoven’s *Missa Solemnis*.

2b. Schnittke’s Symphony No. 2 uses the Catholic Mass as a starting point. Note that this musical work is identified as *Symphony* No. 2 rather than as a *Mass*. (Just as Bach was a Protestant who composed a series of Catholic Masses, so Schnittke was a couple of years away from being baptized as a Catholic when he composed his Symphony No. 2.) Alexander Ivashkin in his wonderful biography of Schnittke describes well a fundamental quality of Schnittke’s compositions: “He combines hints and elements of different styles, although he always strikes a balance between the styles *rather than choosing any one in particular*.”¹

2c. The three works cited by Bach, Beethoven, and Schnittke are not meant to be experiences equivalent to praying in a church. A concert hall mass, and Schnittke’s symphonic treatment of the genre, are different types of experience from attending the

¹ Alexander Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1996), p. 111 (emphasis added).

Mass in a church. Schnittke's symphony is not equivalent to participating in a Catholic church service. Schnittke is appropriating the form for his own ends. The Symphony No. 2 is universal in scope, and not specific to Catholics only. The text of the Mass cited in Schnittke's symphony can be heard as a metaphor for any type of devotion or spiritual striving. (It can also be heard as a memory of a historical period: the history of Europe.)

3. Schnittke gave his Symphony No. 2 the title of "**St. Florian**", which was the name of a monastery in Austria where the inspiration for the symphony first came to him. (Schnittke was visiting Austria as a member of a touring chamber orchestra.) The symphony is also referred to as the "**Invisible Mass**".

I. Kyrie

4. The **first movement** of the Symphony No. 2 is akin to an initiation, a ceremony, a ritual. It puts the audience into a mind space compatible with the greater part of the symphony to come. But it has a more significant role to play than simply "attuning the audience's ears". The first movement conveys a force that can transform the participant (listener) for the better, in the manner of a "spiritual cleansing". Allow me to quote from Ivashkin's great biography of Schnittke one more time: "Schnittke's music . . . requires the listener's participation, it draws all the listener's energy; one needs to be involved in listening to it, in having to *live with this music or within this music*."² From my point of view, Ivashkin is exactly correct here.

5. The **first movement** has two divisions: the introductory choral division, and then the orchestral "commentary" on the choral division, which comprises the greater part of the movement. In the Chandos recording of the symphony, Valéry Polyansky conducting the Russian State Symphony Orchestra, the first movement is eleven minutes and twenty-four seconds in duration. The first division is the shorter part, three minutes and twenty-one seconds in duration.

² Ibid., p. 169 (emphasis added).

Division 1 of the First Movement

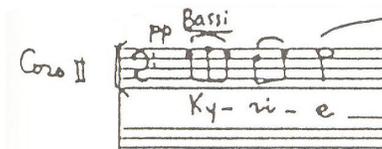
6a. The Symphony begins with a chamber chorus, specifically the basses (the lowest male voices), singing without instrumental accompaniment. The text for the choral division of the first movement is as follows:

Kyrie eleison	Lord have mercy
Christe eleison	Christ have mercy
Kyrie eleison	Lord have mercy

6b. This text is an invocation. An appeal. An entreaty. If we're asking for mercy, it means that we need it.

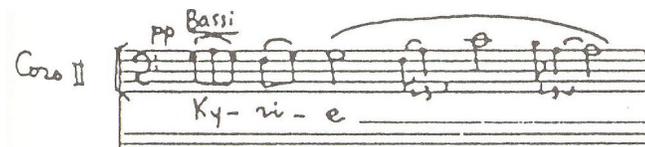
7. The symphony begins quietly; the first utterance of the human voices is calm and composed; but the movement builds to a climactic orchestral "scream".

8. What we hear at the beginning of the first movement, and at various points during the five other movements, is **plainsong**, or, **Gregorian Chant**. That the chorus, singing the liturgical text, begins without instrumental accompaniment recalls the early years of the Western Christian Church. We hear the far past in the beginning of the symphony, the origins of the Church and of Europe. (Unaccompanied choral music in the church lasted from the early days of Christianity to the seventeenth century.)

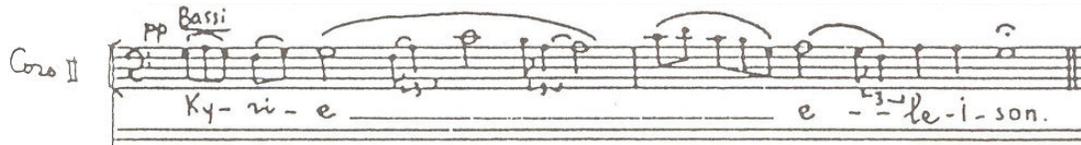


9a. The **first phrase** of six notes. This is a "unit" or "template" that conditions the entire movement. **This is the fundamental structural principle of the movement.** The entire movement is based on this predominant phrase, which will recur (with variations) throughout the movement, moving from instrument to instrument.

9b The **first phrase** of six notes is actually part of a larger phrase of twelve notes:



9c. The first twelve notes (“Kyrie”) and the next eleven notes (“eleison”) are two phrases that make one “sentence”, or theme:

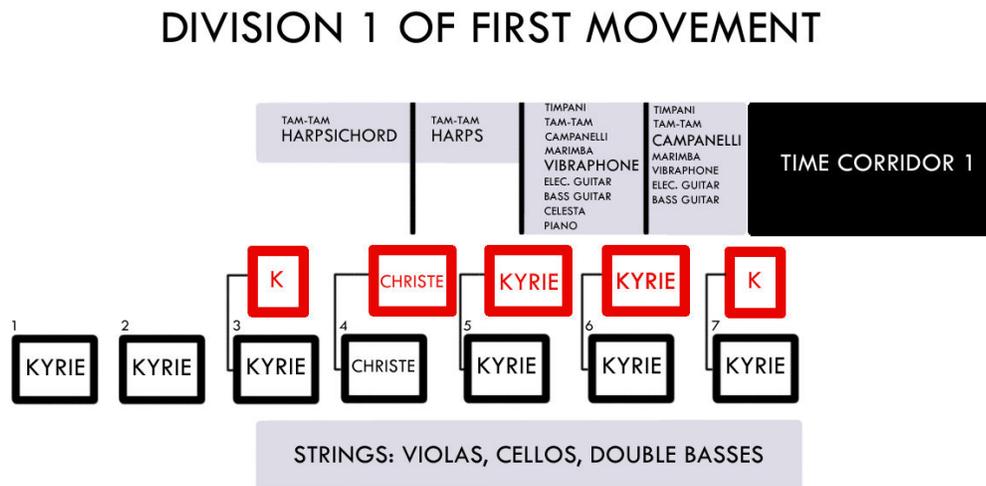


9d. The **first theme** rises a little, lowers a little, then levels out at the “mid-point” or “baseline”. The conceptual “subject matter” of the first movement is **rising and falling**. *Yearning, striving, reaching – and falling back.*



9e. This original vocal theme with slight variations will be heard seven times in a row to begin the movement. (“Kyrie eleison” three times, “Christe eleison” one time, “Kyrie eleison” three more times.) (Tenors, the high male voices, will sing in counterpoint starting with the third instance.)

9f. Here is a diagram of Division 1 of the first movement:

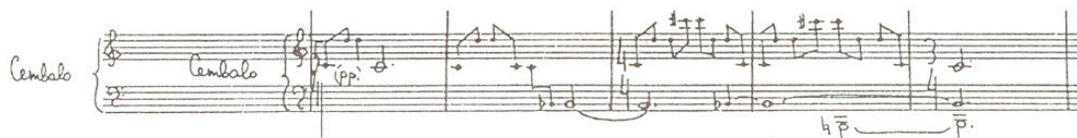


10. The **second instance of the first vocal theme** starts on a D, then rises up to a G. Rising, falling, rising, then returning back to the pitch at which the symphony began:



11. At the **third instance of the first vocal theme**, the strings (violas, cellos, double basses) enter quietly (slightly after the tenors), remaining level, and in the background.

12a. But the most significant instrument to appear during the **third instance of the first vocal theme** is the **harpsichord**. The harpsichord starts very quietly (the word notation is "pp").



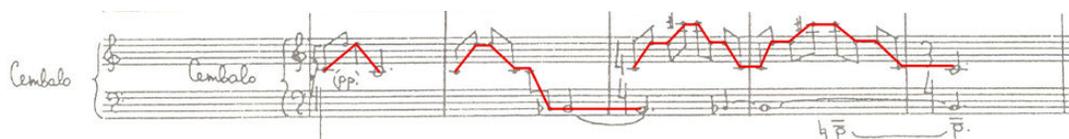
12b. The harpsichord is the defining instrument of Baroque music in Europe (and especially suggests the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries). The harpsichord signifies the musical history of Europe, or, more generally, the harpsichord signifies Europe itself. Like the choral voices joined in Gregorian Chant, the sound of the harpsichord evokes memories of a past time.

13a. Compare the first phrase of the symphony with the harpsichord's first phrase:



13b. Both phrases end on the same note on which they began (what I will call the "base note"). The harpsichord's first phrase is an intensification of the original phrase of the symphony.

14a. The harpsichord jumps many steps, defining a large "area". In a short space of time, a matter of seconds, the harpsichord spans two octaves. This steep rise and fall is juxtaposed to the narrow parameters of the rise and fall of the choral voices which the harpsichord is accompanying. The harpsichord, hitting notes above and below the pitch of the voices, comes to "surround" or "incorporate" the voices.



14b. Compare the relatively level line of the first vocal theme with the harpsichord's **steep rising and falling**. (The notation of the choral voices would fit between the highest and lowest points of the red lines on the harpsichord's staves.)

14c. During the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth instances of the first vocal theme, this steep rising and falling will be taken up first by the harpsichord, then the harp, then the vibraphone (predominantly), and then the campanelli (bells) (predominantly). After this, **for the rest of the movement, during the entire second division of the movement, no one instrument will span such wide intervals (or “run such a steep gamut”) again.**

14d. Note how the harpsichord goes up to C-sharp (its highest point); it is as if it is trying to **break out**, which is consonant with the **reaching** theme. (As compared with the first phrase of twelve notes of the movement (“Kyrie”), where the ninth, and highest, note is middle C.)

15a. A fundamental ordering principle of the instrumentation throughout the entire movement is expressed in these first bars of the harpsichord. It is the principle of **the three**.



15b. For the rest of the movement, virtually every musical instrument will conform to this structure of **the three**.

15c. I define each numbered part as a **mini-block**. In this excerpt of the harpsichord, we see three mini-blocks. In the first movement, the mini-blocks always come in threes. Three mini-blocks make **one block**. The concept of the “block” is central to Division 2 of the movement.

16. During the **third instance of the first vocal theme** (“Kyrie eleison”), we also hear a tam-tam (gong) along with the harpsichord. The gong, of Chinese origin, is one of the oldest musical instruments still in use today. It starts extremely quietly (“*ppp*”), and follows a descending path.

17a. At the **fourth instance of the first vocal theme**, the **harps** enter. The harp is another ancient instrument, at least five thousand years old. The two harps take over the instrumental theme from the harpsichord. The harps play almost the same theme as the harpsichord, but the theme is shifted up to a higher pitch. Like the harpsichord, the harps delineate a “wide area”, “surrounding” the voices.

17b. The harps add tension with their steep jumps; they sound somewhat odd, mysterious. They are a somewhat ominous counterpoint to the choral voices, which are voicing their need for the mercy of a creator.

17c. Although the harps may sound “odd” or “tense”, they are anything but irregularly structured; note the use of both parallel motion and contrary motion.

18a. Underneath the choral voices and the harps, more strings come in, rising in sound, suggesting a hint of alarm. **With every reprise of the vocal theme, tension builds more and more around the voices.** The orchestral accompaniment is growing in thickness (i.e., more instruments are joining in), and will soon “overcome” or “subsume” the voices.

18b. Adding to the tension, the choral voices are a bit “out of sync” with the block structure of instruments. Each time, the voices begin their next reprise before the accompanying instrumental block is over. The chorus and the instrumentation are “on separate tracks”. Perhaps the choral voices can be described as being “at odds” with the instrumental accompaniment.

19. As stated above, the overriding structural principle of the orchestral part (Division 2) especially is the concept of the “three”. Here is the breakdown for the harps, **three mini-blocks** joined as **one block**.

The image shows a musical score for two harps, Harp I and Harp II. The score is divided into three distinct sections, each highlighted with a yellow background and labeled with a red number: 1, 2, and 3. Each section contains musical notation for both harps, with various notes and rests. The first section (1) starts with a piano (p) dynamic. The second section (2) continues the melodic line. The third section (3) concludes the phrase. The overall structure is presented as a single block of three mini-blocks.

20. During the **fifth instance of the first vocal theme**, the orchestra is continuing to “creep up” on the voices, continuing to gain in thickness; the voices are becoming “subsumed” by the instrumental accompaniment. The tension continues to build. The symphony began with a calm and quiet appeal of the chorus, but now, within the first two minutes (in the Polyansky recording) the mood has quickly become unsettled, eerie.

21a. The instrumentation during the **fifth instance of the first vocal theme** is an odd melange, creating an interesting and somewhat peculiar sonic world: tam-tam (gong), vibraphone, electric bass, celesta, piano, and strings.

21b. The gong is ancient, the piano harks back to the nineteenth century, and the vibraphone, celesta, and the electric bass signify the twentieth century.

21c. All of the instruments mentioned in 21b are delineating “wide spaces”, encompassing wide intervals, making “steep” up and down movements, which contributes to the unease; the “instability” of the musical accompaniment is at odds with the repetitive vocal theme.

22a. During the **fifth instance of the first theme**, the **vibraphone** is leading the way, the most prominent instrument to take up the instrumental theme from the harps:

The image shows a musical score for the Vibraphone. The score is divided into three distinct sections, each highlighted with a yellow background and labeled with a red number: 1, 2, and 3. Each section contains musical notation for the vibraphone, with various notes and rests. The first section (1) starts with a piano (p) dynamic. The second section (2) continues the melodic line. The third section (3) concludes the phrase. The overall structure is presented as a single block of three mini-blocks.

22b. Note how the first and the second mini-blocks offer a variation on the symphony’s first phrase: instead of beginning and ending on the same note, the first and second mini-blocks end at a much higher pitch than their beginning notes. This lack of symmetry contributes to the unease, the increase in tension. However, note the beginning and ending of the third mini-block: the phrase begins and ends on E. And, taken as a whole, the entire block (mini-blocks 1 to 3) begins and ends on E, which recalls the main structural principle laid out at the very beginning of the movement: **rising and falling in a wavelike motion then a return to the “baseline”**.

22c. Note the **rhythmic change** of the instrumental theme in the fifth instance. While the harpsichord in the third instance (14a) and the harps in the fourth instance (17a) use duplets, the vibraphone in the fifth instance uses triplets. The increasing density of the rhythm of the instrumental theme contributes to the rising tension of the opening minutes of the symphony.

23a. During the **sixth instance of the first vocal theme**, the primary instrument to take up the instrumental theme from the vibraphone is the **campanelli** (bells). The other instruments are the timpani (kettledrum), the tam-tam, the marimba, the vibraphone, the electric guitar, and the electric bass.

23b. Every instrument named in 23a except for the tam-tam contributes to the rising tension by making steep rises and falls.

23c. The marimba, a percussion instrument of African origin, is another instrument uncommon to the symphony orchestra, and is also primarily a twentieth century addition to European music.

23d. During the **sixth instance of the first vocal theme**, the campanelli is leading the way. Note the resemblance of the campanelli's melodic line to the vibraphone's melodic line from the vocal theme's previous instance (as seen in 22a):

The image shows two staves of handwritten musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Campanelli' and is in 2/4 time. It begins with a dynamic marking of 'mp' and a 'p' marking. The melody consists of eighth notes, with several triplet markings. The bottom staff is labeled 'Vibrafone' and is in 4/4 time. It also features a melodic line with eighth notes and triplet markings, showing a clear resemblance to the Campanelli part above it.

23e. However, the rhythm has slightly altered yet again: the campanelli uses sixteenth notes, which contributes to a growing density, an implacably growing tension.

23f. Notice how jittery the whole orchestral accompaniment looks during the sixth instance of the original vocal theme. While the chorus sings “Lord have mercy”, this is what the orchestra is doing:

Handwritten musical score for orchestral accompaniment during the sixth instance of the original vocal theme. The score includes staves for Timp, 3 Tam-tam, Campanelli, Horns, Violins, Ctr. cl., and Ctr. bass. The music is highly rhythmic and complex, with many accidentals and dynamic markings.

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Handwritten musical score for orchestral accompaniment during the sixth instance of the original vocal theme, with red lines highlighting the rhythmic patterns across all staves.

23g. Note the three-part mini-block structure to the orchestral accompaniment:

Handwritten musical score for orchestral accompaniment during the sixth instance of the original vocal theme, with three parts highlighted in yellow and numbered 1, 2, and 3.

24. And now comes the climax to Division 1 of the first movement: the **seventh, and last, instance of the first vocal theme**.

25a. During the last instance of the vocal “Kyrie” theme, we hear the first instance of the “**time corridor**” theme, which will recur four more times at significant moments in the first movement of the symphony. **The “time corridor” is one of the fundamental structural principles of the first movement.** Each time corridor is a structural “block” that divides the four **super-blocks** from one another. (More on “super-blocks” below, 27a.) (Alternatively, the time corridor can be described as a ligature that *connects* the super-blocks together. Using traditional music terminology, the time corridor can be defined as a “bridge passage”.)

25b. The **time corridor** uses five different instruments (primarily; for the strings are also playing, but extremely quietly, *ppp*), each of which represents a specific time period in the history of music. The **harp** represents the ancient world; there is pictorial evidence that harps were present in Mesopotamia and Egypt circa 2600 B.C. The **gong** originated in China, represents an entirely different culture from the history of the west, and signifies at the very least the early centuries of the first millennium. The **harpichord** is the quintessential instrument of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Baroque and classical ages (Bach to Mozart). The **piano** was the dominant instrument of nineteenth century music, and represents the link between the classical age and the twentieth century. The **celesta**, a keyboard instrument invented in Paris in 1889, is a recent and still relatively rare member of the symphony orchestra, and represents the twentieth century; the celesta also suggests another genre of music altogether: jazz.

25c. The **time corridor** is a “crisis” sound. An “alarming” sound. The voices die away during the onset of the time corridor and are not heard again for the rest of the movement:

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Tromboni, Celesta, Cimbalo, Piano, and Arpa I. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the initial attack of the instruments. The second system shows the instruments continuing with a sustained, flatlined texture.

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25d. Note how with the onset of the **time corridor**, the rising and the falling of the instrumentation have ceased. There is no more up and down movement. Now the instruments have “**flatlined**”:

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Celesta, Cimbalo, Piano, and Arpa I. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the instruments with a flatlined texture. The second system shows the instruments continuing with a flatlined texture.

25e. Although more than one instrument is playing simultaneously during the time corridor, we can still describe the overall effect as **linear**.

25f. The time corridor is like a “baseline” or “brick wall” or “limit”.

25g. The strings are also playing along with the primary **time corridor** instruments, but not loudly; the strings are also flatlined and sound “alarming” and in “crisis”. **The time corridor is the answering sound of the “impersonal universe” to the heartfelt appeal of the choral voices.** The blunt cold void, up against the emotional human.

25h. It is significant that the **time corridor** is the first point in the symphony without choral accompaniment; at this moment we are now entirely in an “inhuman world”, so to speak. Prior to this point, the prominent instruments (harpsichord, harps, vibraphone, campanelli) had mimicked the original vocal theme (“Kyrie”). But now the instruments have flatlined and are acting “in antithesis” to the original vocal theme and its humanity. The time corridor is “immovable”, “impassive”, the sound of “infinity” or the “infinite”. (It might also be said that the time corridor resembles the sound of a ticking clock.) **I have defined this section as the “time corridor” because, to me at least, it represents the phenomenological concept of “Temporality”.**

25i. The **time corridor** also follows the **three-part “mini-block” structure**:

The image shows a musical score for four instruments: Celesta, Cymbalo, Piano, and Arpa I. The score is divided into three distinct sections, each highlighted with a yellow background and labeled with a red number: 1, 2, and 3. Section 1 is the first measure, section 2 is the second measure, and section 3 is the third measure. The notation is dense and rhythmic, characteristic of a 'time corridor'.

25j. However, the prominent harpsichord part also allows the **time corridor** to be broken down into a **five-part structure**:

The image shows a musical score for Cymbalo. The score is divided into five distinct sections, each highlighted with a red box and labeled with a red number: 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. The notation is dense and rhythmic, characteristic of a 'time corridor'.

25k. With the onset of the time corridor and the dying away of the voices, the **first division of the movement comes to an end**. It ends at a crisis point. The human voices have been repeatedly asking for mercy, and at the same time the instrumental accompaniment has been becoming increasingly uneasy and tense until the voices are finally overcome by the instrumentation and vanish, leaving the alarming, “thudding” **time corridor** sound to take center stage and dominate. The music has “encompassed” the voices, “overcome” the voices, “absorbed” the voices.

Postscript to Division 1: Two points

25l. **Fundamental structural nature of the time corridors.** Although the time corridor is introduced during Division 1, it may be said that the time corridor 1 is *not a part* of Division 1. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that the time corridor 1 is *superimposed on* or *breaks in upon* Division 1. First of all, time corridor 1 progresses beyond the boundaries of Division 1, if the division's end limit is defined as the cessation of the human voices. Second of all, the time corridors 2-5 will appear long after Division 1 has ended. So if we accept that the time corridor 1 is not strictly a part of Division 1 but simply appears during Division 1, then we may also be able to accept that time corridors 2-5, while appearing during Division 2, may not simply be a part of Division 2. In short, it may be acceptable to characterize the time corridors as a "division of their own", even though the time corridors are divided from one another rather than existing as one unbroken whole (like each super-block). Rather than existing as a part of Division 1 or Division 2, the time corridors exist *alongside* these two divisions. The time corridor motif is a "world in itself".

26. **Overview of the choral part: the "rising and falling" motif.** There are minor variations to the vocal theme as it recurs. In the first instance of the vocal theme ("Kyrie eleison"), the last note is the same as the first note (G): I call this a **flatline** treatment of the vocal theme. In the second instance, the last note is up five semitones (G) from the first note (D): **rise**. In the third instance, the tenors enter, and begin and end on D; while the basses begin and end on G: **flatline**. In the fourth instance, the tenors begin on D and descend to G; while the basses begin on D and ascend to G: a simultaneous **fall and rise**. In the fifth instance, the tenors begin and end on D; while the basses begin on D and ascend to G: a simultaneous **flatline and rise**. In the sixth instance, the tenors begin on D and descend to G; while the basses begin and end on G: a simultaneous **fall and flatline**. In the seventh instance, the tenors begin and end on D and the basses begin and end on G: **flatline**. (In the foregoing examples, whenever the vocal theme **rises**, the last note is a **perfect 4th higher** than the first note; and whenever the vocal theme lowers, the last note is a **perfect 4th lower** than the first note.) In conclusion, here is a capsule description of the "wave-like" structure of the vocal part: **1. flatline; 2. rise; 3. flatline; 4. simultaneous fall and rise; 5. simultaneous flatline and rise; 6. simultaneous fall and flatline; 7. flatline**. This variability in the rising and falling is *the* main structural component or "conceptual theme" of the first movement of Symphony No. 2.

Division 2 of the First Movement

27a. The rest of the movement follows a strict structural symmetry. The tightly structured movement is composed of three main elements: the **mini-block**, the **block** (composed of three mini-blocks), and the **super-block** (composed of three blocks).

27b. There are different moods to the four super-blocks that comprise Division 2. Although each of the super-blocks follows a structure similar to the other super-blocks, there is an “emotional” progression from the first super-block to the fourth super-block.

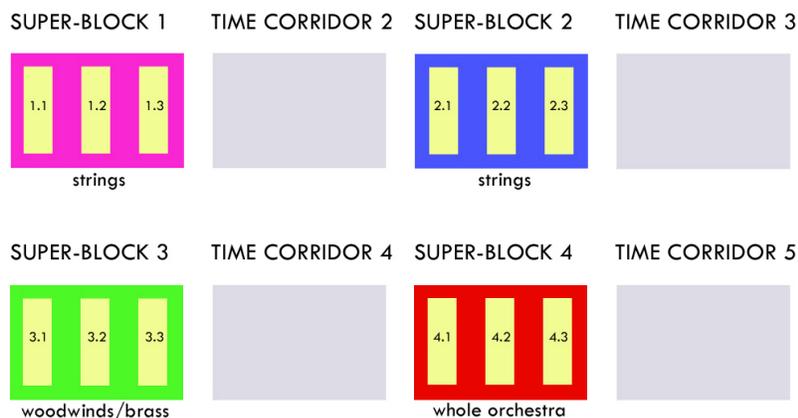
27c. Each super-block consists of three blocks. Each block consists of a specific grouping of instruments that changes from block to block. (For example, in super-block 1, which features the cellos and the violas, the first block (1.1) uses only the cellos, the second block (1.2) uses only the violas, and the third block (1.3) uses both the cellos and the violas together.)

28a. **In Division 2, the instruments take over or “translate” the first human voices phrase (“Kyrie”).** Over and over again, the instruments will repeat their variations of the choral theme.

28b. The same “phrase” (with variations) will be played over and over again until the end of the movement. “Lord have mercy”: this is insistent, needy, forceful. It is a “cry”, an appeal, a forceful yearning.

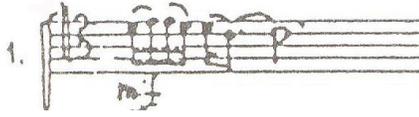
28c. **Structural overview of Division 2.** Division 2 of the first movement is composed of four super-blocks and four time corridors: 1. strings; i. time corridor; 2. strings; ii. time corridor; 3. woodwinds, brass; iii. time corridor; 4. whole orchestra; iv. time corridor. Each super-block is composed of three blocks (for example, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3). In super-blocks 1-3, each block is composed of three mini-blocks.

DIVISION 2 OF FIRST MOVEMENT



29. **Super-block 1:** strings: **BLOCK 1.1:** 6 cellos.

30a. This is the first phrase of the first cello, in the first mini-block of super-block 1:



30b. Compare this first phrase of the first cello with the first (vocal) phrase of the symphony:

30c. Although the time values and the pitch are a little bit different (the first phrase starts on the G below middle C, and the cellos start on the D above middle C), **the first phrase of the cellos and the first (vocal) phrase of the symphony are similar in character.** In both, the theme, as it progresses, moves up only one step or down only one step from the original “baseline” note. The first cello’s phrase is a **variation** of the first vocal phrase of the symphony.

30d. The essential difference between these two phrases is that in the first cello’s staff, the phrase ends not on the “baseline” note but on the C below the D. This contributes to a sense of “weight”, of “sinking”, of “drag” that is one of the main components of Division 2: **the sense of falling.**

30e. **This first cello theme is a translation of the symphony’s original vocal phrase. For the rest of the movement, this theme will move from one block of instruments to the next. The movement will repeat this theme over and over again. It is as if the instruments are “speaking” the words, “Lord have mercy”.**

30f. Each mini-block is a treatment of the “Lord have mercy” theme. So each block repeats the “Lord have mercy” musical phrase three times, and thus each super-block repeats the same phrase nine times (except for the fourth super-block, which repeats the phrase only three times). **So, in terms of the block structure of Division 2, we hear the “Lord have mercy” musical phrase (with minor variations) a total of thirty times.**

30g. But during each mini-block the theme is played by different instruments simultaneously, and each instrument plays a slightly different rhythmic variation of the theme. **If we take each instrumental variation on its own, we hear the “Lord have mercy” musical phrase in Division 2 a total of 600 times!** (Super-block 1: 72 times; super-block 2: 136 times; super-block 3: 168 times; super-block 4: 228 times.) Yes, **six hundred times.**

31a. Here is the entire **first block** of the cellos (block 1.1):

31b. Here is the three-part **mini-block** structure of the same:

31c. The **structure of this first block** is fundamental to Division 2 of the symphony.

31d. In 31a, note (i) the **three mini-block structure**; (ii) the same theme distributed to **different time values**; and (iii) the **difference in duration** of the theme from instrument to instrument.

31e. **Introduction to the rising and falling motif of the variations.** Each instrumental variation in Division 2 is based on the original “Kyrie” vocal phrase. The original “Kyrie” phrase began and ended on the same note. But the variations can end, for example, slightly higher or lower than the note with which they began. This ascent or descent within each variation is what I term the **rising and falling motif**. I call the note with which each variation begins the “base note”.

31f. The **rising and falling motif in block 1.1.** (Refer to 31a.) The cellos in block 1.1 follow a symmetrical pattern, with only a small number of deviations from the norm. In mini-block 1 of 1.1, each variations end **one tone lower** than its base note (except for the sixth cello, which **begins and ends on the same note**). In mini-block 2 of 1.1, the variations end **two and a half tones lower (or a major 3rd)** (except for the sixth cello, which ends **one tone lower**). In mini-block 3 of 1.1, the variations end **one tone lower**. These narrow grades of rising and falling correspond with the **relatively level progression** that characterized the first vocal sentence of the symphony (“Kyrie eleison”).

31g. In this first block 1.1 we see both **repetition** and **change**. Or, **microchanges within macro-repetition**.

32a. This diagram highlights how the **same theme** is distributed among six of the cellos with variations to the time values:

The image shows a musical score for six cellos, labeled 'V-celli' on the left. The score consists of six staves, numbered 1 through 6. Each staff is enclosed in a red rectangular box. The music is written in a common time signature (C) and features a rhythmic theme that is stretched out across the staves. The theme is repeated and varied in time values across the six staves, creating a layered effect. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

32b. The same theme is broken down into different time values. In each mini-block there is a small variation in rhythm between the occurrences of the theme from cello to cello. The theme is gradually “stretched out” rhythmically between the cellos. There is an effect of “drag” or “delayed action”. This creates an “atmospheric” sound, a “multilayered unity” as it were. In each mini-block there is one general theme being played with different angles or dimensions to it: a **Picasso-like, multi-angled theme**. (Perhaps it can be said that this multi-detailed harmony works like one single but multifaceted melody: a “harmonic melody”.) **Mini-block after mini-block, the entire rest of the movement is going to follow this structure.**

32c. The **sixth cello** is moving so slowly compared to the other parts that it could be said that it never gets to complete each of its phrases (and this is why it violates the symmetry of the rising and falling motif in mini-blocks 1 and 2 of 1.1 [see 31f]).

32d. In this first block, **block 1.1**, we can say we hear the musical theme either three times (three mini-blocks of six instruments each), or eighteen times (each individual instrument playing its own variation of the theme).

33. **Super-block 1: strings: BLOCK 1.2: 6 violas.**

The image shows a musical score for six violas, labeled 'Viole' on the left. The score consists of six staves, numbered 1 through 6. Each staff is enclosed in a red rectangular box. The music is written in a common time signature (C) and features a rhythmic theme that is stretched out across the staves. The theme is repeated and varied in time values across the six staves, creating a layered effect. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

34. **Note how similar this second block looks to the first block** (see 31a), even though 1.2 uses an inverted form of the theme in 1.1. Everything that was said above about block 1.1 – different time values, changes and repetition, different durations of each variation, the three-part mini-block structure – holds here, and will hold for the rest of the eight blocks in Division 2. As stated above, Division 2 is organized on **strict structural principles**; the structure might be described as “geometric” (in terms of the visual repetition of the shapes of the block structure).

35a. There are similarities between the first vocal theme of the symphony and the musical theme as performed by the first viola, though the theme has become inverted:

FIRST PHRASE (FIRST) VIOLA

35b. Although the pitch and time values are different, these two themes are related to one another. In both, the melody ascends no further than one step above or below the first note. Like the theme played by the first cello at the beginning of block 1.1, the violas block (1.2) also ends one note above the first note of the theme. To repeat (because this concept is so important), Schnittke has translated the vocal theme into an instrumental theme, and the instruments are now “speaking” the “Lord have mercy” entreaty.

35c. **The rising and falling motif of block 1.2.** In the three mini-blocks of block 1.1, the cellos, generally speaking, ended one tone lower, then two and a half tones lower, then one tone lower. **The rising and falling motif in block 1.2 is more or less a mirror image of block 1.1.** In mini-block 1 of 1.2, each variation ends **two and a half tones higher** than its base note. In mini-block 2 of 1.2, the variations end **two and a half tones higher**. In mini-block 3 of 1.2, the variations end **two and a half tones higher**.

35d. Note how the centralized major 3rd fall in block 1.1 corresponds to the three major 3rd rises in block 1.2

36. **Super-block 1:** strings: **BLOCK 1.3:** 6 violas, 6 cellos.

37a. The **third, and last, block of super-block 1** is a **first climax** of the first movement. It can be described as a *minor* climax; there will be two *major* climaxes to come.

37b. The **third block of super-block 1** starts at a higher pitch and is louder than the previous two blocks. The strings are gathering force and energy. The sound of the strings is intensified by an accompaniment of clarinets, bassoons, and French horns. Compared to the previous blocks, the third block is somewhat forceful, somewhat hopeful. (However, when compared to the blocks to come, this third block sounds relatively meek and tentative.)

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37c. **The canon.** In each of the three mini-blocks of 1.3, the cellos enter one beat after the violas. This rhythmically canonical structure recalls the interplay between the basses and the tenors during the original vocal theme repetition in Division 1. Block 1.3 is an inverted canon (the cellos play an inverted version of the viola themes). The use of the canon is another form of **nostalgia** in the symphony, of harkening back to the past (of which the use of the harpsichord is a prime example), insofar as the use of counterpoint originated around the ninth century, was a popular attribute of songs of the fourteenth century, and was a fundamental feature of the Baroque and classical ages (for example, the fugues of Bach). Also, in the sixteenth century many Church Masses incorporated the canon form, including a series of masses by Palestrina.

38a. Compare the beginnings of blocks 1.2 and 1.3 in super-block 1:

38b. Describing these staves should suffice to stress the similarities of the melodies. In block 1.2, the violas descend one tone, then ascend two tones, to end one tone above the first note (the “base note”). In block 1.3, the violas descend two tones, then ascend one tone, to end one tone below the base note. The cellos, meanwhile, ascend two tones, then descend one tone, to end one tone above the base note. Recall the qualities of the first vocal phrase of the symphony (the first six notes of “Kyrie”): the chorus rises up by one tone, then lowers by two tones, then rises up by one tone again. All this description

is simply to stress the fact that the instruments are “voicing” the original vocal theme in their own “language”. The orchestra is “speaking” “Lord have mercy”.

39a. There is a **perfect symmetry to the rising and falling motif in 1.3. Block 1.3**, in which the violas and cellos play together, has a more complex structure than blocks 1.1 and 1.2. In block 1.1, the cellos ended lower than the base notes on which they began, while in block 1.2, the violas ended higher. Block 1.3 amalgamates the ascent and descent of both blocks 1.1 and 1.2. **Block 1.3 is a fusion of both rising and falling.** The violas go one way while the cellos go the other: they create a simultaneous rising and falling sound. In mini-block 1 of 1.3, the violas end **one tone lower** than the base note, while the cellos end **one tone higher**. In mini-block 2 of 1.3, the violas end **one tone higher**, while the cellos end **one tone lower**. In mini-block 3 of 1.3, the violas end **one tone higher**, while the cellos end **one tone lower**. This simultaneous rising and falling, this “coming and going”, exerts a “pressure” on the participant (listener).

39b. **Overview of the rising and falling concept.** The “wavelike” rising and falling of the instrumentation is juxtaposed to the “long stretch” of the held notes at the end of each mini-block (see 40a) and to the “flatlined” time corridor as well. The up and down movement of the variations can be related to the vicissitudes of human experience (implacable change, whirlwind of emotions); also to the intentional “*reach for . . .*” and the unintentional “*falling back*”.

40a. Here is a diagram of the three-part structure of block 1.3:

The image displays a musical score for violas and cellos, divided into three sections labeled 1, 2, and 3. The score is highlighted in yellow. Section 1 shows the violas ending one tone lower and cellos one tone higher. Section 2 shows the violas ending one tone higher and cellos one tone lower. Section 3 shows the violas ending one tone higher and cellos one tone lower. The score is highlighted in yellow.

40b. This three-part mini-block structure is highly significant. It helps to “gather steam”, to amp up the force, to “get the ball rolling”. It is reminiscent of that old saying which ends with “. . . try, try again”. The orchestra tries once, the orchestra tries twice, and then gives it “the old college try” with the third mini-block. It is akin to a deep sea diver taking one breath, then another breath, and then one last big breath before getting on with the job.

41a. **THE LONG STRETCH.** Among the most significant moments of the movement are the **sustained chords played at the end of each mini-block**. Here are the examples of the “**long stretch**” in the first two blocks of super-block: 1.3:

The image shows a musical score for a symphony, specifically the first two blocks of a super-block. The score is written for a full orchestra, with staves for Violins (Vols), Violas (Vols), Cellos (Vols), and Double Basses (Vols). The music is in a 4/4 time signature. The score is divided into two main sections by a vertical line. In each section, there are three mini-blocks. At the end of each mini-block, a sustained chord is highlighted with a red box. These chords are the 'long stretch' mentioned in the text. The chords are sustained for a significant duration, creating a sense of tension and anticipation.

41b. The most important of these moments is the chord played at the end of the **third (and last) mini-block in each super-block**. Call it the “**long breath**”, or the “**long reach**”, or the “**breathless cry**”. This **long stretch** is a climax to the repetitive appeal for “**Lord have mercy**”. It is a fervent plea:

The image shows a musical score for a symphony, specifically the third and last mini-block of a super-block. The score is written for a full orchestra, with staves for Violins (Vols), Violas (Vols), Cellos (Vols), and Double Basses (Vols). The music is in a 4/4 time signature. The score is divided into two main sections by a vertical line. In each section, there are three mini-blocks. The third mini-block in each section is highlighted with a yellow background. At the end of each of these mini-blocks, a sustained chord is highlighted with a red box. These chords are the 'long stretch' mentioned in the text. The chords are sustained for a significant duration, creating a sense of tension and anticipation.

41c. The “**long stretch**” is akin to one long ecstatic breath. It is a musical metaphor for **reaching toward the beyond**. It is a heartfelt “**reaching for . . .**” (something).

41d. The importance of the **long stretch** moments cannot be overstated. The entire thrust of the first movement of the symphony reaches its most dramatic point at these momentous moments (especially the long stretch concluding each super-block). The **long stretch** is the experience of seeking to “**rise above**” or “**beyond**”, of catharsis. The long stretch is the hope for deliverance; it is the needful reach for something fundamental and vital (such as God).

42a. With the long stretch concluding the third mini-block of block 1.3, super-block 1 comes to an end. Now comes the next instance of the time corridor, **time corridor 2**. The first and second time corridors are very similar in form, and sound almost identical. The essential difference between the first and second time corridors is that in the second instance, the organ has joined the other instruments. The organ, which is the oldest keyboard instrument, is indelibly associated with the history of the church; and can signify the time period of the Middle Ages, just as the harps recall the ancient world, the gongs the early years of the first millennium, the harpsichord the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the piano the nineteenth century, and the celesta the twentieth century; each instrument of the time corridor is a type of time line that sketches in the limits of an overall “view” of temporality.

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42b. After the fervent plea of the long stretch, the time corridor is the blunt answer of the cosmos: a kind of “blankness”, a thudding flatline, a sort of “brick wall”; the time corridor can be equated to the “unfriendly” void of outer space. The time corridor structure *opposes* the super-block structure. The time corridor sounds like the **most basic succession of notes** there is: a regular and (almost) evenly paced “marching-like” movement without change in pitch or tempo. Although six instruments are playing simultaneously (I’m ignoring the gongs here), perhaps the time corridor may be described as “exclusively” or at least “primarily” horizontal insofar as there is no variation in pitch as each instrument plays its notes. The time corridor is composed of a repetition of **one unchanging chord**. If the block structure of the super-blocks, and especially their long stretches, are akin to emotional outbursts, then the time corridor is akin to a blank unemotional stare. It is the sound of the “inhuman”, the sound of the “infinite”, the “void” (or “unconcealed totality”).

42c. After the “reaching” exertion of super-block 1, the time corridor is a “falling back”. But it is also a moment of rest, a moment to regroup before the next attempt to reach, to stretch, to “break through”, to “*attain the mercy of . . .*”

43. **Super-block 2:** strings: **BLOCK 2.1:** 24 violins, 8 violas, 8 cellos.

44a. Now comes **super-block 2**. Just as in super-block 1, the strings are the dominant section of the orchestra in super-block 2, but here the twenty-four violins join with the violas and the cellos. The violins contribute to a completely different mood and intensity, even though super-block 2 is similar in form to super-block 1.

44b. Just as each mini-block contributes to the “. . . try, try again” effect, so each super-block performs the same function: one more entreaty, one more attempt to reach salvation, one more cry for mercy that has not yet arrived but is always forthcoming.

44c. **Super-block 2 is troubled and intense.** The twenty-four violins contribute to a higher, louder, and fuller sound. Whereas each mini-block in block 1.1 began with an accompaniment of a gong playing quietly (“*mp*”), each mini-block in block 2.1 begins with a moderately loud and alarming clash of piatti (cymbals, “*m*”) which adds to the atmosphere of crisis. The “Lord have mercy” instrumental theme is **fervent** in super-block 2. After asking for mercy in super-block 1 and receiving only the blunt non-committal time corridor in reply, the orchestra tries a second time, raising its voice and sounding tense. Here is **block 2.1**:

The image shows a page of musical notation for strings. It includes staves for 3 Piatti, Violins I (div. a1), Violas (div. a2), and Double Basses (div. a2). The notation is dense and complex, with many notes and rests. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The music is written in a style that is both rhythmic and melodic, with a focus on texture and dynamics.

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44d. Compare the first block of super-block 2 (2.1) to the first block of super-block 1 (1.1) (See 31a.) The two blocks are similar. But there is also an essential difference between the two: 2.1 crams one extra note into the first beat by means of the quintuplet; this increases the overall intensity. Here, for example, are the first staves of each:

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled "VIOLINS 1 (div. a1), BLOCK 2" and the bottom staff is labeled "(FIRST) CELLO, BLOCK 1". Both staves show the first few measures of music. The top staff features a quintuplet in the first beat, which is a key difference from the bottom staff.

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44e. In **block 2.1 of super-block 2**, all of the violins, cellos, and violas are playing, but each group of like instruments is broken down into divisions. The first and second violins (twelve of each) are broken down into three divisions of four instruments each; while the cellos and violas (eight of each) are broken down into two divisions of four instruments each.

44f. If the reader has been following my descriptions, then diagrams are not needed to supplement the illustration of block 2.1 (in 44c) in order to point out (1) the three-part mini-block structure; and (2) the “long stretch” at the end of each mini-block.

45a. In **mini-block 1 of 2.1**, each variation starts one semitone higher than the next, creating a clashing sound. The simultaneity of the variations played at different pitches generates an interesting effect. The first note played by each instrument is the same note on which each instrument ends, and yet, because of the difference in time values (in the variations of lower pitches, the final note of each variation starts slightly later than the part above), the overall character of mini-block 1 is **descent** or **falling**.

45b. It was just pointed out in 45a that in mini-block 1 of 2.1 all of the instruments end on the same notes with which they begin. In **mini-block 2 of 2.1**, however, the sensation of **falling** is intensified because each group of instruments follows a melodic descent. The first and second violins, violas, and cellos all end **a semitone lower**.

45c. The rising and falling motif in block 2.1 follows an almost perfect symmetry until **the third mini-block of 2.1**. Now the rising and falling aspect of the instruments becomes more subtle and variable. Each type of instrument no longer follows one trajectory exclusively in each mini-block. In mini-block 3 of 2.1, the first violins division i ends on the **tone with which it began**, while the first violins divisions ii and iii end **one tone lower**. The second violins div. i ends **a semitone lower**, the second violins div. ii ends **a tone lower**, and the second violins div. iii ends **two tones lower**. The violas and the cellos end **one tone lower** from which they began. This breaking of the symmetry contributes to the troubled and intense sound.

46. **Super-block 2: strings: BLOCK 2.2:** 8 violas, 8 cellos, 4 double basses.

47a. **Block 2.2** is a complete change in mood from block 2.1. Block 2.1 incorporated all of the violins which raised the pitch and volume of the string section. But in block 2.2 the violins are silent again, and the pitch of block 2.2 drops down into the lower registers. For the first time in Division 2, the double basses play. (Four of the eight double basses play in block 2.2.) Block 2.2 features the violas, the cellos, and the double basses. In block 2.2 the violas and cellos are divided into smaller sections than in block 2.1; in 2.2, the violas and the cellos are divided into pairs, so that instead of the violas and cellos playing four variations of the “Lord have mercy” theme, as in 2.1, in 2.2 the violas and cellos simultaneously play eight variations of the theme. Instead of the strident cymbals that accented block 2.1, each mini-block of 2.2 begins with a note sounded by the (three) gongs.

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47b. The sound of **block 2.2** is low and lugubrious; it is at the emotionally opposite end of the sonic spectrum from block 2.1. Block 2.1 was febrile and tense, but block 2.2 is **downcast, glum**.

47c. In **block 2.2**, note (1) the three-part mini-block structure; (2) the minor rhythmic differences between each of the individual variations (such as the transformations from duplets to triplets to quintuplets); and (3) the “long stretch” concluding each mini-block.

48. Mini-block 1 of block 2.2 looks very similar to mini-block 1 of block 2.1, but there are essential differences. Although these two mini-blocks look very similar in terms of the melody, the theme played by the violins in mini-block 1 (2.1) has been shifted down one note shy of two octaves to the violas in mini-block 1 (2.2). Moreover, the cellos and the double basses in mini-block 1 (2.2) also play identical or virtually identical melodies from mini-block 1 (2.1), but also at a lower pitch. The entire mini-block 1 (2.1) has been shifted down in pitch in mini-block 1 (2.2):

MINI-BLOCK 1 (2.1)

MINI-BLOCK 1 (2.2)

(Reformatted to identify key signatures.)

49. The **rising and falling motif in block 2.2**. In mini-block 1 of 2.2, all of the instruments end on the same **notes with which they begin**. In mini-block 2 of 2.2, however, the instruments follow a downward trajectory: all of the instruments end a **semitone lower** than their base notes (see 47a). (This mirrors the same trajectories in mini blocks 1 and 2 of block 2.1; see 45b.)

50a. What contributes to the amazing auditory effects of the first movement is the difference in time values of the simultaneous variations of the “Lord have mercy” instrumental theme. Here, for example, is the mini-block 3 in block 2.2:

The image shows a musical score for mini-block 3 in block 2.2. The score is for four parts: 3 Bongis, 8 Violas, 8 Cellos, and 4 Contrabass. The score is written in 4/4 time. A red line is drawn across the score, starting from the top left and moving downwards to the right, indicating a downward trajectory of the instruments. The text "THE 'LONG STRETCH'" is written in the score.

50b. Note how the instruments lower down in the score continue to play their variations while the upper instruments have already begun their “long stretch”. The lower instruments play a successively more rhythmically augmented version of the theme. The protracted variations at the lowest registers create a “depth” that “weighs down” the soundscape just as the “long stretch” is attempting to “reach for . . .” (the higher, the divine, the beyond).

51a. Earlier I spoke of the **geometrical structure** to the first movement of Symphony No. 2. Here is a snapshot of the general structure of the mini-blocks that comprise Division 2 of the movement:



51b. The general geometrical attributes of a mini-block are (1) the square; (2) the triangle; and (3) the straight line (the held notes of the “long stretch”). (The third mini-block of each block is the best visual exemplar of this general structure.)

51c. However, there will be variations of this general geometrical mini-block structure, the first of which will be seen in block 2.3.

52a. The **rising and falling motif of mini-block 3 of 2.2** is innovatory. Up to now, most generally the mini-block structure of the movement featured instruments ending one tone higher, one tone lower, or on the same tone with which they began. For example, in mini-block 1 of 2.2, the first and last notes of each variation were the same, while in mini-block 2 of 2.2 the variations ended one semitone lower. But the third mini-block of block 2.2 floods beyond the boundaries of this established structure. The violas, cellos, and the double basses all end **a diminished fifth** higher than their start notes. **This is the highest ascent of all of the variations in the first movement.** This expansion of the established boundaries contributes to the relentlessly mounting tension of the first movement as it progresses.

52b. **Note on my general approach.** Why, throughout this commentary, do I consider the first and last notes of each variation critical, and worthy of inspection? And why do I refrain from using such terminology as “pitch” and “melody” and “harmony” and “key” and “scale” and “chords” and “cadence” and “tonal context” to enhance my discussion? It is obvious to the reader that I am not analyzing the variations of the first movement in terms of even the simplest sort of music theory analysis. So what *am* I doing, and why?

I use the original “Kyrie” theme as a template to which I compare all of the variations in order to reveal a “thematic” disposition to the structure of the mini-blocks. By “thematic” I mean an “attitude” that doesn’t necessarily have to be equated with Schnittke’s own point of view, which can never be recovered at any rate, but a general “attitude” that is related to a “mythic” or “cultural” approach toward spatial direction. Most generally speaking, throughout world civilization “up” has been equated with optimism, while “down” has been equated with pessimism. Although of course there will be exceptions to this rule, still this general principle dominates the concepts of “up” and “down”. Think, for example of the expression “things are looking up for me” (an optimistic statement) as opposed to “I’m feeling down in the doldrums” (a pessimistic statement). A thousand and one examples from every conceivable world culture could be cited to bear out this general point. When I indicate that a variation ends, for example, one tone higher than its base note, I am keeping in mind that (1) the original “Kyrie” theme ended on the note with which it began; and (2) the original “Kyrie” theme is the fundamental “attitude” which has “calibrated” the ear of the participant (listener) to all that follows it. Each variation of the original “Kyrie” theme is a musical metaphor for the “everchanging neverchanging” emotional world of an individual person, which shifts from one mood to another in a never-ending progression until no more moods can be experienced (death). If a variation ends higher than its base note, I characterize that variation as a “hopeful” variation; and if a variation ends on a note lower than where it began, I characterize that variation as “downcast”. Of course, this has nothing to do with specific music theory, because there are instances in which a note that ends higher than its keynote may not necessarily be “optimistic sounding”. That said, I am standing by my simple (or simplistic) “thematic” approach in this essay: a variation that ends higher is “hopeful” while a variation that ends lower is “downcast”, and that the original “Kyrie” theme, the first and last notes of which were the same, is to be kept in mind throughout all of the variations.

53. **Super-block 2:** strings: **BLOCK 2.3:** 24 violins, 8 cellos, 4 double basses.

54a. Super-block 2 is characterized by emotional change. The first block (2.1), which included the first and second sets of violins, was febrile and alarming; the second block (2.2), missing the violins, was low and gloomy, murky and glum; and the **third block (2.3)**, which includes the full array of violins once again, returns to the fullness and volume and vigorous character of block 2.1, complete with a new extraordinary sonic effect which approximates a momentary “human cry”. In block 2.3 the intensity of 2.1 is reprised, including the alarming clash of the cymbals beginning each mini-block.

54b. **Block 2.3**, featuring all twenty-four violins, all eight cellos, and four double basses, is the most complex moment of the movement yet. Whereas in terms of the melodic line this block resembles the blocks that have come before, block 2.3 includes the most simultaneous variations of the “Lord have mercy” theme yet. The twenty-four violins in block 2.1 were divided into six divisions of four each, but in **block 2.3** the violins are divided into pairs, so that the violins are not playing six variations at once but twelve variations at once. Moreover, each cello is given its own variation to play, whereas in block 2.1 the cellos were broken down into two divisions of four each, and in 2.2 the cellos were divided into pairs. We heard ten variations of the “Lord have mercy” theme in each mini-block of block 2.1, and again in each mini-block of block 2.2., but in each mini-block of block 2.3 we hear **twenty-four variations** of the “Lord have mercy” theme playing at once. (Twenty-four simultaneous variations doubles the amount of the most variations heard together up to this point, which was twelve, in the third block of 1.3.) **As the first movement progresses, the block structure, while not deviating from the general structural principles, is becoming more dense and complex.**

54c. Here are the **first and second mini-blocks of block 2.3**, and by now there is no need to point out the similarity of each variation to both the original “Kyrie” vocal theme and the previous mini-blocks of Division 2:

The image shows a musical score for an orchestral piece, divided into two sections: **MINI-BLOCK 1** and **MINI-BLOCK 2**. The score is written for the following instruments: 3 Pianos (3 Pnals), 3 Gong, Violins I (Vln I), Violins II (Vln II), Viola (Vla), Cello (Cello), and Double Bass (4 C Bass). The score is in 4/4 time and features complex rhythmic patterns, including sextuplets. A red box highlights a specific section in Mini-Block 2, and a larger red box highlights a section in the Cello and Double Bass parts.

54d. The section highlighted in red is the extraordinary “collective human cry” effect which is created with the participation of the (three) gongs. Note how the cellos and the double basses are acting in counterpoint to the violins. Also note how the first cello in both mini-blocks 1 and 2 is using sextuplets for the first time in the movement.

54e. After the low and dour 2.2, **block 2.3** is heated and feverish; the musical texture is thicker. (To repeat, the mini-blocks of 2.3 use sextuplets for the first time in the movement, creating the densest treatment of the “Lord have mercy” theme yet.) Perhaps it can be said that the orchestra here is “desperate for” or “demanding of” mercy. **It is the most forceful entreaty of the movement yet, the most intense instance of the “Lord have mercy” theme.**

54f. The twelve pairs of violins, each commencing on a different note, run the gamut from B-flat above middle C up an octave to B-flat, with every note in between accounted for. The other strings are doing something similar at a lower pitch. This “comprehensive” treatment of the scale contributes to the multilayered “atmospheric” sound.

54g. **The canon.** Similar to the structure of each of the three mini-blocks of 1.3, each of the three mini-blocks of 2.3 follows a canonic structure: the cellos and the double basses enter two beats after the violins. (More specifically, the structure is an inverted canon.) The use of the canon in Symphony No. 2 is evocative of many significant points in the history of music, including the church music of the sixteenth century and many significant compositions of the Baroque and classical ages.

54h. The **rising and falling motif in block 2.3. In mini-block 1 of block 2.3**, the instruments end on the **same note with which they began**, which recalls the structure of the original “Kyrie” vocal theme that began the movement. But following this the structure becomes more complex.

54i. In **mini-block 2 of 2.3**, twenty-four instruments end higher than where they began, while twelve instruments end lower than where they began. The first violins and second violins end **a minor 3rd higher** than their base notes; while the cellos and the double basses end **a minor 3rd lower**.

54j. In the climactic **mini-block 3 of 2.3** (see 55a), the violins end a **perfect 4th higher**; while the cellos and the double basses end a **perfect 4th lower**. In this mini-block 3 of 2.3, twelve instruments end lower, while twenty-four instruments end higher, which is exactly the same structure as mini-block 2 of 2.3.

54k. **Note how in mini-block 2 and mini-block 3 of block 2.3 the instrumentation both rises and falls at the same time.** The integration of simultaneous rising and falling corresponds to the overall conceptual theme of the first movement: the tense, topsy-turvy quality of the human condition: we reach up to the (divine) sky from the (base) mud. Simultaneously we reach up for the ethereal (God’s mercy; artistic inspiration; imagination) while gravity (the bodily fundament; responsibility; dour human truth) weighs us down. The simultaneous rising and falling of the variations creates a rich and magnificent soundscape.

55a. There are **two major climaxes** of the first movement of Symphony No. 2. **The last mini-block of super-block 2 is the first major climax of the movement.** Here is the “grand” or “majestic” third mini-block of **block 2.3**, with its stunning **long stretch**:

The image shows a page of musical score for the first movement of Symphony No. 2. The score is arranged in a standard orchestral format with multiple staves. The instruments listed on the left are 3 Piccolos, 3 Trombones, Violins I, Violins II, Violas, Cellos, and Basses. The music is in 4/4 time and features a dense, rhythmic texture with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The 'long stretch' is a continuous sequence of notes that spans across the measures, creating a sense of upward motion and intensity.

55b. In the Chandos recording with Valéry Polyansky conducting, the **long stretch lasts a remarkable thirteen seconds**. It is the **first major high point of the movement**. After the three blocks of super-block 1, and then the blunt time corridor, and then the two more blocks of super-block 2, this last block of super-block 3 ends with the most ardent and passionate “*reach for . . .*” yet. Although each variation of the long stretch is horizontal in character, the effect of the whole (the array of different pitches) may be heard as something “vertical”: the long stretch is a reach for “the Heavens”, a reach for something “up and away”; alternatively, or rather more generally, the long stretch is a

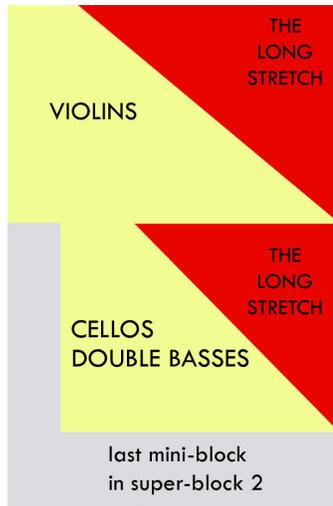
“*reach for . . .*” or an “*appeal to . . .*” something “more” or “beyond”, whatever the direction (up, down, or whatever). The long stretch that concludes super-block 2 is an unforgettable moment of Schnittke’s Symphony No. 2. It has a power and an exhilaration that can *transport* the participant (listener). **It is a moment of a great gathering of force.** (The long stretch or reach that concludes block 2.3 is like a laser that burns through the visible and the known, revealing new imaginative passageways through the unconcealed totality. It is a momentous occasion for potential inspiration. It is the experience of mystic visions distilled into music. It is the auditory equivalent of the awakening moment of annunciation.) The last mini-block of super-block 2 is the sixth attempt of the orchestra to obtain the mercy that is asked for, and the most astonishing thus far.

55c. The amazing chord that the **long stretch** resolves into is composed of thirty-six string instruments playing fourteen different notes. **The long stretch that concludes super-block 2 resolves into a fourteen note chord.** The twelve pairs of violins simultaneously play twelve different consecutive notes above middle C; listing the notes from the top down, the violins play the descending series: D, C-sharp, C, B, B-flat, A, A-flat, G, F-sharp, F, E, and E-flat. It is almost a complete octave; what is missing is the D directly above middle C. The cellos and the double basses simultaneously play twelve different consecutive notes below middle C; listing the notes from the top down, the cellos play a descending series of A, G-sharp, G, F-sharp, F, E, E-flat, and D, while the double basses play the descending notes C-sharp, C, B, and B-flat above the cellos’ A. Once again, what the cellos and double basses play is almost a complete octave; what is missing is the D above the double basses’ C.

55d. During the duration of the long stretch, the addition of new notes to the overall chord “clarifies” the overall sound of the chord as it progresses into a “purest euphony”. This change occurs subtly and smoothly. The changing sonic quality of the elaborate chord during its “reach” or “stretch” is a significant aspect of the remarkable sound of this climactic moment.

55e. Each instance of the “Lord have mercy” theme may be likened to an intake of breath. If we accept this metaphor for the moment, then this is one reason why I describe the long reach that concludes block 2.3 as “remarkable” and “amazing” – it is one grand sustained intake of breath. Alternatively, the long reach of 2.3 can be likened to (1) one sustained held breath; (2) or one long exhalation of breath.

56a. We saw in 51a a diagram of the general **geometrical structure** to the mini-blocks of the first movement of Symphony No. 2. But with the advent of **mini-block 3 of block 2.3**, a new geometrical structure arises:



56b. Until mini-block 3 of block 2.3, the instrumentation in a mini-block contributed to one “geometric effect”; i.e., the instrumentation played together to create one overall effect. But see now how the string section is working on two separate “tracks” as it were; the cellos and double basses keep silent for a rest of two beats before entering. The “double-triangle” structure will lead to an “omni-triangle” structure in super-block 4.

57a. Following the immense long stretch of the climactic block 2.3, the **time corridor** returns. This is the third instance of the time corridor. The different instances of the time corridors sound almost exactly alike to one another: there is neither rise nor fall, simply the blunt, thudding beat of flatlined instrumentation.

57b. Although the overall structure remains the same between all of the time corridors, there are slight variations between them. The **third time corridor** uses the same instrumentation as the first time corridor: the gongs, celesta, harpsichord, piano, and two harps; the second time corridor had also used an organ, which is absent from this grouping.

57c. The geometrical structure of the **time corridor** is notable because it can be broken down into either a three-part structure, which makes it consonant with the general mini-block structure of the super-blocks, or a five-part structure, which makes it consonant with the overall structure of the first movement, which has five time corridors in total. It is the slightest of pauses between bars in the harpsichord treatment of the theme which can suggest a five-part structure:

The image shows a musical score for harpsichord with five time corridors highlighted in red boxes and numbered 1 through 5. The score includes staves for Flauto I, Flauto II, Violino I, Violino II, Viola, and Cello/Bassi. The time corridors are marked with red boxes and numbers 1 through 5. Below the harpsichord staff, there are three large red numbers: 1, 2, and 3, indicating the three-part structure of the time corridor.

57d. The **third instance of the time corridor** follows the climactic long stretch that concludes block 2.3 but does not sound any more intense because of it. The third time corridor has the same character as the earlier time corridors. The third time corridor is quieter and less intense than the long stretch it has just followed. This time corridor is “unfazed by” or is “ignoring” what has just happened. From my point of view, the soundscape of the time corridor has the eerie quality of a dark wood in a fairy tale, or the spooky corridors of a haunted house; it is a peculiar and unsettling “pathway” for the participant (listener) to “travel through”. However, after the “exertion” of the long stretch of block 2.3, the time corridor doesn’t sound exclusively frightening and callous; now, ironically, the time corridor sounds almost welcome: because it is **a moment of rest, a moment to take a breath, a moment for a re-gathering of energy.**

58. **Super-block 3:** woodwind and brass: **BLOCK 3.1:** woodwind: 4 flutes, 4 oboes (including 1 English horn), 4 clarinets (inc. 1 bass clarinet), 4 bassoons (inc. 1 double bassoon).

59a. After the third instance of the time corridor comes the third super-block of the movement. In super-blocks 1 and 2 the “Lord have mercy” instrumental theme was expressed by the strings, moving from the cellos to the violas to the violins to the double basses. **In super-block 3, the “Lord have mercy” theme will be expressed exclusively by the woodwind and the brass sections of the orchestra.**

59b. Generally speaking, the overall trajectory followed by the instrumentation in super-blocks 1 and 2 has been an upward route. Although the upward “reach for . . .” direction has been tempered by simultaneous downward steps by certain of the instruments, the general character has still been the “reach upward”. In **super-block 3**, however, the general character of all three blocks is a **downward direction, a falling, a sinking.**

59c. Super-block 1 was, generally speaking, an optimistic section, and super-block 2 was a mix of both the hopeful (blocks 2.1 and 2.3) and the glum (block 2.2). **The prevailing**

character of **super-block 3** is dejection and glumness from the beginning of **block 3.1** to the end of **block 3.3**.

59d. Generally speaking, the brass instruments can belt out sounds that can dominate an orchestra. Here, however, in **super-block 3**, the brass instruments, and the woodwinds as well, remain within a “temperate” volume, never attaining a great intensity of noise. The “quiet” sound of the brass instruments is relatively surprising, in light of how the violins in **super-block 2** attained a high volume (especially in **block 2.3**).

60a. Here is **block 3.1** of **super-block 3**, another forty-eight variations of the instrumental translation of the heartfelt entreaty, “Lord have mercy”:

The image displays a complex musical score for Block 3.1 of Super-block 3. The score is arranged in a multi-staff format, with each staff representing a different instrument or section. The instruments listed on the left include: 4 Flutes (Fl.), 3 Oboes (Ob.), 3 Clarinets (Cl.), 3 Bassoons (Bsn.), 3 Trumpets (Trp.), 3 Trombones (Tbn.), 3 Tenors (Ten.), 3 Basses (Bsn.), and Campana (Cym). The score is written in 4/4 time and features a variety of rhythmic patterns and melodic lines. The dynamics are marked as *mp* (mezzo-piano) throughout. The score is divided into four measures, with a repeat sign at the end of the first measure. The notation includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks.

(Edited to fit on page.)

60b. The structure of **block 3.1** resembles the blocks that have preceded it. The same “Lord have mercy” theme, with rhythmic variations, is played at different pitches simultaneously. The variations of the “Lord have mercy” theme are similar to the preceding variations (compare, for example, the illustration of **block 3.1** with **block 2.1** in 44c); the three-part mini-block structure is evident; and, as before, “long stretches” conclude each mini-block.

60c. Here, for example, is the first flute's variation (crowning the first mini-block of 3.1) set alongside the opening vocal phrase of the movement. The pitch and the time values are different, but the melodies are directly related to one another. Each begins and ends on the note with which it began, and ascends only one note above its base note. The first flute, along with all of the other instruments, is “singing” “Kyrie”.

FIRST PHRASE (FIRST) FLUTE

60d. While the structure of block 3.1 generally resembles earlier blocks, there is a particular difference to be noted: in 3.1, the intervals between the starting notes of the simultaneous variations are not semitones (as in earlier blocks such as 2.1) but **minor 3rds**. For example: flute 1 starts on B-flat, flute 2 on G, flute 3 on E, and flute 4 on C-sharp.

60e. Instead of super-block 3 beginning with the sounding of the gongs (as in super-block 1) or the cymbals (as in super-block 2), the beginning of super-block 3 features the clang of *campane* (bells). The gongs were played softly and had a dark depth and resonance, and the clashing cymbals were loud and alarming, but the curt sound of the bells is cold, blunt and austere, in accordance with the overall soundscape of super-block 3:

60f. Just as in block 2.3 the twelve pairs of violins fill in all of the notes between B-flat above middle C up an octave to B-flat, so here in **block 3.1** (see 60a) the flutes, oboes, and clarinets, playing simultaneously at different pitches, create a sonic space spanning the F one octave below middle C up to the G one octave above middle C.

60g. **The rising and falling motif in block 3.1.** In **mini-block 1 of 3.1**, the instruments end on the **same note** with which they began, which recalls the “Kyrie” vocal phrase that opened the movement.

60h. In **mini-block 2 of 3.1**, eight instruments end lower while eight instruments end higher. The flutes, oboes, and the English horn end **one semitone lower**, while the clarinets and bassoons end **one semitone higher**.

60i. In **mini-block 3 of 3.1**, the depth increases: the flutes, oboes, and English horn end **one tone lower**, while the clarinets and the bassoons end **one tone higher**. (Symmetry remains: as in mini-block 2, eight instruments end lower while eight instruments end higher.)

60j. In mini-blocks 2 and 3 of block 3.1 the instrumentation both rises and falls simultaneously. **The simultaneous variations in the rhythm and pitch of the “Lord have mercy” theme generate an unsettling and multilayered “atmospheric” sound:**

The image shows a handwritten musical score for block 3.1, consisting of 12 staves. The staves are labeled on the left as follows: 4 Fl (flute), 3 Ob (oboe), C. Clar (clarinet), 3 Cor (B) (cor Anglais), O. Clar (B) (clarinet in B), 3 Fag (bassoon), C. Fag (contrabassoon), and Campana (cymbal). The score is divided into three mini-blocks, numbered 1, 2, and 3. Red arrows are drawn above the staves, pointing to the right, indicating upward pitch movement in the first and second mini-blocks. Blue arrows are drawn below the staves, pointing to the right, indicating downward pitch movement in the third mini-block. The notation includes various rhythmic values, dynamics (mp), and articulation marks.

61a. Although the written score of block 3.1 looks very similar to the blocks of previous pages, the sound of the orchestra in block 3.1 is different from most of what has come before. Block 2.2, sounding low and glum, is its closest antecedent. The woodwinds that comprise Block 3.1 sound “sick” or “stricken”; the mood is low, “depressed”, “frowning”, “in the doldrums”. The orchestra has a “melting” or “deteriorating” character. Although some of the instrumentation rises in pitch by small increments during the mini-blocks of 3.1, **the prevailing trajectory of the instrumentation in all three mini-blocks of block 3.1 is downward – melodically and emotionally.**

61b. In earlier moments such as mini-block 1 of 2.1, the simultaneity of the variations played with slightly different time values and at different pitches generated an effect of descent or falling, even if each of these variations ended on the same note with which it began. The same auditory effect occurs in **mini-block 1 of 3.1**: the instruments each end on the same note with which they began, and yet the overall sonic character of the mini-block is **descent**, because the lower pitches take longer to complete their variations and in the process the lower notes “fill out” or “fill in” the “sonic space”.

61c. **The “long reach” motif in block 3.1 sounds less like “a reach for . . .” than a “falling away from . . .”** The juxtaposition of variations during each mini-block’s “long reach” in **block 3.1** is a “quiet minor tumult”. Individual notes sound out here and there

against a backdrop of the “melting” orchestra; these notes sound erratic, somewhat akin to dust motes drifting in a shaft of sunlight, or cinders floating around a fire.

61d. The dynamic for all of the woodwinds in block 3.1 is “*mp*” (medium-soft). There is something magisterial in the potentially loud woodwinds being held back. In the Polyansky recording, the instruments in super-block 3 sound restrained; they sound stricken, like something immense and powerful that is being brought low by something just as massive. (If I had to compare the sound of super-block 3 to something visual, I might suggest the sinking of the Titanic; or an immense toppling cityscape crumbling to powder in slow-motion before one’s eyes.) **Super-block 3 is the wan, moribund heart of the first movement of the Symphony No 2.**

62. **Super-block 3:** woodwind and brass: **BLOCK 3.2:** brass: 4 French horns, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones.

63a. If super-block 3 is the heart of the first movement, then **block 3.2** is the central core, the “heart of the heart”. This core is a **gloomy** one. Here are thirty-six more variations of the “Lord have mercy” instrumental theme:

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the 'Lord have mercy' instrumental theme. The score is arranged in a system with multiple staves. On the left side, there are handwritten labels for the instruments: '4 (C) (F)', '4 Tr. (B)', '4 Tr. ni', and '3 Picoli'. The score is divided into four measures, with a double bar line after the second measure. The notation includes various rhythmic values, dynamics (such as *mf* and *mf*), and articulation marks. The key signature has one flat, and the time signature is 4/4. The score is densely written with notes, rests, and other musical symbols.

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63b. First of all, note the similarity between the “Lord have mercy” theme between this block and all of the other super-blocks that have come before. This is another example that demonstrates the symmetry between the various structural elements of the first movement:

(FIRST) CELLO, BLOCK 1.1 (FIRST) VIOLIN, BLOCK 2.1 (FIRST) FRENCH HORN, BLOCK 3.2

63c. However, note the differences as well. The rhythm of the “Lord have mercy” theme becomes more and more complex as the movement progresses, as evidenced by these three citations.

63d. **Block 3.2** features the brass instruments sounding the “Lord have mercy” theme, and the cymbals reappear at the beginning of mini-blocks 2 and 3 of 3.2, but neither the powerful brass instruments nor the loud cymbals can rouse the orchestra from its “gloomy” “demeanor” and “enervated” character. **Block 3.2 is the antithesis of super-blocks 1 and 2. Instead of “stretching outward”, the prevailing motion of block 3.2 (and all of super-block 3) is the experience of being “dragged down”.**

64a. “Lord have mercy.” Why ask that question, if not out of *hope* or out of *desperation*? Super-block 3, the heart of the symphony’s first movement, channels melancholy desperation. It is a glum hearkening to the abyss that encapsulates the human experience. The “truth” (whatever it may be) is allowed “air to breathe” here in super-block 3. **In super-block 3 the “reach for . . .”, the long stretch, has ceased to have any force.** To reach, to stretch, takes place in the present moment; super-blocks 1 and 2 featured active and energetic “*appeals for . . .*”; perhaps super-block 3 may be said to be dominated by the past and the future, both of which coincide as loss and the void.

64b. The climactic long reach or long stretch in **block 3.2** is dominated by the trumpets, which lead the way :

long stretch

1 2 3

64c. The **long stretch** in **mini-block 3 of block 3.2** sounds anything but energetic or forceful. It reminds me of a phrase by Hunter S. Thompson: **“an eerie trumpet call over a lost battlefield.”** Alternatively, the long stretch might be likened to an arm turning to dust as it *“reaches out for . . .”*

64d. Unlike super-blocks 1 and 2, the mini-block structure of super-block 3 cannot gather the force to end on a high point. **There is something “sickly” about super-block 3.**

65a. **The rising and falling motif of block 3.2.** Although trumpets 1 and 2 end block 3.2 on a relatively high note, the rest of the instrumentation is dragging them down. Let us look at the overall pattern, as we have done for earlier blocks. What is immediately interesting about the rising and falling motif in block 3.2 is this: the first mini-block in the preceding super-blocks is usually a “stasis” block, insofar as the first and last notes of the instrumentation are the same (as in the first vocal phrase of the movement); here, however, mini-block 1 of 3.2 is characterized by rising and falling movement. As before, the rising and falling motif refers to the comparison between the first and last notes in each variation.

65b. In **mini-block 1 of 3.2**, six instruments end down and six instruments end up: French horns 1-2, and the trombones end **one semitone higher**; while French horns 3-4, and the trumpets end **one semitone lower**.

65c. In **mini-block 2 of 3.2**, ten instruments end down and only two instruments end up: the French horns 1-2, the trumpets and the trombones end **one semitone lower**; while French horns 3-4 end **one semitone higher**.

65d. In **mini-block 3 of 3.2**, six instruments end down and six instruments end up, and both to a greater degree than the first two mini-blocks of block 3.2: French horns 1-2, and the trombones end an **augmented 4th lower**; while French horns 3-4, and the trumpets end an **augmented 4th higher**.

65e. To sum up: In **block 3.2**, fourteen of the variations end higher than where they began, while twenty-two end lower. The predominance of the lower variations is consonant with the downcast attitude of super-block 3.

66. **Super-block 3:** woodwind and brass: **BLOCK 3.3:** woodwind and brass: 4 flutes, 4 oboes, 4 clarinets, 4 bassoons, 4 French horns, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones.

67a. **Block 3.3 is the most elaborate block yet.** Back in the climactic block 3.2, thirty-six instruments were playing twenty-four simultaneous variations of the “Lord have mercy” theme. Here in block 3.3 only twenty-eight instruments are playing simultaneous variations, but the difference is that each of the instruments is playing its own variation. So although there are less instruments playing in block 3.3 compared to block 3.2, there are more variations being played in 3.3.

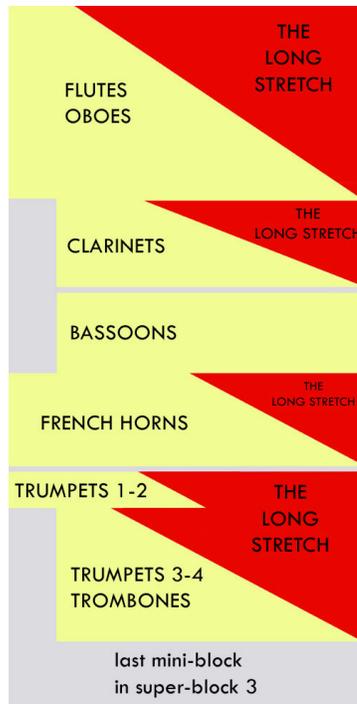
67b. **Block 3.3** is the “busiest” looking two pages of the entire first movement:

MINI-BLOCK 1 MINI-BLOCK 2 MINI-BLOCK 3

The image displays a page of a musical score, likely for a symphony, showing two pages of music. The score is divided into three sections: MINI-BLOCK 1, MINI-BLOCK 2, and MINI-BLOCK 3. The instruments listed on the left include Flutes (Fl.), Oboes (Ob.), Clarinet in G (Cl. in G), Bassoon (Fag.), Clarinet in Bb (Cl. in Bb), Trumpets (Tr.), Trombones (Tromb.), Horns (Horn), and Cymbals (Cympan). The music is dense and complex, with many notes and rests. The page is numbered 43 in the top right corner.

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67c. The horizontal movement of the instrumentation in the block structure of super-blocks 1, 2, and 4 can be easily translated into simple geometrical diagrams (see 51a and 56a). But the “busy” quality of block 3.3 cannot be translated into as simple a diagram as these others: here is, for example, **mini-block 3 of block 3.3**:



68a. Super-blocks 1, 2, and 4 each end with a climactic moment – major climactic moments in the cases of 2 and 4. But **super-block 3 does not end with a climactic moment**. The prevailing direction of blocks 1.3 and 2.3 was an upward ascent; here **in block 3.3, however, the prevailing direction is descent**. The long reach has no real force (because there is too much movement from the instruments playing counter themes).

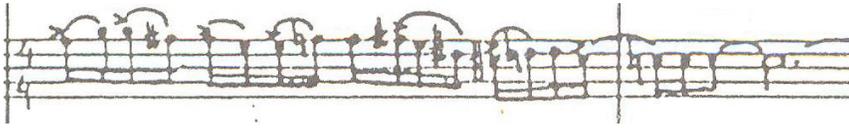
68b. Unlike the block and mini-block structures of super-blocks 1, 2, and 4, **the three-part block and mini-block structures of 3.3 are unable to muster the energy for a climactic conclusion. Super-block 3 ends sounding as enervated and powerless as it began.**

69a. Each of the “long reaches” in mini-blocks 1, 2, and 3 of 3.3 sounds “sick”.

69b. For the first and only time in a third block, the **long reach that ends super-block 3** is glum, downcast, the antithesis of a forceful “*reaching for . . .*” Instead of the orchestra “*straining for . . .*”, here it is weak and frowning, morose.

69c. Even the clash of the cymbals that begins mini-block 3 of 3.3 can’t generate any energy in the instrumentation. (Super-block 3 is like an engine that is turning over but refuses to start.) The soundscape sounds caught in a sort of **stasis**, and then all sinks **downward**.

70a. In **mini-block 3 of 3.3**, it sounds as if the prominent trumpet gives up its variation in medias res:



70b. This **passage of the first trumpet** brings to my mind the vision of a human arm sticking straight up out of quicksand in an alarming appeal before this last evidence of a person sinks under the surface, disappearing along with the rest of the body.

71. In the Polyansky recording, the brass and woodwind instruments in super-block 3 sound “**weary**”. The orchestra, which could belt out bombastic sounds of immense volume, is “**muffled**”, “**restrained**”. An entity that could exhibit great power has become **tired** and **wan**.

72a. The sombre long reach that concludes 3.3 is a *memory* of a “*reaching for . . .*”, a mournful echo of the previous “*reaching for . . .*” of earlier super-blocks.

72b. Super-block 3, and especially block 3.3, brings to my mind the image of a light shining in the crumbling shell of a decaying church.

72c. Super-block 3 expresses a monumental mournfulness. It is the memory of an imposing edifice, once grand and glittering, now dilapidated, a paradise in ruins. The **long reach of 3.3** is the sound of a **beautiful dream, dissolving into the void**.

72d. “Only a god can save us now,” Heidegger said in his final years.

72e. Super-block 1 exhibited a kind of optimism, a hopeful “*reach for . . .*” Super-block 2 was a tense and emphatic “*reach for . . .*”. Super-block 3, an expression of dejection, is a wan and enervated “*reach for . . .*”

73a. However, when the **rising and falling motif** is tallied up in block 3.3, it is revealed that block 3.3 is not entirely all doom and gloom. Twenty-eight instruments play twenty-eight variations in each of the three mini-blocks of block 3.3. In each mini-block, fourteen instruments end incrementally higher than where they began and fourteen instruments end incrementally lower than where they began. **In block 3.3, there is a parity to the rising and falling trajectories of the “Lord have mercy” instrumental motif**. Although, on the surface, super-block 3 sounds entirely gloomy and miserable, a look at its deep structure reveals a ray of hope: the downward trajectory does not in fact dominate the variations.

73b. The following is the rundown of the **rising and falling motif in block 3.3**, with respect to the base notes (refer back to the score reproduced at 67b):

73c. In **mini-block 1 of 3.3**, the flutes, oboes, French horns, and trumpets 1-2 end **one semitone lower**; while the clarinets, bassoons, trumpets 3-4, and trombones end **one semitone higher**.

73d. In **mini-block 2 of 3.3**, the flutes, the oboes, the French horns, and trumpets 1-2 end **one tone lower**; while the clarinets, bassoons, trumpets 3-4 and trombones end **one tone higher**.

73e. In **mini-block 3 of 3.3**, the flutes, oboes, French Horns, and trumpets 1-2 end a **perfect 4th lower**; while the clarinets, bassoons, trumpets 3-4, and trombones end a **perfect 4th higher**.

73f. Note the increasing intervals, contributing to the drama: from a **semitone** in mini-block 1 to a **tone** in mini-block 2 to the much wider interval of the **perfect 4th** in mini-block 3.

73g. In **block 3.3**, the instrumentation is rising and falling simultaneously, which makes for a more satisfying “psychological experience” insofar as no one direction is favored over another; rather, different directions are happening at once, which is a realistic treatment of the multilayered experience of conscious life, in which clashing ideas, sensations, and events occur all at once.

74a. After super-block 3 dies away comes the fourth instance of the **time corridor**. No matter if a super-block sounds energetic, fervent, or despondent and morose, the time corridor remains unfazed by the changing moods. This time corridor, like the three that have preceded it, is an aural equivalent of a blank stare or icy demeanor. It is the sound of “**cosmic indifference**”.

74b. **Time corridor 4** is almost exactly like time corridor 3 (see 57a), except for minor variations in pitch for certain notes and extra notes added to or removed from the chords; but these micro-changes do not alter the overall character of the time corridor, which sounds almost exactly the same as the previous time corridors: blunt, thudding, “unfriendly”, “flatlined”. The structure is exactly the same: a five-part structure (primarily the harpsichord) embedded in an overall three-part structure.

74c. However, **time corridor 4** can be heard differently to the three that have come before it. The first time corridor was a “rude” imposition on the choral voices, finally “chasing them away” and “blotting them out” as it were. The second and third time corridors were sheer reversals of mood following the “vaulting” conclusions to blocks 1.3 and 2.3, “dumbly” static after the energetic long reaches. But super-block 3 was anything but energetic, and hence the time corridor 4 doesn’t sound so much a *reversal* of mood as a *continuance* of mood. A rest is not needed after super-block 3 because a great burst of energy wasn’t channelled there. Whereas time corridors 2 and 3 might be heard with “weary” ears, time corridor 4, like super-block 3, is contemplative, not so much a rest period as a time to brood on the mystery of things.

75. Super-block 4: (virtually) the whole orchestra: 4 flutes, 4 oboes, 4 clarinets, 3 bassoons, 4 French horns, 4 trumpets, 4 trombones, 1 tuba, 24 violins, 8 violas, 8 cellos, 8 double basses.

76a. This is *the* climactic moment of the first movement. **Super-block 4 is a monumental episode in the symphony, and the most massive sounding moment in the first movement.**

76b. **Super-block 4** is one last amazing gasp of breath, one last gathering of force for a **massive outburst** of the terribly needful appeal of “Lord have mercy”. After super-block 3’s mood of dejection and decayed majesty, super-block 4 is the response: a dominant, indomitable, irrepressible “call to arms”. **In the face of the bleakness, the human spirit rouses itself to its strongest cry yet.** The whole history of humanity is implicated in this massive cry.

76c. Each of the three parts of **super-block 4** is a remarkable “shout”, “reach”, or “yearning”. We will not give up, we will try, try again. Super-block 4 is a recapitulation of the original ardor, the original drive of super-block 1, but intensified to an astonishing degree. We will not be silenced (until we can speak no longer).

77. Super-blocks 1, 2, and 3 were each composed of three blocks, comprising nine mini-blocks in total. **Super-block 4, however, comprises three parts only**, so that each of its parts may be called a mini-block *or* block; and super-block 4, taken as a whole, may be described as one single block. Why don’t we just say that **super-block 4 is one massive block of three massive mini-blocks.**

78a. In the Polyansky recording, super-block 4 is forty-eight seconds in duration. Block 3.3 was forty-two seconds in duration and filled a little less than two complete sheets of Schnittke’s handwritten manuscript. But super-block 4 (which is, to repeat, one block) is so massive (i.e., so many instruments are playing at once) that it fills up six complete sheets of manuscript paper.

78b. To show illustrations of the entire super-block 4 would take up too much space, so extracts will have to suffice to suggest the overall effect of the whole.

79. Super-block 4 is composed of three mini-blocks exclusively. **In each of the mini-blocks, seventy-six instruments are simultaneously playing seventy-six variations of the “Lord have mercy” theme.** Eighty-six instruments are playing in total during each block, as accents are given by 3 cymbals, 3 gongs, 3 tam-tams, and campane. **The orchestral sound is colossal.** Super-block 4 is the first time that all eight double basses are used in Division 2, and it is the first time that the tuba is used in the movement.

80a. When we look back to the first mini-block in each block of super-blocks 1, 2, and 3, we see that the notation can be translated into a narrow triangle, and each of the third mini-blocks can be translated into large triangles. But each mini-block of super-block 4 is so massive that even in the first mini-block of super-block 4 the strings are laid out just as they would look in a second or third block of the other super-blocks. Here, for example, are the **twenty-four violins of mini-block 4.1**, as seen in Schnittke's manuscript and translated into a diagram:

The image shows a musical score for 24 violins, divided into two groups of 12. The score is written on 24 staves, with the first 12 staves for '12 violins 1' and the next 12 for '12 violins 2'. To the right of the score is a diagram consisting of two large triangles pointing towards each other, forming a double-triangle shape. The top triangle is red and labeled 'the long reach'. The bottom triangle is also red and labeled 'the long reach'. The space between the two triangles is yellow and contains the text '12 violins 1' for the top half and '12 violins 2' for the bottom half.

80b. The only other time we have seen this double-triangle geometrical shape in the strings section was in the climactic mini-block 3 of block 2.3 (see 56a). **But the scale of super-block 4 is so massive that what was climactic in block 2.3 is but the first mini-block of super-block 4.**

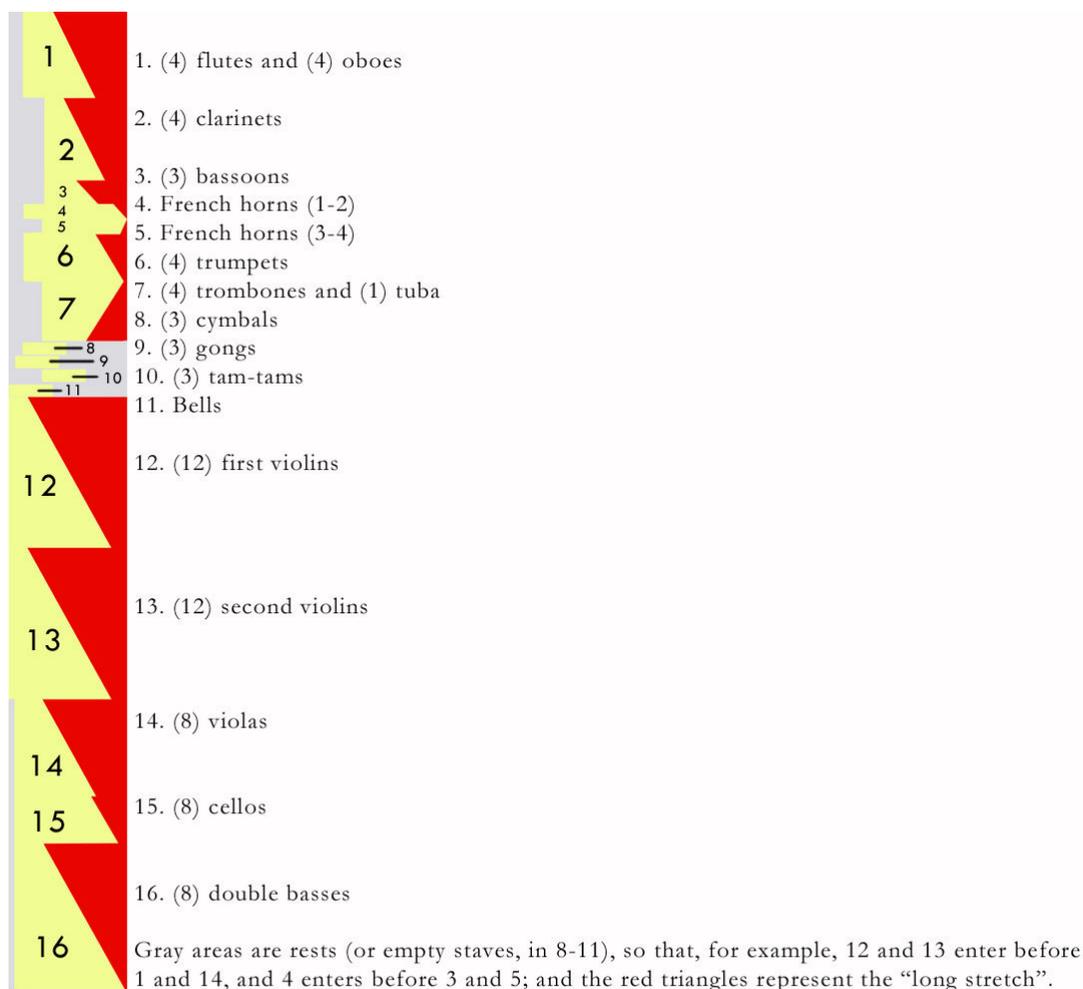
80c. Regardless of its massive scale, at the most basic level the first mini-block of super-block 4 is exactly like the first mini-blocks of super-blocks 1, 2, and 3: each of the seventy-six variations of the “Lord have mercy” theme ends on the same note with which it began, which recalls the original “Kyrie” vocal theme that began the movement. The sound of 4.1 is immense but it is a sort of a “stasis” sound.

80d. The **first mini-block of super-block 4**, and all of super-block 4, is tense and heated, and thus is related more closely to super-block 2 than to super-blocks 1 and 3. In both 4.1 and 2.1, the strings sound febrile and alarming right at the start.

80e. The immense sound of the first mini-block of 4.1 is a “gathering of force” that is the initial stage in the decisive and crucial final long reach of the movement.

81. The instrumentation with its seventy-six variations creates a multifaceted soundscape which is akin to an ambience, a murmurous “cloud” of sound in which certain facets – instruments – stand out, such as the trumpets. Each individual instrument in a group of like instruments playing slightly different variations creates in some instances a subtle “pulsing” quality to the melodic lines of each grouping. The soundscape can be likened to a detailed landscape in which the viewer sees now one detail, and now another detail, as perspective shifts from one angle to another.

82a. **Mini-block 4.2 of super-block 4.** The middle part of super-block 4 is not like the middle part of the other super-blocks because, in comparison with these others, much more happens in the immense 4.2. Here is a diagram that illustrates the massive array of simultaneous variations in 4.2:



82b. Just as 4.1 was a “gathering of force”, the immense sound of 4.2 is the “rallying cry” that is preparing for 4.3, the final mega-effort of the orchestra in the first movement.

82c. The prevailing direction of blocks 2.2 and 3.2 was descent, being “dragged down”. While half of the instruments in **mini-block 4.2** are following a downward trajectory, the prevailing motion in 4.2 is **ascent**, because the most prominent instruments are leading the way upward: the four trumpets, French horns 1-2, and all twelve of the first violins. (See 84a and 84b.)

82d. The sound of the gongs signal **a great push upward**. Even though the prevailing direction of 4.2 is ascent, there is a certain **straining** to the rising of the orchestral sound. Some of the brass instruments sound as if they are rising “against the tide”; every note of the prominent brass instruments is counterbalanced with a lower brass note. This is not the somewhat “effortless” rise of the long reaches in super-blocks 1 and 2. There is a sense of a great weight, of an attempt of an ascent struggling against a massive gravity.

83. **Mini-blocks 4.2 and 4.3 are so massive that each has a multi-part structure of its own.** As is readily apparent by the diagram in 82a, different sections of the orchestra enter at different times in mini-block 4.2. **Mini-blocks 4.2 and 4.3 have an identical four-fold structure.** In **part 1**, the bells and the violins play. Entering one beat after the start of the block, in **part 2** the gongs enter with the rest of the strings: the violas, cellos, and double basses. Entering two beats in, in **part 3** the crash of the cymbals accompany the flutes, oboes, French horns 1-2, and the four trumpets. Finally, entering three beats in, in **part 4** the tam-tams join in with the clarinets, bassoons, French horns 3-4, trombones, and the tuba. Each instrumental grouping entering at different times can be likened to booster rockets kicking in, a propulsive blast hastening the orchestra onward. The numerology is interesting: there are four super-blocks in the first movement, and then four parts each to mini-blocks 4.2 and 4.3 of super-block 4.

84a. The **rising and falling motif in 4.2**. Similar to block 3.3, there is a **symmetry** to the differences of ascent and descent of the “Lord have mercy” variations in 4.2. **In 4.2, thirty-eight instruments end higher than where they began and thirty-eight instruments end lower than where they began.**

84b. Here is a more specific tally of the rising and falling motif in 4.2. **Thirty-eight instruments end a minor 3rd higher** than their base notes, and **thirty-eight instruments end a minor 3rd lower** than their base notes. Higher: the flutes, clarinets, French horn 1-2, trumpets, violins I, cello 4-8, double basses. Lower: the oboes, the bassoons, French horns 3-4, trombones, tuba, violins II, violas, cellos.

85a. **Mini-block 4.2** is a comprehensive accounting of the whole range of instruments. In thirteen seconds (in the Polyansky recording) the conglomeration of instruments fills in every note between the C that is two octaves below middle C all the way up to the F that is two octaves above middle C. **It is as if Schnittke is revealing the entire “world of sound” itself, unadorned, “nebulous” and “miasmatic”.** The conglomeration sounds “unstructured” to the ear, but in fact the score follows strict structural principles, as this commentary has demonstrated.

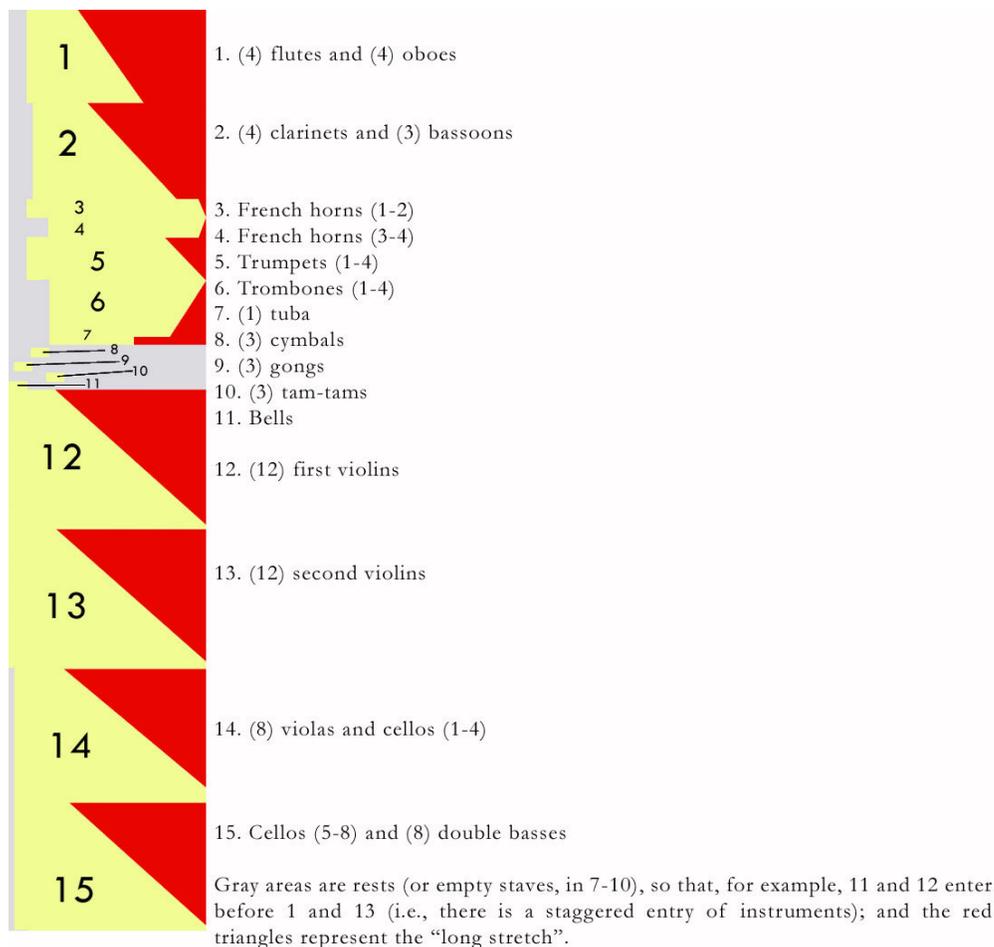
85b. The orchestral sound of 4.2 is more multifaceted than the previous blocks. In the long reaches that concluded super-blocks 1 and 3, for example, the orchestral sound for the most part narrowed to or streamlined around the “reaching” motif. Here in 4.2,

however, the sound is more expansive and “dispersed” as it were; instead of drawing a “laser-like” “reach”, the orchestra fills in a complex “ambience” that can be likened to every nerve ending in a body suddenly firing at high intensity. The long reach is no longer a “laser-like” sound; in super-block 4 it has become a murmurous, multidimensional “atmospheric” phenomenon.

86. The variations of “Lord have mercy” in mini-block 4.2 are more than a shout but less than an hysterical outburst. Mini-block 4.2 is an emphatic, resounding, controlled, heart-splitting cry for “*a meaning to . . .*” Mini-block 4.2 is a monumental effort to “*break through to . . .* (salvation, meaning, deliverance)” once and for all.

87. And now we have reached the **main climax of the movement, mini-block 4.3**. This enormous climactic moment is what the entire movement has been moving toward. It is a moment that burns through to a clarity that can augment (spiritually, intellectually) the participant (the listener). It is expiatory, cleansing, a cathartic experience. **This is the last expression of the “Lord have mercy” instrumental theme in the movement, and it is the most massive.**

88a. Here is a diagram of the instrumental layout of **mini-block 4.3**: seventy-six more variations of the “Lord have mercy” theme:



88b. Mini-block 4.3 follows the same four-fold structure as 4.2. The groups of instruments that enter after one-, two-, and three-beat rests contribute to a “propulsive” uplift of the orchestral sound.

88c. Eighty-six instruments feature in mini-block 4.3. Seventy-six instruments are playing variations of the “Lord have mercy” theme, while accents come from three cymbals, three gongs, three tam-tams, and bells. The instrumentation fills in a comprehensive sonic space. In mini-block 4.3, the instruments sound every note from the second G above middle C all the way down to the second B-flat below middle C. **Mini-block 4.3 covers a thirty-four note chromatic scale.**

89a. The fundamental structural principle of 4.3 remains the same as the other blocks: the same theme, with slight variations in time values and pitches, is distributed throughout the instrumentation. The amalgamation of the simultaneous rises and falls generates one mammoth effect. The effect is massive.

89b. How to characterize the thematic effect of mini-block 4.3? **Something huge is growing in an upward direction even as it sinks downward.** This is a fundamental phenomenological snapshot of humanity: a mix of the earthly and the divine: a “*reaching for . . .*” and a falling back simultaneously; both the weightlessness of imagination and the weight of gravity.

89c. This is *the* fundamental thematic concept of the first movement of Schnittke’s Symphony No. 2: **Reaching up, as we fall.**

90a. The final **long reach** of the movement, which can be said to begin with the crash of the tam-tams, lasts twenty-one seconds in the Polyansky recording. As in 4.2, the long reach of 4.3 is not a streamlined “laser-like” or “intake of breath” sound (as in blocks 1.3 or 2.3) but an “ambience”, an “open area” of sounds.

90b. In the **long reach of 4.3**, the upward ascent of the brass is not the effortless “sliding” or “gliding” as in the long reaches of blocks 1.3 or 2.3; here, the brass has to ascend by “steps”, as if scaling a staircase. The ascent is somewhat of a strain, a struggle, not at any rate an effortless ascent.

90c. The climactic long reach of the first movement is a thematic mix of earth/sky; body/spirit; truth/hope. It is a forceful mega-cry for transcendence. While exhilarating and awe-inspiring, it is a somewhat melancholy experience because the downward pull that acts simultaneously along with the rising action wins out in the end.

90d. The long reach of mini-block 4.3, its rising and falling action, can be likened to the phenomenon of a flower unfolding, its pedals opening, and then slowly folding in again.

91a. Mini-block 4.3 is the symphony’s ultimate expression of the **rising and falling motif**. The simultaneity of the ascent and the descent pulls the listener into different directions at the same time. Put in a blunt way, it is a “multi-” experience.

91b. **Personal note.** Prior to the climactic super-block 4, I had become attuned to the “laser-like” long reaches of 1.3 and 2.3. But this last “atmospheric” long reach, a surprising augmentation of the motif, has a power to “act on me” in a way that is different from the two earlier long reaches. The “atmospheric” “openness” of the final

long reach, because it is so different in its sonic quality from the “laser-like” long reaches of 1.3 and 2.3, has a power to “do something” special to me: I am “opened up”, the atmospheric long reach expands my “boundaries” (the way a retractor keeps an incision open for a surgeon during a medical operation). This “opening up” of my mind space is part of the cathartic process of super-block 4. It is also indicative of Schnittke’s profound genius and visionary character.

91c. The **rising and falling motif of 4.3**. What follows is the breakdown of the last set of variations of the instrumental “Kyrie” theme. The “lower” or “higher” relates, as before, to the comparison between a variation’s last note with its first note. Thirty-eight instruments end a **perfect 4th higher**, and thirty-eight instruments end a **perfect 4th lower**. Higher: flutes, clarinets, French horns 1-2, trumpets, violin I, cellos, double basses. Lower: oboes, bassoons, French horns 3-4, trombones, tuba, violin II, violas, cellos.

91d. Just as in 4.2, **in 4.3, thirty-eight instruments end higher than where they began and thirty-eight instruments end lower than where they began**. The symmetry to the distribution of the rising and falling instrumentation demonstrates Schnittke’s rigorous composition methods and his dedication to the most minute details of his art. **There is no way that the human ear can distinguish the subtlety of this symmetry.**

92. The entire movement has been heading toward this climactic moment of 4.3. The strict structural symmetry to the movement suggested a “ceremonial” or “ritualistic” aspect to the movement. In mini-block 4.3, the moment has come for the mind/spirit to attempt its final “*reach for . . .*”, its final “*breaking through to . . .*” It is the moment for the final exertion towards a “revelation”.

93. Just as in blocks 1.3, 2.3, and 3.3, the variations played at the lower pitches in 4.3 (such as, for example, the clarinets and the double basses) take longer to reach their “long reach” note, so that a general sense of “deepening” or “lowering” or “descent” fills in the soundscape as the block progresses, even though the clarinets and the double basses in fact end at higher notes than where they began. This sense of “descent” is due to the increased augmentation of the rhythm of the phrases in the successive voices.

94a. The long reaches at the end of 1.3 and 2.3 are “stirring” and somewhat “optimistic” or “hopeful”. **But the climactic long reach that concludes 4.3 ends with a somewhat lugubrious chord**, dominated by the bassoons and the brass instruments (French horns, trumpets, trombones, and tuba). Here are the last bars of these instruments in super-block 4:

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the final bars of super-block 4. The score is arranged in a system of staves, with each instrument part labeled on the left. The instruments and their parts are:

- 2 Fag. (2 Bassoons): Two staves, each with a first and second ending.
- C. fag. (Contrabassoon): One staff with a first and second ending.
- 4 (r. F) (4 French Horns in F): Four staves, each with a first and second ending.
- 4 Tr. (B) (4 Trumpets in B): Four staves, each with a first and second ending.
- 4 Tr. (M) (4 Trumpets in C): Four staves, each with a first and second ending.
- Tuba: One staff with a first and second ending.

The notation includes various musical symbols such as clefs, time signatures, notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The score is presented in a compact, vertical format, with the instrument names and part numbers listed on the left side of the staves.

(Edited and reformatted to fit on page)

94b. Neither a steady rise nor a steady fall – but **rising and falling simultaneously**: this is the fundamental nature of the first movement. Falling, descent, “brought down to earth” . . . and T.S. Eliot’s “I will show you fear in a handful of dust.”

95a. And now, after the amazing exertion of super-block 4, the first movement comes to an end with the fifth and final treatment of the time corridor. **The fifth time corridor is played by almost the entire orchestra – 71 instruments contribute to the final time corridor. All of the instruments have “flatlined”.** This last time corridor is repeated three times to close out the movement:

The image shows a page of a musical score, likely for an orchestra. The score is written on multiple staves, each labeled with an instrument or section. The instruments listed on the left side of the page are:

- 4 Fl.
- 3 Ob.
- C. ing.
- 3 Cl. (B)
- Cl. bass (B)
- 3 Fag.
- C. fag.
- 4 Cor. (F)
- 4 Tr. (B)
- 4 Tr. (A)
- 3 Piccini
- 3 Gongi
- 3 Tom-tam
- Campane
- Cel.
- Cel. II
- Piano
- Str. I
- Str. II
- 7 Viol. I ind.
- 7 Viol. II ind.
- 7 Viola ind.
- 7 Violoncelli ind.

The score is written in a standard musical notation style, with notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The dynamic markings include *pp* (pianissimo) and *pp (sul.)* (pianissimo sul tasto). The score is dense with musical notation, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The page is numbered 55 in the top right corner.

95b. This time corridor is played quieter than the four previous time corridors. The dynamic level for all of the instruments here is “*pp*”.

95c. This last time corridor sounds akin to the steely gaze of a bystander after eyewitnessing or experiencing a disaster. This is a rest period for the worn out. This is the time for the participant (listener) to assimilate what has just been experienced. But it is not an entirely calm coda. The fifth time corridor sounds slightly ominous, *mysterioso*. Accents come from cymbals, gongs, and bells. The orchestra is “stunned”, worn down, uneasy.

95d. The **time corridor 5** reaffirms the “indifference of the cosmos”, and yet, now, all of the instruments are playing along with the standard time corridor instruments (gongs, celesta, harpsichord, piano, and harps). There is something significant in the whole orchestra joining to perform a time corridor. The instruments that previously embodied the “human” sections of the movement (the “Lord have mercy” theme) are now performing the “inhuman” time corridor theme. This suggests a sort of “understanding” between the human and the cosmic. If the human has not “made its peace” with the cosmos following the catharsis of super-block 4, then at least there is a sort of truce: the fifth time corridor, even if it sounds slightly eerie, isn’t as “hostile” as, for example, the first time corridor.

95e. Here, the standard time corridor instruments sound very quiet, engulfed by the other instrumentation, especially the brass instruments. But as this last time corridor is played for the second and then the third time, instruments begin to fall silent. Schnittke has written directions for the conductor at the bottom of the page. In the second instance of the time corridor, the brass instruments and the flutes are silent. In the third and last instance, all of the woodwinds and the brass instruments are silent, and the time corridor thereby resembles a little bit more the sonic character of the four previous time corridors.

96. The harpsichord and the piano have slightly more prominence in the last reprise of **time corridor 5**. But this is not the emphatic “thudding” sound of the other four time corridors. Here, the harpsichord and the piano are less emphatic; they sound quieter, slower, and “wearier”. Moreover, whereas in the four previous time corridors the harpsichord and piano comprised the most prominent aspect of the time corridor, here the “flatlined” repeated notes of the harpsichord and piano are “surrounded” by other sounds such as the gongs and the cymbals. Just as the long reach in super-block 4 sounded more “opened up” than the long reaches of 1.3 and 2.3, so this final time corridor sounds more “opened up”, more “atmospheric”, more “multifaceted” than the previous time corridors.

97. The fifth time corridor is a new rendering of the time corridor sound. The first four time corridors were akin to a “brick wall”, a blunt response to a heartfelt appeal. **Time corridor 5** is more akin to a three dimensional space: the fifth time corridor is a multidimensional “universal” sound. In a way, the movement has “broken through” to a new “space”.

98. The participant (listener) has now experienced the first movement of Schnittke’s Symphony No. 2. It has been an experience commensurate with a ceremony or ritual. The first movement has “attuned” the listener to assimilate the five movements to come, each of which is built of its own particular structure, and all are as remarkable as the first.

99. If the participant (listener) has been perfectly “integrated” with the first movement, then Schnittke’s music, which can be likened to an “engine” or “initiator agent” or “process” (or perhaps “shamanistic” or “mystic” force), may have transported the listener into a mind space that is exalted, cathartic, revelatory, profound. The Symphony No. 2 is not to be “merely listened to”; it can be an *experience* in the fullest sense of the word. Religious or spiritual ceremonies are known to trigger visions and revelations in its participants. Experiencing a great work of art is akin to participating in a religious or spiritual ceremony. **The first movement of Schnittke’s Symphony No. 2 has an incantatory power to transport the participant into a mind space conducive to the “revelation of . . .”**

100. The first movement begins with the human voice and ends with the sound of “cosmic indifference”. With the last eerie sounds of the fifth and final time corridor dying away comes **the end of the first movement of Schnittke’s Symphony No. 2.**

CONCLUDING REMARKS

a. **Numerology.** The first movement of Schnittke's Symphony No. 2 is designed on strict structural principles. Three significant numbers of this structure are 3, 4, and 5. **Three:** 3 mini-blocks; 3 blocks; the three-fold time corridor structure; and the three repetitions of the final time corridor. **Four:** 4 super-blocks; 4 parts each to 4.2 and 4.3. **Five:** 5 time corridors; and the alternative five-part time corridor structure. As it happens, the grouping of numbers 3, 4, and 5 relates to one of the most basic concepts of geometry. **The 3-4-5 right triangle has sides whose lengths are in the ratio of 3 to 4 to 5.** However, the correspondence between the symmetrical structure of the first movement and the sides of a right triangle may be pure coincidence. At any rate Schnittke the artist was unquestionably concerned with "deep structures". For example, Alexander Ivashkin in his great biography of Schnittke notes Schnittke's interest in both the cabbala and the I Ching.³ Schnittke was anything but a "crackpot", however, and was no practitioner of these occult arts. Rather, like many geniuses of any art or science, Schnittke had a healthy curiosity for different systems of thought. The shape of a triangle *can* be used as a visual metaphor to characterize the prevailing conceptual theme of the first movement: the striving upward of a basal entity towards an apex. But I'll leave it to someone else to justify or disavow the presence of the right triangle in the first movement of the Symphony No. 2.

b. **The number three.** The most prominent of the "three fundamental numbers" of the first movement is the number three (chiefly as a result of the mini-block and block structure). It seems that most every mythology, religion, culture, and spiritual and ethical system have been fascinated with number symbolism. Instances of the "spiritual" and "philosophical" significance of specific numbers are so widespread and multiform that it would be ludicrous to assign one or even more than one "explanation" or "meaning" to the use of the number three in the first movement. Of course, the number three can be related to the Holy Trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And repeating the same praise three times is the most emphatic form of praise in the Bible; for example, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isa. 6:3) Whole studies have been written on the importance of the number three in the Bible. But, for example, Pythagoras had his own reasons for admiring the number three, as did the ancient Egyptians, and so on and so forth. The number three has spiritual significance for a variety of reasons in Judaism. Many different and far-flung cultures throughout world history have created a visual symbol of a triad. Although the Symphony No. 2 has incorporated the concert mass into its structure, it would be rash to say that the use of the number three has been inspired first and foremost by the Holy Trinity. That is one judgement call I would much rather leave to others. We don't have to assign a "meaning" to the use of the number three in the first movement. The rhythm of the number three (the simple "one – two – three" of it) can exist as an "aura" or "penumbra" around a meaning that is not to be uncovered or disclosed. The number three in the first moment can exist as pure rhythm always prior to being identified by the "*it means this . . .*"

³ Alexander Ivashkin, *Alfred Schnittke* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1996), p. 158-160.

c. **The other five movements.** Each of the six movements of the Symphony No. 2 has its own particular structure. No other movement in the symphony resembles the first movement, though the “long reach” motif is quoted in the sixth movement. None of the other movements are as rigidly “visually geometrically symmetrical” as the strict format of the first movement.

d. **A monument of twentieth century music.** Schnittke’s Symphony No. 2 is as monumental a work as Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, and deserves to be performed at significant historical moments, just as Beethoven’s Ninth, conducted by Leonard Bernstein, was performed in Berlin in response to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

e. **Alfred Schnittke’s Symphony No. 2** is as relevant and “contemporary-sounding” today as it was when it had its first performance in 1980. It is a colossal, vital work of art, an authentic expression of the essence of a fraught and troubled time.

Author's Afterword

An exceptional thank you is due to Catherine Burchell, whose close reading of an early draft corrected many errors and translated my untutored, searching phrases into musical terminology. Nick Swinglehurst also read an early draft and contributed vital suggestions. Of course, all errors that remain are wholly my own. Special thanks to Alexander Ivashkin, whose kind encouragement of the idea of this commentary impelled me to follow through with it to the end.

Sheffield, England

23 September 2007