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# A Study and Performance Guide to Dennis Kam's Sonata Ibis for Clarinet, Violin, Cello and Piano and a Performance Comparison to Four Earlier Versions of the Work

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

A STUDY AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO DENNIS KAM'S *SONATA IBIS* FOR  
CLARINET, VIOLIN, CELLO AND PIANO AND A PERFORMANCE  
COMPARISON TO FOUR EARLIER VERSIONS OF THE WORK

By

Biljana Milovanovic

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty  
of the University of Miami  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2008



UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

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A Study and Performance Guide to (May 2008)  
Dennis Kam's *Sonata Ibis* for Clarinet, Violin,  
Cello and Piano and a Performance Comparison  
to Four Earlier Versions of the Work

Abstract of a doctoral essay at the University of Miami.

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Number of pages in text. (108)

In 2005, Dennis Kam completed the *Sonata Ibis* which the ensemble Ibis Camerata premiered at the Festival Miami at the University of Miami that same year. The composition is the last of five versions of the same work, originally written for piano solo. The work was recorded by the Ibis Camerata, on their CD titled *Glisten*, and released in 2006 on the Albany Records music label. The composition presents an important addition to the existing repertoire for the ensemble of clarinet, violin, cello, and piano.

*Sonata Ibis* is a single movement work not following traditional forms. The work reflects the composer's conscious aim of making works with different versions. One of the issues that this study takes up is the evolution of the *Sonata Ibis* through all five versions. Analysis of musical materials and techniques used in the *Sonata* are also a part of the study.

One chapter of this paper deals with Dennis Kam's biography. One chapter discusses the formal structure and musical idiom of the work. Performance-related issues from the ensemble and a pianist perspective are discussed in the remaining two chapters.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION: THE FIVE VERSIONS OF *SONATA IBIS*

Dennis Kam completed the *Sonata Ibis* for clarinet, violin, cello and piano in the fall of 2005. The occasion was the upcoming performance of the piece at the annual Festival Miami by the chamber ensemble Ibis Camerata. Kam had already collaborated with the ensemble on the several occasions, having composed the piano trio version of this piece for them, as well as having entrusted the group with the performance of several of his other works.

Originally written as a solo piano sonata for pianist Amy Tarantino in 2002, the work became a quintet for piano and string quartet in 2003. In 2004, Kam rewrote the piece for clarinetist Dmitry Ashkenazy as a clarinet-piano sonata. That same year he rearranged the work as a trio, at the request of the Ibis Camerata, to accommodate an additional instrument, the cello. The fifth and latest version of the piece is a result of the composer's longstanding collaboration with the ensemble. This version, and the evolution of the *Sonata* in its five forms, clearly demonstrates the composer's compositional views and techniques.

Dennis Kam has developed a simple and yet unique method of rewriting the existing works. Rather than changing the instrumental parts, he writes an additional instrumental line for the existing score. The piece evolves like an organism taking on new character and development of dramatic range, while retaining its essential structure. This is an original approach in the use of self-borrowed material, which Kam comments upon in the liner notes of the Ibis Camerata's CD *Glisten*:

While instrumentation is a clear and obvious difference between versions in the large sonata structure - the character, temporal flow, and energy of each version also changes significantly with the addition or subtraction of instruments, giving each version a different character. Where the version for solo piano is the leanest and temporally spacious, *Sonata Ibis* is probably the most dramatic and complex because of the number of interacting instruments.<sup>1</sup>

### Outline

The author's purpose in writing this paper is to offer a performance guide for the five versions of the *Sonata* with an emphasis on the quartet version, *Sonata Ibis*, as well as to raise awareness of this unique multi-version work with chamber musicians and music lovers.

The *Sonata Ibis* offers numerous challenges and rewards to performers. Whether playing one or several versions, performers will experience the constantly changing role of their instrument resulting from the evolving character of each part. This is especially applicable to the pianist, who is the constant in all versions of the piece. A dominant line in one version becomes an accompaniment in another as the voicing, timbre, and balance among the instruments and each instrument's role constantly changes.

The emphasis of this study is on the ensemble issues in the multi-instrumental versions of the work. The study includes a technical and performance analysis, and suggestions for rehearsal. Since the piano is featured in all five versions of the *Sonata*, the study also focuses on the continually changing role of the piano and the complexity of balance with the other instruments in the ensemble.

The esthetic problems of this work are opposite to those of the other transcriptions in chamber music literature. While other transcriptions may change the actual notes of the

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<sup>1</sup> Dennis Kam, liner notes to *Ibis Camerata*, *Glisten*, Albany Records TROY886, 2006, CD, 9.

original score, the overall musical idea remains. The melodic material may be featured in a different instrument, but remains recognizable.<sup>2</sup>

In the five versions of the *Sonata*, the entire piano part remains unchanged, but sounds different in each version because of the addition and redistribution of the newly introduced instrumental parts. This effect may be confusing for a performer, particularly if one has already played one of the other versions of the piece. One may compare this experience to an actor participating in different productions of the same play. A different character will arise from the actor's interactions with the other players, as well as from his or her ability to communicate the different emotions that the new setting requires, effectively endowing the character with new meaning.

Chapter Two features Dennis Kam's biography. The author worked closely with the composer in establishing and verifying the biographical information.

Chapter Three of this paper provides a commentary regarding the form and musical idiom of the *Sonata*. The author also uses Peter Fraser MacDonald's commentary for the musical language of the "Dream-like" section of the *Sonata*. The author also uses the composer's own notes on his use of the Fibonacci series. Kam's statement from 1988 at the Honolulu Academy of Arts is also used in this chapter. The statement reveals in detail the composer's thoughts regarding neo-tonality, rhythmic regularity and other aspects of his compositional style.

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<sup>2</sup> In a letter to the author dated February 3, 2008, Kam's colleague Lansing McLoskey offered the following comments, "Although Kam has explored a wide range of styles, techniques, and compositional "movements" over the years, from serialism, graphic scores, and Cage-ian "concept art" to avant-garde modernism and quasi-minimalism, his works from the past two and a half decades have a unified and distinctly original voice. Kam's music is the soundtrack of a parlor where Steve Reich and Keith Jarrett sit together, sipping tea and engaged in the thoughtful, affectionate conversations of good friends with the ghosts of Benjamin Britten and Bill Evans...now and again Schoenberg's specter will take a seat, joining the conversation."

Chapter Four address the sound balance and intonation issues of the multi-instrumental adaptations of the work, with an emphasis on the quartet version. The performers who premiered the work provide performance-related comments regarding the ensemble and the specific technical issues of their respective instrumental parts. Clarinetist Christopher Graham, violinist Domagoj Ivanovic, and cellist Marie-Elaine Gagnon offer their insightful comments and helpful suggestions for the performance of this work.

Chapter Five addresses the role of the pianist in all five versions of the work. The author herself offers commentary regarding the technical and performance issues of this multi-version work. The author uses here her own experience acquired through many performances of the *Sonata* to describe the challenges this work presents.

Kam's compositional profile and complete list of works is provided in Appendices A and B. Lansing McLoskey's commentary regarding Kam's compositional style as well as a review by Greg Stepanich of the *Sonata*'s performance at Festival Miami are also included in Appendix A.

The author hopes that this thesis will bring wider attention to the works of Dennis Kam from both performers and audiences. His works have already been performed and recorded by professional groups and performers such as the Bergonzi String Quartet, and clarinetists Dmitry Ashkenazy and Margaret Donaghue, to name a few. He has received numerous awards and grants and is an active member of the College Music Society and the Society of Composers. He has been a member of both the Executive and National Councils for Society of Composers, Inc. He also serves as President and National Board Member of the Southern Chapter for the College Music Society. Kam also serves as the

Chair of the Music Theory and Composition Department at the University of Miami, and has advised and taught numerous young composers, most recently Gonzalo Gonzales, Rio Sato, Steve Danyew, as well as Raina Murnak and Sofia Kraevska, whose pieces are featured on the Ibis Camerata's CD *Glisten*.

The author offers acknowledgement to those who have made the writing of this paper possible. First and foremost, the author thanks Dennis Kam, who was very involved in this study and dedicated many hours to working sessions and consultations. Special thanks go to musicians Christopher Graham, Domagoj Ivanovic, and Marie-Elaine Gagnon for their valuable advice with respect to technical and performance issues. The author also thanks composers Peter Fraser McDonald and Lansing McLoskey for their insightful comments. Credit for advice on both performance issues and writing style goes to Dr. Paul Posnak, who was the author's advisor. The author also wishes to acknowledge the members of the committee, professors Paul Wilson, J. B. Floyd, and Rosalina Sackstein, each of whom has provided important comments on early versions of this paper. Last but not least, special thanks goes to the author's husband, Milos Marinkovic, for his continuous support and involvement in the writing of this study of the *Sonata Ibis*.



## CHAPTER TWO

### A BIOGRAPHY OF DENNIS KAM

Dennis Kam was born in Honolulu, Hawaii on May 8, 1942. He spent his early childhood there with his parents Lawrence and Phyllis Kam. Mrs. Kam was a teacher and librarian in an elementary school. Mr. Kam worked as an electrician at Pearl Harbor, and later as a postal worker at the Honolulu Post Office. The family moved to Waipahu, a rural sugar plantation town outside and west of Honolulu when Dennis was in the third grade. His mother was especially supportive of her son's musical development, encouraging him to study piano in the sixth grade with Helen Miller. Also a teacher in the school where Mrs. Kam taught, Miller was an interesting figure among local piano teachers. She had an avid interest in contemporary music and introduced her students to the music of Bartók and other twentieth-century composers. Dennis Kam grew up playing pieces from Bartók's *For Children* and *Mikrokosmos* while other children studied the traditional piano repertoire with works by Clementi and Czerny. Thus, Miller was Kam's first true musical influence. Always exploring new interests, Miller went to France in the 1960's and later earned a degree in French from the University of Hawaii, where she eventually taught.

In 1957, Kam's family moved back to Honolulu, at which time Miller suggested that Dennis study with her former piano teacher, Marian Kerr. Kam was a sophomore in high school at that time. Marian Kerr also proved to be a major influence in Kam's musical education. Already a celebrated pianist and teacher at the time, she was a founding member and Director of the Festival of the Arts in Honolulu. Born in 1907, and educated in Oberlin College, Kerr settled in Hawaii in 1945. Before her relocation, she

taught at Pennsylvania State University and Northwest Missouri State College. In Honolulu, she became the Head and subsequently the Director of the Piano Department at the Punahou School. She also served on the faculty of the University of Hawaii's Music Department. As a Director of the Festival, she created a major showcase for twentieth-century composers of the United States and Asia. Since its inception, the Festival has presented over 473 works by 234 contemporary composers of 20 nationalities, including 100 premieres.

Kerr was a determined teacher who believed in a well-rounded musical education. She arranged for Kam to begin lessons with the composer and theorist Homer Keller. He was an active teacher in Honolulu, and Kam enjoyed working with him until Keller's departure to the University of Oregon. As a young composer, Kam was interested in the music of Shostakovich, Prokofiev, and Bartók. His first piece was a fifteen-minute long composition titled *Rhapsody*, a solo-piano work inspired by early twentieth-century composers. Kerr's interest in contemporary music provided a fertile influence on Kam. While running the Festival of the Arts in Honolulu, Kerr had access to a budget of \$250,000, which during the 1950's was a significant sum of money and allowed her to attract world-renowned composers and performers. She was the first presenter to introduce the Japanese composer Toru Takemitsu to an American audience. She also brought leading musicians such as John Cage and the Juilliard Ensemble to the Festival. Kerr encouraged Kam's compositional training. She provided her students with advice regarding potential musical careers, and helped them choose colleges where they could continue their studies. When Keller decided to take a teaching position at the University of Oregon, Kerr, herself an Oberlin graduate, suggested that Kam should continue his

education at Oberlin College. Kam enrolled in Oberlin in 1960 as a composition major. Although he continued to play and study piano, Kam made composition his primary focus.

### Kam's College Years in Oberlin

Kam first became more familiar with twentieth-century music while studying at Oberlin. His teacher at Oberlin was Joseph Wood, who also taught David Maslanka, Stephen Chatman, Leslie Adams, Greg Steinke and Laura Kaminsky, to name only a few.

While in Oberlin, Kam also took courses with Richard Hoffman, a former student of Schoenberg. During his college junior year, Kam had the opportunity to study in Salzburg with Cesar Bresgen, another famous composer of the time.

In 1963, Kam won the prestigious Broadcast Music Inc. Award for his composition *Sections* for chamber orchestra (1963), his third serial piece. The award carried a great deal of prestige, and Kam quickly became recognized among peers and professors. He won the Broadcast Music Inc. Award for the second time as a Doctoral student at the University of Illinois in 1967 with his *String Quartet No. 1* (1966) and *Interplay* for two ensembles and chamber orchestra (1966), which was his thesis topic for his Master's degree from the University of Hawaii.

### Masters Degree Studies at the East-West Center in Hawaii

Upon graduating from Oberlin, Kam decided to return to Hawaii. Initially, he planned to enroll in the University of California, Berkeley, or the University of Illinois but changed his mind after learning about the student exchange program at East-West Center at the University of Hawaii. The program offered a unique opportunity for American students to spend a semester at an Asian university. In return, students from

Asia were invited to study at an American university on the mainland. Kam enrolled at East-West Center for his Masters Degree in 1964. He spent a semester in Tokyo at the prestigious Toho Gakuen School. During that time, Japan was the center of contemporary music in Asia. While he was there, Kam decided to study conducting as well as composition, as the school offered an excellent conducting program. Maestro Seiji Ozawa is among the school's distinguished graduates. Kam studied composition with Yoshiro Irino, the first serial composer of Japan. He also had the opportunity to meet Toru Takemitsu, Japan's most celebrated composer at that time. During his years at the East-West Center, Kam also had the opportunity to study with celebrated composers such as Armand Russell, composer at the University of Hawaii and Ernst Krenek, a visiting composer during the summer.

#### Kam's Doctoral Studies and Residency for the Ford Foundation in Hawaii

After completing his Masters Degree in 1966, Kam enrolled in the Doctoral Degree program at the University of Illinois. He received a Fellowship to study with famed composer Salvatore Martirano. During this stage in his life, Kam was not very interested in pursuing his academic studies. He realized that he learned a great deal from his experiences abroad, and decided not to restrict himself by studying only with his primary professor. The University of Illinois was an important center for contemporary music at the time with such famed visiting professors as Lejardin Hiller, Ben Johnston, and Ken Gaburo. Other emerging composers of note from Kam's circle included Gavin Briars and Jim Fulkerson. Salvatore Martirano, whom Kam first met in Oberlin, encouraged

him to develop professional ties with other composers. Kam and Martirano developed a close relationship, and Martirano often advised Kam on career decisions.

When Kam received an invitation to return to Hawaii as a Ford Foundation/MENC Composer-in-Residence for the State of Hawaii, Martirano urged him to accept the position. The position offered a two-year contract, substantial salary as well as the responsibility of organizing musical venues in Hawaii. According to his contract, he was also obliged to compose many works during the two years of residency; he completed twenty-four for various individuals and ensembles. An interesting sequence of events led to Kam's candidacy for this position. Kam's friend and colleague John Van der Slice, alerted him about the Ford Foundation residency. He and Kam met in Hawaii at the University of Hawaii several years earlier. They became close friends and kept in touch when Kam left Hawaii for Illinois. Amongst other things, they shared an interest in Japanese contemporary music. Kam encouraged Van der Slice to pursue a career as a composer. Taking Kam's advice, Van der Slice, an ethnomusicologist at the time, enrolled in the Masters Degree program in composition at the University of Hawaii. Years later, Kam and Van der Slice became colleagues at the University of Miami School of Music. When Kam submitted the necessary material to the committee of the Ford Foundation, he learned that his former teacher Marian Kerr had already put forth his name. The prestigious position also carried some downsides. Due to the impending duties as a composer and presenter, Kam had to delay the completion of his Doctoral studies at the University of Illinois. In Hawaii, Kam had a very active role in the music community. As an organizer of music concerts, he brought to Hawaii and composed for the leading American ensembles of the time, notably the University of Illinois

Contemporary Ensemble and the Juilliard Ensemble, conducted by Dennis Russell Davies.

After completing his tenure for the Ford Foundation, Kam returned to the University of Illinois to finish his degree. Before his tenure in Hawaii for the Ford Foundation, Kam's topic for his Doctoral thesis was "Phenomenology and Music." Upon returning to continue his studies, he discovered that the topic was no longer relevant since a book on the very topic had just been published. This was a serious setback for Kam with only one year left to complete his degree. He also had financial problems since he was no longer receiving funds from the Fellowship. Fortunately, he was able to secure an assistantship at the University and continue his studies. Kam decided to write his dissertation on the music of Terry Riley and Steve Reich.<sup>3</sup>

#### Professorship at the University of Miami

Immediately after completing his doctorate in 1974, Kam was offered a position with the University of Miami's School of Music as the coordinator of music theory. His friend, Lee Kjelson, Choral Director at the institution, suggested him as a possible candidate. Kam had also applied for a position at Yale University at the time. He accepted the offer from the University of Miami. In 1976, Kam married Cynthia Chun, a pianist who also studied with Marian Kerr. They currently reside in Palmetto Bay, Florida, with their daughter Lauren.

As a teacher and mentor, Kam taught several students who later pursued careers as composers. His students have included Charles Mason, Dorothy Hindman, Dan

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<sup>3</sup> "Repetition and the Drift Towards Consonant Focus in the Pattern-Pulse Works of Terry Riley and Steve Reich." (DMA diss., University of Illinois, 1974)

Adams, Fred De Sena, Robert Gower, Peter Fraser MacDonald, Paul Beaudoin, Robin Cox, Joseph Koykkar, Orlando Garcia, Stephen Danyew, Gonzalo Gonzales, Scott Stinson, Raina Murnak, and Sofia Kraevska. Many of his students have won compositional awards and recognitions, and have become successful composers and university professors. During his 35-year tenure at the University of Miami, Dennis Kam has helped many young composers develop and find their own compositional styles. In addition to his teaching duties at the University, Kam is an active member of the South Florida musical community where he leads and conducts the Other Music Ensemble, and serves as the Composer-in-Residence for the South Florida Youth Symphony.

Kam's works have dealt with varied approaches to "psychological time", modes of perception, context, new tonal procedures and continuity. Kam's music has been published by Belwin-Mills, Kalmus, Media Press, and Smith Publications. His music has been recorded on the Albany Records, Capstone Records, and Living Artist Recordings music labels. He has served as the President of the Southern Chapter of the College Music Society and is a National Board Member for Composition. He has also been an active member of the Society of the Composers, Inc., as a member of the Society's Executive and National Councils.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### CRITICAL COMMENTARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE FORM AND MUSICAL IDIOM IN THE *SONATA IBIS*

Dennis Kam's *Sonata* is a one-movement work composed in the post-minimalist style, characteristic of the composer's works from the 1990's. Kam wrote the five versions of this piece in the period between 2002 and 2005, the quartet version being the latest. The analysis of this chapter will focus on the duo, quartet and quintet adaptations of the work.

The author has omitted the piano version of the *Sonata* from the analysis in this chapter because of its simpler texture compared to the multi-instrumental versions. Chapter 5 will address the performance-related issues. The trio version of the *Sonata* is omitted since the cello part remains unchanged in the quartet version such that its role does not alter the results of the analysis.

#### Kam's Approach to the Formal Structure of the *Sonata*

In this work, Kam utilizes the title *Sonata* in its original meaning describing an instrumental work, not as a reference to sonata form. Toward the end of the sixteenth-century, the term "canzone da sonar" became associated with instrumental pieces. In the next century, the word "canzone" disappeared, and the word "sonar", "to sound", became the "sonata."

The form in which Kam has written this work escapes the classical definitions of previous musical epochs. For the most part, the composition develops as a series of variations based on the material from clear *A*, *B* and *C* sections contrasting with each other. Kam uses the *phasing* technique associated with the minimalist style in which the



rhythmic and melodic patterns come in and out of unison with each other. This technique is very effective in the clarinet-piano version of the work and in the other multi-instrumental versions of the work. It is, however, somewhat less noticeable in the piano solo version, as the score primarily provides only two musical lines. Because the work has a unique music form, the author has incorporated in her study Kam's own views on music analysis. In his paper "Distinguishing Music Analysis from Music Theory", the composer offers his thoughts on the subject:

Differences between analysis and theory only become rightfully apparent when a work under investigation does not conform completely to expectations in some generally accepted theoretical system -- or if it seems to operate partially or wholly under a different set of principles. In this situation, true analysis can be difficult, requiring analytical prowess rather than mere theoretical accounting and formalism.<sup>4</sup>

Early minimalists such as Steve Reich and Terry Riley first introduced phasing as a technique in their compositions. Riley's *In C* and Reich's *Piano Phase* are classic examples. *In C* resembles a traditional canon and heterophony in the sense that several melodic-rhythmic lines are heard simultaneously, creating a polyphonic effect at times. However, the traditional rules of a *canon* or *fugue* are not applicable here, as the thematic material is being "broken" into short segments seemingly used at random to create an "interchanging dialogue."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dennis Kam, "Distinguishing Music Analysis from Music Theory" (paper presented at the CMS Conference (Southern Chapter) State University of West Georgia, February 27, 1998)

<sup>5</sup> Kam continues to use some techniques associated with the minimalist style, notably *phasing* as a tool to manipulate fragments of the motivic material in order to create an effect of instruments conversing and interrupting each other. In emails and conversations with the author, the composer uses the expression "interchanging dialogue" to describe the relationship in such moments.

### Experiments with the Fibonacci Series

Many of Kam's compositions reflect his interest in the use of the Fibonacci series.<sup>6</sup> In the *Sonata* he uses the Fibonacci series with respect to the number of measures that make up each section of the piece. He follows this idea through all five versions of the work. In the instance of the quintet adaptation, the string quartet precedes the piano by one measure, therefore making the A section one measure plus 34 measures long.

Example 1. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 1-2

Kam abandons strict use of the Fibonacci series in the section between mm. 176-216 of four versions of the piece and mm. 172-210 in the quintet version. At this stage, the musical score evolves and Kam pursues the idea of fragmenting, or in his own words,

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<sup>6</sup> The Fibonacci numbers is a series of numbers whereby after the initial two values of 0 and 1, each subsequent value in the series is the sum of the two previous numbers (i.e. 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, etc.).

“melting” the previous sections. At this point, he decided that the length needed for this particular segment does not match the Fibonacci proportions.<sup>7</sup>

After this temporary episode, he returns to the use of Fibonacci series in m. 216. Kam also does not maintain the consistency with the Fibonacci series in the *coda*, starting in m. 314, and in the quintet score at m. 310. He feels that the *coda* presents an appendix, and therefore the rules he imposes on the structure of the work are not applicable here.<sup>8</sup>

### Dennis Kam’s Musical Language

As a young composer, Dennis Kam was attracted to serial music and between the 1960’s and 1970’s he was devoted to atonal music. However, during the late 1960’s he became acquainted with and extensively researched the works of Terry Riley and Steve Reich, occasionally experimenting with minimalist concepts. Gradually, during the 1970’s, Kam evolved his musical idiom into a language that incorporated the use of consonance, neo-tonality and rhythmic regularity. In a statement from 1988 at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, Kam states his views on his compositional development through the years:

Twenty years ago, I was composing music that was decidedly atonal, Post-Webernian and experimental. Because I was happy with this music and committed to continual exploration in these directions, I didn’t imagine or anticipate the changes that would gradually (and naturally) occur in my output during the ensuing decades. The works on today’s

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<sup>7</sup> In an email to the author on Dec.15 2007, Dr. Kam reflects on this part as a “melting” of the *A* and *B* sections. The perceptual fragmentation is reinforced by the composer’s abandonment of the use of the Fibonacci numbers, and merging the material in a through-composed segment.

<sup>8</sup> The author noticed the discrepancy in the number of measures represented in the *coda* to those of the Fibonacci series. In an email dated Dec. 7 2007, Kam explains, “I felt that the *coda* is an appendix, a section that reinforces and recapitulates certain musical thoughts of the *Sonata*. Traditionally, a *coda* does not follow the rules that apply to the rest of the work, such as keeping the structural form of musical phrases.”

concert represent some of these changes and some of the directions my composing is currently taking.

Today I think that my music is different in character when compared to what it was like in the 60's. I am still interested in exploration, but the frontiers have changed. Thus, the challenges that seemed frontier-like in the 60's no longer stimulate my interest. On the surface, my music today may appear to be regressive due to the use of consonance, neo-tonality, and rhythmic regularity, but on a deeper level, these aspects should be perceived to exist in non-traditional contexts and relationships. Perhaps this is my way of reconciling progressive instincts with musical roots in the past. Behind its surface, however, the search for a novel approach to "psychological time", modes of perception and formal procedures is what differentiates my music from the past. I suspect that these musical "agendas" will keep me occupied for some time.<sup>9</sup>

The musical language of the *Sonata* is neo-tonal with clear gravitational attraction towards the tonal center. Kam uses three sections *A*, *B*, and, closer to the end, *C*, to create three different characters throughout the piece. According to his inscription in the score for the performer's guidance, the *A* section is to be played "exactly in tempo but lyrical." He also refers to this section as "majestic" later in the piece where *A* evolves to a chorale, similar to a Protestant chorale as often portrayed in music literature. In this work, the composer establishes a direct approach to the tonal core and main motives at the very beginning. This decision helps to unify the musical language of the work.

#### Analysis of Form and Musical Idiom

The opening octaves in the piano part immediately establish the tonal center of *A*. Kam uses a prolonged pedal to sustain the sonority of the bass notes and the high register combined. He uses a strong dissonance in m. 2, G sharp, followed by a G natural in m. 3. This chromatic interchange of the leading note becomes a part of the main motive of

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<sup>9</sup> Dennis Kam, composer's statement on program notes "Dennis Kam, twenty years later." Honolulu Academy of Arts, April 2, 1988.

section A. By doubling lines in both hands, he achieves simplicity and linear direction in the section. The thematic material is laid out in the first five measures (see Examples 2 and 3).

Example 2. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 1-7

Bb Clarinet

Violin

Violoncello

Piano

*ff*

*f*

*sfz*

*loco*

*8vb*

Example 3. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 8-9

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

*sfz*

Kam marks the opening of the main motive by using a breath mark between mm. 5-6. Exposition of the thematic material continues in the next four measures where he rhythmically varies the motive while preserving the pitch and the perceptual length of the key notes of the motive. Development of the material continues for the next twelve measures (see Examples 4 and 5).

Example 4. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 9-15

Example 4 shows the musical score for measures 9-15 of Kam's Sonata Ibis. The score is written for Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet part is silent. The Violin and Viola parts play a melodic line, with the Violin part starting on a half note G4 and the Viola part on a half note G3. The Piano part provides a complex accompaniment with many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes. A breath mark is placed between measures 9 and 10. Dynamics include *mf* and *p*.

Example 5. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 16-21

Example 5 shows the musical score for measures 16-21 of Kam's Sonata Ibis. The score is written for Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet, Violin, and Viola parts are silent. The Piano part provides a complex accompaniment with many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes. A breath mark is placed between measures 16 and 17.

In this section, the composer continues to double the lines in both hands of the piano, while introducing chromaticism on the passing notes. The importance of A tonality continues, while E flat and G gain the listener's attention through varied repetition. The third part of the A section continues with “insistent” rhythmic and intervallic repetitive figurations, leading to a climax and the beginning of the B section (see Examples 6, 7 and 8).

Example 6. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 22-28

Example 6 shows the musical score for measures 22-28 of Kam's Sonata Ibis. The score is for Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet part is mostly silent. The Violin part starts with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note F#4, and then a series of eighth notes. The Viola part starts with a half note G3, followed by a quarter note F#3, and then a series of eighth notes. The Piano part features a complex, repetitive rhythmic pattern in both hands, with a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (f) section.

Example 7. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 29-34

Example 7 shows the musical score for measures 29-34 of Kam's Sonata Ibis. The score is for Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet part is mostly silent. The Violin part starts with a half note G4, followed by a quarter note F#4, and then a series of eighth notes. The Viola part starts with a half note G3, followed by a quarter note F#3, and then a series of eighth notes. The Piano part features a complex, repetitive rhythmic pattern in both hands, with a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (mf) section.

Example 8. Kam, Sonata Ibis, m. 35

35 Strong, exact, & detached

Clar. *f*

Vln. *f*

Vlc. *f*

Pno. *f*

In the piano and clarinet-piano versions of the *Sonata*, the entire *A* section was written as a piano solo. In the piano-string quintet, piano trio and piano quartet scores, the string instruments enter either at the very first measure or in m. 5 (see Example 2). The quintet version starts with an opening unison of the string quartet, moving in opposing directions and forming a four-note A major chord before the piano begins (see Example 9).



### Example 9. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 1-6

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Piano

*mf* *f* *mf*

*mf* *f* *mf*

*mf* *f* *mf*

*f* *mf*

*ff* *f*

*pizz.*

*8vb* *loco* *8va*

In the quartet score, Kam reintroduces the motive in the violin part from a later chorale section. The notes C#- D- E, are used in the same configuration in m.142 in the piano and violin parts (see Examples 10 and 11).

### Example 10. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 1-7

Exactly in tempo but lyrical ♩ = ca. 120

Bb Clarinet

Violin

Violoncello

Piano

*f* *f* *f*

*ff* *f*

*8vb* *loco* *8va*

Example 11. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 142-147

Rejoiceful & majestic

The musical score is arranged in four staves. The top staff is for Clarinet (Clar.), the second for Violin (Vln.), the third for Viola (Vlc.), and the bottom for Piano (Pno.). The tempo/mood is indicated as 'Rejoiceful & majestic'. The piano part is marked with a forte (ff) dynamic. The score shows measures 142 through 147. The piano part includes a 'loco' section, indicated by a bracket and the word 'loco' below the staff. The piano part is written in a complex, virtuosic style with many doublets and triplets.

In every adaptation of the work, the clarinet enters at m. 35, which marks the beginning of section *B*. Section *B* starts with m. 35 and ends with m. 47. The character of this section is energetic and full of motoric motion. Kam’s written comment to performers is, “Strong, exact, & detached.” In the return of the *B* section in the later part of the work, the composer suggests “interrupting” at m. 151 of the quintet and m. 155 of the quartet version, indicating a change of character and pace. The piano part is a key component of this section. The other instruments answer in intricate dialogue to the piano’s virtuosic and powerful lines. Written mostly as single lines doubled, the piano part is technically demanding and rhythmically challenging (see Example 12).

Example 12. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 42-44

The musical score for Example 12, Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 42-44, is presented for four instruments: Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet part is in the treble clef and features a melodic line with a slur over measures 42-44. The Violin and Viola parts are in the treble and bass clefs respectively, with staccato notes and accents. The Piano part is in the bass clef and features a complex, fast-moving line with many sixteenth notes and rests.

The quintet version introduces parts of the same motive carried by sixteenth notes in a canonic imitation. As mentioned earlier, the phasing technique is most successful when applied in multi-instrumental works. Here the energy is carried by five instruments interrupting and imitating each other. The intricate rhythm with the use of eighth-note rests, followed by two sixteenth notes, juxtaposed with a moving line in the piano score, makes this segment challenging from an ensemble perspective (see Example 13).

Example 13. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm 35-36

The musical score for Example 13, Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm 35-36, consists of five staves. The top four staves are for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The bottom staff is for the Piano. The Violin I staff is marked 'Strong; exact' and 'f'. The Violoncello staff is marked 'pizz.' and 'f'. The Piano part is marked 'Strong, exact, & detached' and 'f'. The music is in 2/4 time and features a dotted rhythm in the piano part.

The beginning of the *B* section is very different in the duo, trio and quartet versions. Here, Kam uses a larger scale, namely quarter and half notes, to continue the phasing. The dotted rhythm makes the main motive from section *A* recognizable. Effectively, Kam is merging material from the *A* and *B* sections. By using fresh material in the piano part, and continuing the dialogue in the other instrumental parts with the section *A* material, he creates the effect of a variation of section *A* (see Example 14).

Example 14. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm 35-37

35 Strong, exact, & detached

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

The return of the *A* section comes in m. 48. The broad feeling of the chorale is reinforced by the composer's remarks: "lyrical; slightly slower an option." Here, the quintet score differs from other versions; it also starts a measure later because of the extra measure at the beginning of the piece. The piano brings in the chorale while the string quartet answers on the tonal *A* chord in half-note rhythmic unison (see Example 15).

Example 15. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 49-53

Slightly slower an option

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

*ff*

*Lyrical; slightly slower an option*

*loco*

The *forte* dynamic changes in m. 58 to *pp* as the strings play a nervous tremolo as an accompaniment to the piano chorale (see Example 16). The piano continues its solo line until the strings join back in at m. 68 (see Example 17).

Example 16. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm 58-60

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

*ppp*

*ppp*

*ppp*

*ppp*

Example 17. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 68-69

The musical score for Example 17 shows four staves for strings: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vcl., all marked with a forte (f) dynamic. Below these is a grand staff for piano, with the word "(Insistent)" written above the right-hand staff. The piano part consists of chords in rhythmic unison with the strings.

Kam writes “insistent” in this measure, as the piano and strings reply to each other. He uses the string quartet as an accompaniment here; their part consists mostly of chords played in rhythmic unison. The word “insistent” speaks about the composer’s wish to sustain the energy in this spot, a task not easily achieved, as his writing for the strings here provides few chords.

This section has a different character in the other multi-instrument versions. In all of them, the clarinet plays a key role in bringing forth the thematic material, establishing the leading role of the soloist in this section. The duo emphasizes canonic dialogue between the clarinet and piano. The question-answer dialogue effectively sustains the listener’s attention, but does not reach the feeling of the majestic chorale, which Kam captures so well in the quartet version.

The trio, while introducing a new instrument, namely the cello, and more texture and harmony to this part, stays halfway between the simple, clear lines of the duo and the

rich textural complexity of the quartet. In the quartet version, the piano chorale is interrupted by the clarinet's motive, while the violin and cello accompany in a sequence of parallel-fifth intervals in rhythmic unison. This “quote from the past” creates an interesting color, reminiscent of a medieval chant. The dynamic marking of *ff* through the section supports the rich sound quality of the string parts.

Example 18. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm 48-55

48 Lyrical; slightly slower an option

When the clarinet comes back with a quote from the *B* section in m. 67, the listener is reminded of other musical materials in the piece, representing a contemporary idiom. The application of the *phasing* technique by the use of “imitative dialogue,” and simultaneous early-music and contemporary harmonies, represents an original idea (see Examples 19 and 20). In the string section we can observe the parallel motions of intervals reminiscent of the early-music idiom.



## Example 19. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 55-60

55

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

*mf*

## Example 20. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 67-70

67

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

*f*

This section also poses certain technical challenges for the cellist and violinist who continue to play intervals of sixths apart in a sequence of double stops in mm. 55-77. Here, the composer uses isorhythm, another compositional invention of the latter Medieval and Renaissance periods.

Further analysis of technical and ensemble issues in the string parts will be presented in subsequent chapters. The sequence in the cello part, in mm. 55-66, and later in the violin part in mm. 67-77, is in counterpoint with the piano part, varying the parts of the chorale. Here again, Kam utilizes compositional techniques of previous musical epochs. This application, while eclectic, creates a new effect, particularly in mm. 67-77, in which the active clarinet lines bring forth elements of the *B* section. This *A* section is the longest in the work, lasting 55 measures. The clarinet continues with an energetic tune with difficult leaps containing intervals of sevenths and octaves.

In the quartet score, the violin joins in m. 84 with a secondary melody that competes with the clarinet line over the course of nineteen measures. This new material builds upon the use of intervals of seconds, upward and downward, creating an effect of insistent energy, and draws the listener's attention away from the clarinet part.

Example 21. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 84-87

The musical score for measures 84-87 of Kam's Sonata Ibis is presented for four instruments: Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The score begins at measure 84, indicated by a box containing the number 84. The Clarinet part is in treble clef and features a melodic line with intervals of seconds, starting with a forte (f) dynamic. The Violin part also enters in measure 84 with a similar melodic line. The Viola part is in bass clef and provides a harmonic foundation with sixteenth-note patterns. The Piano part is in grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and plays a complex texture of chords and moving lines. The overall texture is dense and energetic, reflecting the 'insistent energy' described in the text.

The cello facilitates diverting the listener's attention by bringing forth the agitated sixteenth notes from the *B* section. The piano keeps playing the chorale, seemingly

unaffected by all the activity in this section. This moment resembles a quote from an operatic quartet in which key characters sing their lines at same time, each with different words and melody. The music achieves suspense by challenging listeners to grasp individual lines at the same time. The clarinet, violin and cello become simpler in m. 97, where they accompany the piano chorale.

Example 22. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 97-98

The musical score for Example 22, Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 97-98, consists of four staves. The top three staves are for the Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), and Cello (Vlc.), and the bottom staff is for the Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet, Violin, and Cello parts are relatively simple, featuring single notes and chords. The Piano part is more complex, featuring a dense, rhythmic pattern. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The Piano part has a dashed line above it, indicating a continuation of the pattern.

The dynamic growth and the imminence of the climax is emphasized by the composer's use of *accelerando* in m. 101, where all four instrument come to a rhythmic unison leading to the return of the *B* section (see Example 23).

Example 23. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 101-102

Clar. *ff* *accel.*

Vln. *ff*

Vcl. *ff*

Pno. *ff*

In the quintet version, Kam opts for a more subdued effect. The piano continues to lead the chorale, while the string quartet answers in alternating *crescendo* and *diminuendo* chords.

Example 24. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 81-87

Vln. I *mf* *p* *f*

Vln. II *mf* *p* *f*

Vla. *mf* *p* *f*

Vcl. *mf* *p* *f*

Pno. *mf* *f*

The chords are for the most part dissonant, keeping common tones with the piano part, while at the same time creating a strong and simple effect. The return of the *B* section starts in m. 104 in the quintet version, due to the extra measure at the beginning of the work. For all other versions, this section starts at m. 103.

In the quintet version, the piano sixteenth notes are accompanied by moving *pizzicato* chords played in quarter notes through m. 110 (see Example 25).

Example 25. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 106-109

The musical score for Example 25 shows four staves for the string quartet (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello) and a grand staff for the piano. Each string staff is marked with 'pizz.' (pizzicato). The string parts consist of moving chords in quarter notes. The piano part features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with sixteenth notes and chords, creating a dissonant effect.

In m. 111, the pace of the chords is perceptually accelerated by alternating quarter and eighth notes, leading to the climax in m. 117 and the return of the *A* section. In the quartet version, section *B* brings a lively dialogue between the piano and clarinet-cello parts (see Example 26).

Example 26. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 110-117

110

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

*a tempo*

*ff*

The cello grounds this section with a steady pulse of strong quarter notes, and joins the rest of the instruments in m. 110, where its insistent rhythmic pattern helps build up to the climax and the return of section A in m. 117.

In the duo version, the imitative dialogue and the return of the unison between the clarinet and piano provides a simple and effective solution for the entire section (see Examples 27 and 28).

Example 27. Kam, Sonata, Duo, mm. 103-104

Clar.

*loco*

Pno.

## Example 28. Kam, Sonata, Duo, mm. 105-107

The musical score for Example 28, Kam, Sonata, Duo, mm. 105-107, consists of two staves. The top staff is for the Clarinet (Clar.) and the bottom staff is for the Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet part is written in the treble clef and the Piano part is written in the bass clef. The music is in 4/4 time. The Clarinet part features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The Piano part features a dense, rhythmic accompaniment with many sixteenth notes and some chords.

The return of the A section in the duo version is far less dramatic than in the previous two examples, due to the lesser volume and the relative sparseness of the score.

Section A again returns in m. 117 with the chorale in the piano part and lasts for 13 measures. Kam offers different solutions for this section. In the duo version, the unison in the piano and clarinet strengthens the feeling of a Protestant chorale. In the quintet version, the piano continues to lead while the string quartet answers with long, sustained chords in a varied dynamic range from *f* to *p*. The texture of the string writing is simple and lean, and has a supportive role throughout the work, similar to a choir answering a soloist. Kam uses the tonal richness of the string quartet to create the dynamic and textural changes needed in this section. In the quartet, the violin brings back the figurations from the clarinet solo in m. 71, while the other three instruments play the chorale in unison (see Example 29).

## Example 29. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 119-123

119

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

8<sup>vb</sup>

200

This small variation of the chorale brings a textural and timbre change to this section. The last time the listener heard the chorale was in the section starting at m. 48, in which the cello and violin play the sequence in parallel fifths, a gesture suggesting a Medieval chant.

Measures 129-130 of the quintet score is the moment where sections *A* and *B* begin to merge vertically as well as horizontally. Until now, the composer's utilization of *A* and *B* focused on parallel *A* and *B* quotes in separate instrumental parts (see Example 30).



## Example 30. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 126-131

126

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

*loco*

The clarinet for the most part carries the alternate thematic development, while the piano carries the main motivic progression of the section. From this point on, the material merges. The beginning of the new section is not immediately perceptible in the duo, trio and quartet scores. In the original piano version, this change of section is clear, but the addition of the clarinet and violin lines obscures the change. The reason for this is that the new parts precede the quote from the *B* section, performed here by piano and cello. The continuity of the thematic material in the violin and cello parts facilitates the unity of the two sections. The two segments are linked in character, and the emerging *B* section in m. 129 feels like a development of the previous *A* section. The shortness of these segments, thirteen measures each, and the absence of any comments by the composer (which until now indicated wherever a change of section took place) also supports the idea of a

merging *A* and *B* section. Kam writes about this in an email to the author referring to the merge as the “melting” of the *A* and *B* sections.<sup>10</sup>

Measure 142 brings back the chorale, and this time Kam keeps the processional, majestic character through the thirteen measures of the section, which in the quintet is only eight measures. He writes “rejoiceful & majestic” in the score. This episode is short; however, the processional pace of the instrumental parts supports the identity of a contrasting chorale section. The length of this section in the quintet differs from the other versions. The section starts in m. 143, having an extra measure from the beginning of the work. After four measures of piano solo, the string quartet takes over the hymn melody from the piano and goes on without the piano for the next four measures. Kam shortens this section by four measures and brings the *B* section in m. 151 (see Example 31).

Example 31. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 143-150

143 Rejoiceful & majestic (in tempo)

The musical score for measures 143-150 of Kam's Sonata, Quintet, is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 143-146) features the string quartet (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vcl.) playing a melody in a 'rejoiceful & majestic' style. The second system (measures 147-150) features the piano playing a solo in the same style. The piano part includes a 'loco' marking and an '8th' note indication.

<sup>10</sup> The author approached Dr. Kam during the analysis to comment on the sections in question. In his email from Dec 15, 2007, the composer states, “At this point, I felt that the two sections are already weaved together, going back to the use of chorale material in the *B* section. I had decided to further ‘melt’ the materials of *A* and *B* sections, and used them in vertical as well as horizontal directions. I thought that this approach could help create the anticipation of the change of the motivic material, leading to the *C* section.”

In the quartet score, the composer gives the piano a solo in the lower registers, giving this section a sonorous, majestic sound. The clarinet plays a strong, repeated F through four and one-half measures of this section. Interestingly, the comma Kam places above the clarinet part on that spot indicates not only the breath mark, but brings back the declamatory quality of the chorale from the beginning of the piece. The cello and violin parts overlap each other here, producing a beautiful and mellow tonal effect (see Example 32). Many composers use this technique to enrich the tonal qualities of the string ensemble. For example, one of the most beautiful examples of this technique in chamber music literature is the second movement of Beethoven's "Ghost" Trio, where he creates a haunting effect by overlapping the violin and cello lines.

Example 32. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 142-147

Rejoiceful & majestic

The musical score for Example 32, Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 142-147, is presented in four staves. The top staff is for Clarinet (Clar.), the second for Violin (Vln.), the third for Viola (Vlc.), and the bottom for Piano (Pno.). The tempo/mood is indicated as 'Rejoiceful & majestic'. The piano part features a strong, repeated F in the lower register, marked with a breath mark (comma) and a dynamic of *ff*. The violin and viola parts overlap each other, creating a mellow tonal effect. The piano part is marked with *8vb* and *loco*.

The next few sections further support the composer's comments about the fragmentation, or in his own words, the "melting" of sections. Section *B* at measure 155,

or measure 151 in the quintet, lasts only eight measures. Kam's comment "interrupting" indicates the change of character (see Example 33). Here, all versions show the composer's work with fragmented parts of the motive from the *B* section.

Example 33. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 155-17

The musical score for Example 33, Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 155-17, is presented for four instruments: Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet and Violin parts are in treble clef, and the Viola part is in bass clef. The Piano part is in grand staff. The music is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Piano part features a dense, rhythmic texture with many sixteenth notes. The word "Interrupting" is written above the Piano part, indicating a change in character.

The chorale quickly returns in measure 163, (measure 159 in the quintet), but again only for eight measures. Kam slightly varies the rhythmic pulse, using changing meters: 3/4; 5/4; 3/4; 4/4.

In the quartet, he gives short, individual lines to each instrument, with alternate chords in the piano part unifying the dialogue (see Example 34).

Example 34. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 163-166

Rejoiceful & majestic

In the quintet, this section resembles the previous chorale section. The piano starts the chorale in measure 159, and the strings take over in the next measure and play without the piano until the change of harmony in measure 167 (see Examples 35 and 36). Here the composer abruptly changes the harmony from A to A flat, and the rest of the section continues in this transposed key.

Example 35. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 159-163

## Example 36. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 164-169

The musical score for Example 36, Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 164-169, is presented for five staves: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Piano. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. Measure 164 is marked with a box containing the number 164. The score shows dynamic markings of *mf* and *f*, and articulation marks like accents and slurs. The piano part features a complex, rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a more active line in the left hand.

Kam brings back the chorale section in measure 176. Strong piano chords interrupt the linear direction of the clarinet, violin and cello parts. Kam has so far used the elements of the *B* section throughout the piece in various lengths. According to Kam, the fragmentation, or “melting,” raises the listener’s perceptual awareness of the imminent change of the thematic material.<sup>11</sup> The composer introduces the new section *C* in m. 216, after bringing forth the chorale once more.

Kam abandons strict Fibonacci proportions in the final chorale statement, over a longer period of 40 measures, in mm. 176-214, mm. 172-210 of the quintet, with interjections or interruptions of previous material. At this point, the composer feels that the musical length needed here does not correspond to the frames of the Fibonacci series.

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<sup>11</sup> In an email to the author on Dec.15 2007, Kam reflects on this part as a “melting” of the *A* and *B* sections. The perceptual fragmentation is reinforced by the composer’s abandonment of the use of the Fibonacci numbers, and merging the material in a through composed segment.

While convenient when used in small number segments, the perceptual length greatly varies if applied using the higher numbers in the Fibonacci series, namely 34 and 55. The quintet offers a lean, simple chorale where Kam explores the use of repeated, long chords shared by the piano and strings. In the quartet score, the rich instrumental lines evolve into a romantic, song-like section. Kam's interest in the melodic quality of the chorale is most evident in the clarinet solo. A long and sustained melody with intricate leaps and *appoggiaturas* keeps the listener's attention, while the cello and violin sing the accompaniment, their parts overlapping each other.

The introduction of moving eighth notes in the piano and clarinet parts in m. 214 and m. 215 anticipates the beginning of the *C* section. It begins with the piano's declamatory line in m. 216, while the clarinet holds an E flat from the previous measure. This unusual moment happens due to the composer's use of "layers" in the treatment of the instrumental parts. The change was established in this and previous sections in the original piano *Sonata*. In the duo version, Kam decided to answer the "anticipation" in the piano part with the clarinet line, leading to the almost unnoticeable beginning of section *C*.

Example 37. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 214-216

The musical score for Example 37, Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 214-216, is presented in four staves. The Clarinet (Clar.) part features a long, sustained melody with intricate leaps and appoggiaturas. The Violin (Vln.) and Viola (Vlc.) parts provide a harmonic accompaniment. The Piano (Pno.) part includes a declamatory line with a crescendo leading to a forte (f) section, followed by a legato section. The score is marked with 'cresc.', 'f', and 'legato'.

The chorale material proceeds smoothly into the *C* section. The majestic mood from the previous chorale section changes into a “dream-like” feeling brought by an ethereal sound in the piano part.<sup>12</sup> The mood of this *C* section is not very different in the quartet and quintet versions. The piano is the key participant in establishing the character of this section. Eighth-note figurations in the left hand bring create an unsettling, brewing motion, while the right-hand melody line sings in the high register of the instrument. The change of registers from the previous sections serves as a simple, yet effective tool in establishing this new, “dreamy” character. The right hand line creates a “glassy”, chime-like effect. In the quartet score, the clarinet has a second important instrumental line. The melody line sings independently from the piano, weaving a delicate texture around the eighth notes in the piano part. The violin in this section plays a third independent line at the very top of its register, drawing the listener’s ear to the eerie, surreal-sounding lines. Meanwhile, the cello plays *pizzicato* half notes through this section, keeping the texture light (see Example 38). Peter Fraser MacDonald offers these comments for the “Dream-Like” section:

The *C* section and its two returns never fail to capture my attention. The main property of these three sections is a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand of the piano with the pedal down, creating a somewhat ethereal effect. The pattern is distinguished by a quasi-improvised series of harmonic structures. The right hand of the piano part is playing a line in the high register, frequently in rhythmic unison with clarinet. In this part, Kam is incorporating a technique known as “in-filling”, where the right-hand piano and clarinet melodies only play notes that are not part of the left hand pattern. The violin plays a line

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<sup>12</sup> The composer first used this expression to describe the character of the *C* section during a rehearsal session with the Ibis Camerata. Since then the composer commonly refers to this part of the *Sonata* as “dream-like.”



contrapuntal to the clarinet, while the violoncello assumes the bass role in pizzicato half notes.<sup>13</sup>

## Example 38. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 230-234

230

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

mf

pizz.

8va

Sea

The musical score for measures 230-233 of 'The Sea' features four staves. The Clarinet part begins with a whole rest, followed by a melodic line starting on G4, moving through A4, B4, and C5, with a final whole note on B4. The Violin part starts with a whole rest, then plays a series of chords: G4-B4, A4-C5, B4-G5, and A4-C5, each for a half note. The Viola part begins with a whole note on G2, followed by a whole rest, then a half note on G2, and finally a whole note on A2. The Piano part is divided into two systems. The first system has a whole rest, followed by a melodic line starting on G4, moving through A4, B4, and C5, with a final whole note on B4. The second system features a continuous eighth-note accompaniment pattern: G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5, G4-A4-B4-C5. The score includes dynamic markings of *mf* and *pizz.*, and an *8va* marking for the piano's upper register.

In the quintet score, Kam offers a less complex solution. The piano plays the main material while being gently accompanied by the string quartet's chords. The overall mood is serene and dreamy, but lacks the “glassy” textural quality that the quartet has.

Example 39. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 226-230

226

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

pizz.

mf

f

8va

<sup>13</sup> A letter to the author dated, February 22, 2008.

The composer used thirty-four measures in the *C* section, returning to the use of the Fibonacci series. The “dream-like” section ends with a *fermata* in measure 250.

Kam uses the repetitiveness of the lullaby-like motive in the piano part through section *C* to create a hypnotic state. As a young composer, Kam frequently showed interest in the “hypnotic” qualities of music as a compositional tool.<sup>14</sup> The sudden return of the *B* section in m. 251 is the composer’s surprise for the listener. This moment is particularly effective in the quartet, where all instruments have very active parts (see Example 40).

Example 40. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 257-260

The composer uses sequences of scale-like series to keep the pulse of this section going forward, particularly in the piano part. The composer achieves rhythmic energy in this section with *staccato* notes played by the clarinet. The *B* section lasts twenty-one measures. In the next few segments, the composer uses fragmented parts of the *A*, *B* and *C* sections.

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<sup>14</sup> “Repetition and the Drift Towards Consonant Focus in the Pattern-Pulse Works of Terry Riley and Steve Reich.” (DMA diss., University of Illinois, 1974)

In m. 272, a sudden change brings back the chorale, and eight measures later there is a return of the *C* section. As Kam already demonstrated in the examples of the *A* and *B* sections, the *C* section also becomes shorter with repetition. After only eight measures, the composer brings back the “majestic” piano chords from the chorale, then immediately elements of the *B* section, all in five short measures. This short episode leads to m. 293 and once more another return of the chorale. A slower tempo with use of the lower *A* octaves in the piano part underpin the *ff* of the climactic moment, indicating the approach of the *finale*. The quintet does not offer the same power of sound and textural timbre in this part. Kam chooses to limit the string quartet to a simple accompanying line, leaving the responsibility of preparing the climax to the piano. This section lasts twenty-one measures.

The *coda* starts after the *fermata* in the m. 314, (m. 310 in the quintet score). Marked only as *Tempo I* in the score, it brings back the *C* section, followed by a chorale in m. 329. Kam delays the end with prolonged chords, and several *fermatas* in m. 328, m. 333, and m. 341.

Example 41. Kam, Sonata Ibis, a) m. 328, b) m. 333, c) m. 341

The image displays three musical score excerpts, labeled a), b), and c), from Kam's Sonata Ibis. Each excerpt features four staves: Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.).

- a) m. 328:** The Clarinet plays a half note G4 with a *p* (piano) dynamic marking. The Violin and Viola have whole rests. The Piano part consists of a sustained chord of G2, B1, and D2 in the left hand, and G4 and B4 in the right hand.
- b) m. 333:** The Clarinet plays a half note G4. The Violin has a whole rest. The Viola plays a half note G2. The Piano part features a sustained chord of G2, B1, and D2 in the left hand, and G4 and B4 in the right hand, with a *mf* (mezzo-forte) dynamic marking.
- c) m. 341:** The Clarinet has a whole rest. The Violin has a whole rest. The Viola has a whole rest. The Piano part consists of a sustained chord of G2, B1, and D2 in the left hand, and G4 and B4 in the right hand.

Here the composer explores another one of his mediums of interest, namely the qualitative properties of time as a perceptual factor in music. The ambiguity of this part is then quickly resolved in mm. 342-353, where the composer uses the fused motives of the *A* and *B* sections to create a dramatic climax at the end. The quartet score offers the most effective ending as the cello, violin and clarinet vigorously bring full texture and speed to a sustained, prolonged, and dramatic ending.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO THE *SONATA IBIS* FOR CLARINET, VIOLIN, CELLO, AND PIANO

The focus of this chapter is the analysis of the ensemble-related interpretive and technical issues found in the *Sonata Ibis*. Special emphasis is placed on the role of the clarinet in the *Sonata*, as well as the complexity of the instrumental relationship with the remaining instruments, notably the violin.

Clarinetist Christopher Graham, a member of the Ibis Camerata, offers insightful commentary about the specifics of the clarinet part, and about the challenges of performing in this instrumental configuration. One of the important comments he makes is that the leader in the group should be the clarinet. Traditionally, the violin takes the lead role in the string or piano-string quartet. However, in a situation in which every breath is time-sensitive, only the clarinetist can cue the rest of the group. As the author further states in this chapter, the clarinet plays almost without rests for a good third of the entire work. The rests in the score are limited to eighth notes or to a quarter-note rest. This presents a challenge for the ensemble and for the clarinetist, as some additional breaths may be needed. Therefore, the clarinet assumes the role of the leader in the ensemble, and the violinist accommodates the clarinet in this piece. Domagoj Ivanovic and cellist Marie-Elaine Gagnon, former members of the Ibis Camerata, also offer valuable comments in this chapter on the technical challenges and the nature of the violin and cello parts in this work.

### Instrumentation Challenges

The *Sonata Ibis*, written for clarinet, violin, cello and piano, belongs to the category of works written for the mixed ensemble. Although written in only one movement, and relatively short by the standards of chamber-music literature, lasting only twelve minutes, the *Sonata* presents several challenges for performers. The first and most difficult issue to resolve is related to the instrumentation itself. Chamber literature contains few works for clarinet, violin, cello and piano, and for good reason. The instruments are not easily compatible, at least not in the traditional sense. The ensemble balance of the violin, cello and piano is destabilized by the addition of the clarinet. The violin and clarinet often compete in their registers and in the distribution of melodic material. The clarinet cannot assume the same function as the viola in the piano quartet.

An important factor in dealing with this instrumental configuration is the seating arrangement of the group. The ensemble experience regarding the performance of *Sonata Ibis* indicates that the clarinet should sit next to the cellist, opposite the violinist, while maintaining visual contact with the pianist. A switch in seating with the violinist is not possible, due to the violinist holding the instrument with the left hand towards the audience. The timbre of the clarinet does not blend easily with the piano and string instruments, and requires special care on the part of all players. In addition, the clarinet's powerful, bright, higher register complicates the tonal balance in the group. Often, there are intonation issues related to the string and clarinet parts. The clarinet, being a wind instrument, has few natural overtones. Because of that, the timbre of the clarinet is difficult to match with the string instruments in color and pitch.

Understandably, not all musicians have the experience of performing in this type of ensemble. Traditionally, strings and winds perform chamber music in their own separate categories. Both groups are accustomed to performance with piano. Most students acquire this experience from the beginning of their musical training. They also train to perform in orchestras as young students, where the seating arrangement and the presence of the conductor facilitates the performance. Considering these observations, it is not unusual that even professional musicians sometimes lack the full awareness necessary to perform in this type of ensemble. Therefore, the ease and spontaneity most musicians acquire and expect in a chamber group are sometimes curtailed, at least at the beginning of the clarinet-piano-string ensemble's existence. The newly-formed group would have to dedicate a considerable amount of time and energy to achieve the accustomed spontaneity in performing together. On the other hand, when played successfully, this type of quartet offers a most rewarding performance experience. The richness of the texture and color are unique and intriguing for listeners and performers. Because balance is hard to achieve in this configuration, the ensemble must always perform with utmost concentration, as no performing aspect can be taken for granted. Perhaps it is this hypersensitivity on the part of the performers that heightens the musical experience of the audience and the performers alike.

#### Creation of a New Medium

As stated earlier, there are few works written for this type of quartet. The classic masterpieces of this literature are Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the end of Time* and Paul Hindemith's *Quartet* of 1938. However, there have been several major additions in the past few years to the literature for this ensemble. Paul Moravec won a Pulitzer Prize

for his *Tempest Fantasy* in 2004, and Ned Rorem, Yehudi Wyner, and Harald Genzmer each wrote quartets for these four instruments. One can say that this type of quartet is a “medium in the making.” More groups are forming and playing in this configuration in recent years, one example is the author’s own ensemble, the Ibis Camerata. During the last few years, the Ibis Camerata has performed and recorded numerous works by contemporary composers. Presenters of concert venues are increasingly realizing the attraction of this type of ensemble. The need to create a larger repertoire is apparent. More composers are now writing works for the clarinet, violin, cello and piano ensemble.

### The Role of the Clarinet in the Ensemble

The clarinet, a woodwind instrument, places different physical demands on the performer than strings or the piano. The most obvious one is breath control, a necessary factor for the composer’s consideration. Partners in the group also have to be aware of this need and consider it during rehearsals and performances. Very often, the clarinetist will have to take an extra breath, apart from any places indicated in the score. Reasons could be due to a slower tempo, or neglect on the part of the ensemble to give the clarinetist enough time in the indicated breathing spots. This is particularly important in situations in which the musical score is complex and all performers need to focus more on their own parts and less on the ensemble.

Composers in the past were aware of the special needs of the clarinetist in the chamber group. Good examples of this are the clarinet-cello-piano trios by written by L. V. Beethoven and J. Brahms. Both composers allowed sufficient time for clarinetist to rest and tend to his instrument. Olivier Messiaen and Paul Hindemith were also aware of the need to give the clarinet more time to rest compared to other instruments in the group.



Messiaen ingeniously solves this problem by omitting the use of the clarinet in some movements. The *Quartet for the End of Time* is a monumental work lasting almost an hour. The instrumentation varies from movement to movement, such that all four players perform in different configurations through the quartet. This solution provides a variety of texture and color for the listener, as well as a welcome rest for the members of the group. Paul Hindemith provides some lengthy rests in the clarinet part, which is secondary to the violin part in this work. Here Hindemith uses the clarinet in a role similar to that of a viola, and entrusts the major lines to the violin and piano.

#### Kam's Approach to the Use of the Clarinet in the *Sonata*

In 2004, Kam wrote a duo version of the *Sonata* for the clarinetist Dmitry Askenazy. He conceived of the work as a technically challenging piece composed to highlight the virtuosity of this distinguished musician. The part offers many rewarding moments for the performer, but it also brings certain technical issues to light that require stamina as well as leadership skills.

The clarinet enters at m. 35, at the beginning of the *B* section. The long lines and dynamics of the clarinet part demand superb technical control by the performer. The outline of the clarinet part explores the high register, with sudden leaps to lower registers. In the trio and quartet adaptations of the *Sonata*, the clarinet part remains unchanged. The focus of attention shifts somewhat from the clarinet to the rest of the ensemble in these versions, but the issues of tonal balance, texture and intonation in the group introduces new complexities for the performers to consider. The first and foremost problem is the choice of tempo. If the tempo is not quick enough, the clarinetist will have trouble finishing the phrase before the next breath mark. If the tempo is too fast, he will have

trouble articulating the sixteenth notes in the *B* section. Besides the occasional rest for a quick breath, Kam does not offer any moments of rest to the clarinetist until a bar of rest in m. 135. Kam shows his understanding of the physical demands of the clarinet by spacing the clarinet writing with longer rests as the work progresses towards the *coda*. The next long rest of nearly three measures appears in m. 169. Similar rests occur between mm. 189-193, mm. 249-252, mm. 273-276, mm. 290-294, mm. 309-314, and mm. 335-342. The pattern of a three- or four-measure long rest inserted between shortening sections as the work unfolds reveals Kam's keen awareness of this performance issue.

Christopher Graham, the clarinetist of the Ibis Camerata provides valuable commentary regarding the technical and interpretive aspects of the role of the clarinet in the *Sonata*:

Having performed this piece in its earlier version, the *Sonata* for clarinet, cello and piano, I can offer some insight as to the metamorphosis of a piece with multiple versions. One could call this sort of writing cumulative; however, each addition of a voice presents additional challenges with respect to balance, blend, phrasing, cueing, and intonation. Speaking about the balance issues of the ensemble, the clarinet will tend to overpower the violin and cello, regardless of their range. Specifically, in the calmer melodic section mm. 218-249, the clarinet is in its clarion, a very strong and resonant register compared to the shimmering violin and although many of Kam's *forte* markings must be taken in context, this one needs adjustment. The large gap in the *tessitura* here also makes intonation between the two voices slightly problematic. The brightness of the violin does not naturally match the duller sound of the clarinet in this passage and so playing softer here on the clarinet will add some sharpness to the sound that is associated with the acoustical properties of a single-reeded instrument.

One of the few places where adding the violin to this equation might give some difficulties to the projection of the clarinet line could be mm. 67-71, where *staccato* detached sixteenth notes are written in the chalumeau and throat registers of the clarinet. Although the clarinet can produce a good *staccato*, *legato* is normally its strong suit. It is important that the player use plenty of air support and crisp light tongue technique to

produce these repeated sixteenth-note ascending scales, which are inherent in many of Kam's compositions.

The clarinetist must also be an attentive leader in transitional passages throughout the score. In mm. 116-117 the entire quartet comes to rest on a long note *a tempo*. There is no motion until the clarinet and piano move together on a weak beat two in m. 118. Here, the clarinetist assumes the cueing role, normally performed by a violinist in a quartet setting.

One other small topic of concern is breathing. Kam has some suggestions for breath marks in his clarinet parts, which often contradict my interpretation of the phrase regardless of which version one might be performing. One example occurs in m. 223 at the end of the measure. Breathing here, although it is helpful in getting the player through to m. 228, puts far too much separation at a point where all the instruments feel like they are moving forward together. A better solution here is to bring the dynamic down to *mp* or *mf* (which also helps the balance), and make it through in one seamless phrase.

To close, I would like to point out that one of my favorite parts is the lyrical section around m. 218-280, featuring the clarinet and violin duet. Although it is difficult to blend the timbre of the two instruments, when it is well executed the sonority is truly amazing.<sup>15</sup>

### The Role of the Violin in the *Sonata*

The clarinet's partnership with the string instruments, most notably the violin, is another point of interest in this study. For the most part, the clarinet has the leading role in the *Sonata*, while the violin assumes the accompanying role. In some parts of the score, the violin takes the lead role from the clarinet, notably in parts where the clarinet either holds a long note or does not play (see Examples 42, 43 and 44).

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<sup>15</sup> Letter to the author dated October 21, 2007.

Example 42. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 7-8

Bb Clarinet

Violin

Violoncello

Piano

Example 43. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 22-23

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

## Example 44. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 40-41

The musical score for Example 44, Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 40-41, is presented for four instruments: Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Cello (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet part begins with a box containing the number 40. The Violin and Cello parts play double stops in intervals of sixths. The Piano part plays a continuous eighth-note accompaniment.

The violin and cello have some technically difficult tasks in the chorale sections where they play double stops in intervals of sixths in mm. 55-78. This is a vulnerable spot for both instrumentalists. The intervals of major and minor sixths here are difficult to play perfectly in tune. The whole section may need additional work regarding the intonation among the cello, violin and clarinet.

The violin part was the latest addition to the quartet version of the *Sonata*, providing color and texture to various sections. The violin often quotes material featured in other instrumental parts. An example is the opening measures of the *Sonata*, where the violin quotes the piano chorale motive from the middle section of the work in m.142 (see Example 45).

## Example 45. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 6-15

The “interchanging dialogue” in this section is exceptionally well executed in mm. 23-29. Here, Kam introduces the rhythmical elements from the clarinet and cello parts from the section from mm. 67-70 (see Example 46).

## Example 46. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 67-70

In this section, the violin sometimes quotes the clarinet's part, and sometimes serves as a partner in the dialogue with the cello. Occasionally, it doubles the piano part, as in mm. 135-140 (see Examples 47 and 48).

Example 47. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm.135-137

135

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

Example 48. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 138-140

138

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

In section C, the violin's line extends to the very top of the register (see Example 49). The challenge here is the balance with the other instruments, notably the clarinet. In this section, the dynamic markings of the composer needed adjustments, due to the high register of the violin's part.

Example 49. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 214-219

Kam wrote *f* in all four parts, and therefore the violin will inevitably overpower the clarinet and piano. This generic method of marking dynamics is typical of Kam's compositional style. He allows the performers to interpret the markings in the context of their agreed upon ensemble balance. By playing a *mf*, or even a *mp*, the violin will achieve the desired effect without overpowering the other instruments. A similar adjustment is needed through the whole section C, wherever the violin has high notes. Domagoj Ivanovic offers an excellent commentary on the role of the violinist in this work:

Throughout music history, there have been a number of composers that have written music for violin emphasizing its virtuosic capabilities and, in many cases, making a piece of music sound harder than it actually is. Dennis Kam is definitely not one of those composers. Having played several of his works, I can say that his music is in fact much harder to



perform than it may seem to an average listener; he is much more interested in an overall musical effect in his compositions than in trying to write music idiomatic to the violin. Clearly, as an extremely experienced composer, he does not ignore the capabilities of the instrument, but puts them in service of a much higher goal – the music itself.

Hence, from my perspective, the violin part of the *Sonata Ibis* often requires utilization of extremely unorthodox fingerings and bowings, as well as a large variety of colors and nuances in sound. Sometimes one has to struggle in order to sustain the intensity of sound without changing the direction of the bow, which could break the musical line. Furthermore, the role of the violin as an instrument in the ensemble is quite unorthodox, as well. Usually, violinists are accustomed to having a leading role in most chamber ensembles. Surely, there are several sections of *Sonata Ibis* where the violin is undoubtedly given more importance than the other instruments, but for a significant part of the piece it shares its melodic line with the clarinet, doubles the pianist's right hand and the cello lines in the low register. To make things even harder, in several spots the violinist has to match his sound to the clarinet, which often plays in the same register as the violin, however with a completely different timbre and without any vibrato. Very often it is the violinist that needs to adjust, since he has more options considering the variety of his sound than the clarinetist. This means that one has to concern oneself not only with the difficulty of one's own part, but the difficulty of the other instruments' parts as well. As a result, Kam's *Sonata Ibis* is definitely a piece that requires all the members of the ensemble to be extremely familiar with its score and very aware of what the other instruments' parts look like.

Creation of a work for such different instruments together will often cause unusual problems requiring unusual solutions to them. However, at the end, the musical effect that Kam's work produces and the satisfaction it gives to both the ensemble and the audience makes it well worth the effort.<sup>16</sup>

#### Ensemble Issues in the *Sonata Ibis*

In addressing ensemble issues, the author decided to focus this chapter on those few sections of the *Sonata* where effort is required on the part of the entire group to achieve unity in the performance. The separate role of the pianist is described in Chapter Five, with a commentary regarding the pianist's technical and performing issues.

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<sup>16</sup> Letter to the author dated September 21, 2007

One of the difficult tasks for most string and piano players is performing expressively in a strict tempo. The very opening of the *Sonata* presents the performers with the task of establishing a desirable tempo from the very first measures of the work. In a situation in which the layering of the parts does not allow for rhythmic liberties, lyrical expression can be achieved through a blending of timbre and color of the string instruments with the piano. Further, the opening should be executed in the same tempo as section *B*. The pianist needs to think ahead about the appropriate tempo for this segment before starting the piece. A significant change of tempo in m. 35 is not a good choice. In section *B*, the piano has sixteenth notes played in the lower register, so that a sudden change of tempo may not be clear and audible to the rest of the group. The clarinet and violin play in this spot in their high registers, and their dynamic marking is *f*. Measure 48 is marked as “Lyrical; slightly slower an option.” While the piano has the first and second beat of that measure, it is up to the clarinet to lead the ensemble in the following measure to make sure that the chorale is played in a slightly slower tempo. Because of the clarinet’s breath in m. 49, the clarinet should cue the rest of the group.

Example 50. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 48-49

The image shows a musical score for measures 48 and 49 of Kam's Sonata Ibis. The score is written for four instruments: Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet part is in the treble clef, starting with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The Violin and Viola parts are also in the treble clef, with the Violin starting with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The Piano part is in the bass clef, starting with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. A 'loco' marking is present under the piano part in measure 49.

The tempo, however, should not slow down significantly, as the clarinet may have difficulty completing the long phrases, and the *staccato* notes in m. 67 may not project well. Similarly, the clarinet should lead in all places in this section, and particularly in the *accelerando* during mm. 101-103. The clarinet's control of the *accelerando* section will ensure that the new tempo in m. 103 is not too fast for the clarinet to articulate and project. The difficult spot in this regard is mm. 108-109 (see Examples 51 to 53).

Example 51. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 67-70

The musical score for Example 51, Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 67-70, is presented for four instruments: Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet part begins with a forte (f) dynamic and features a long, rapid phrase. The Violin part has a long, sustained note. The Viola part has a long, sustained note. The Piano part has a long, sustained note.

Example 52. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 101-103

Example 52 shows a musical score for four instruments: Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet part is marked *accel.* and *ff*. The Violin and Viola parts are marked *ff*. The Piano part is marked *ff* and *loco*. The music is in 2/4 time and features a complex, rhythmic pattern in the Clarinet and Piano parts, with the Violin and Viola providing harmonic support.

Example 53. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 108-109

Example 53 shows a musical score for four instruments: Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet part is marked *ff*. The Violin and Viola parts are marked *ff*. The Piano part is marked *ff*. The music is in 2/4 time and features a complex, rhythmic pattern in the Clarinet and Piano parts, with the Violin and Viola providing harmonic support.

Here, the clarinet is in the lower register and cannot project or articulate notes as successfully as in the higher register. It is important that the rest of the group is aware of this spot, particularly the pianist, who can easily overpower the clarinet in these

measures. A similar example of the clarinet's lower-register *staccato* is found in m. 139 (see Example 54).

Example 54. Kam, Sonata Ibis, m. 139

The musical score for Example 54, Kam, Sonata Ibis, m. 139, consists of four staves. The Clarinet (Clar.) staff is in the upper register, playing a series of staccato eighth notes. The Violin (Vln.) and Viola (Vlc.) staves are in the lower register, playing a continuous eighth-note line. The Piano (Pno.) staff is in the lower register, playing a steady eighth-note pattern. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

Other potentially vulnerable spots are in mm. 155-157, where the clarinet again plays in the lower register. The cello and violin partially cover the clarinet in these measures, and the piano has to balance the “interrupting” lines with crisp articulation. The cello should try to play the *staccato* eighth notes as articulately as possible, since it is the only instrument in this section with an uninterrupted line. In this part of the piece, slight fluctuations of tempo could bring a welcome variety to the interpretation; however, any variations in tempo should be clearly indicated by the clarinetist (see Examples 55, 56, 57 and 58).

## Example 55. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 141-147

141 Rejoiceful & majestic

Clar. *ff*

Vln.

Vlc. *ff*

Pno. *ff*

*8<sup>va</sup>* *loco*

## Example 56. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 148-154

148

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

## Example 57. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 155-157

155

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

Interrupting

*f*

## Example 58. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 162-165

162

Rejoiceful & majestic

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

*f*

*ff*

*f*

There are a few spots where the unity of the ensemble is challenged (see Examples 59, 60, 61 and 62). The section prior to the *coda* is particularly difficult from an ensemble point of view. A good example is in mm. 288-294. Here, the violin has to

lead the sixteenth notes prior to the *rit.* and, in the interest of maintaining the flow of this section, leads the clarinet into m. 294. The many *fermatas* in the *coda* section also present a bit of a challenge, as to how long they should be held. The piano and clarinet have a difficult entrance in m. 329, after the *fermata* in m. 328.

Example 59. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 175-176

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

*ff*

Example 60. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 191-193

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

*mf*



Example 61. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 249-252

Slightly faster or slower

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc. arco

Pno. *p* *f* *f* *f*

Example 62. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 288-294

288

rit. ----- Slower

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc. arco

Pno. *sub f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f* *f*

Example 63. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 327-330

Here, the pianist would ideally need to have visual contact with the clarinetist to provide a cue. The cellist is also responsible for several important cues in the work, such as in mm. 250-251, m. 288, and m. 342 (see Examples 64, 65, and 66).

Example 64. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 250-251

Example 65. Kam, Sonata Ibis, m. 288

288

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc. arco *f*

Pno. *sub. f* *loco*  
8th-1

Example 66. Kam, Sonata Ibis, m. 342

342

Clar. *f*

Vln.

Vlc. *f*

Pno. *loco* *f* *b2*

### The Role of Cello in the *Sonata*

The repertoire for the clarinet, violin, cello and piano is still evolving, thus the author can only comment and compare the cello part in the *Sonata* to the well-known quartets of Messiaen, Hindemith and Moravec. While each of these works provides unique solutions regarding the utilization of these instruments, they all feature difficult cello parts. The four instrumental parts seem to be in balance and they offer a relatively

even distribution of difficulties among the performers. In the *Sonata*, the seemingly simple cello line proved challenging for the ensemble as well as for the cellist on several instances. Technically, although it does not appear virtuosic, it presents the cellist with some challenging moments. As often occurs in his works, Kam is not strictly concerned with the physical comfort of the performer. He writes music that often feels awkward and difficult for the performer, while sounding easy to the listener. It takes a mature performer to overcome the initial difficulties of his or her individual part and focus on the beauty of the music of the quartet as a whole. Here, the cellist's role is to provide support and balance to the quartet, without ever having a solo. Here are some comments by cellist Marie-Elaine Gagnon:

During rehearsals, I felt the section around mm. 35-48 was a 'battleground' between the violin and clarinet. The two instruments play with all their force in their strongest registers. The cellist has to work very hard here to project the sound and ensure an overall balance. The section around the mm. 48-65 is more rewarding. Here, the double stops in the cello part project well and harmonize beautifully with violin. The section around m. 71 always presented difficulties with respect to balance in the ensemble, because of the projection issues with repetitive low D on the C string. The part around m.110 is very effective. Here, the cellist can produce a resonant detached line on the open A string. The dialogue between the instruments and the color of sound is exciting and interesting. I wish that the cello part had more fast-moving notes. Compared to the clarinet and piano, the cello part seems too simple, yet it is difficult to play. Having performed the trio and quartet versions of the *Sonata*, my preferred version is the quartet. Perhaps the violin and cello, being the string instruments, help each other with intonation and sound issues.<sup>17</sup>

The cello part provides the necessary balance and support for the three other instruments in the quartet. The part demands superb playing skills and mature musicianship from the cellist to effectively balance the ensemble issues. Although the

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<sup>17</sup> Email to the author dated February 23, 2008

cello part is not as complex as the other instrumental parts, it does provide a welcome anchor to the rest of the ensemble. Its primary role in this version of the *Sonata* is to provide harmonic and textural support for the violin and clarinet.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### A PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO THE *SONATA* FROM THE PIANIST'S PERSPECTIVE

The role of the pianist in the five different versions of the *Sonata* varies greatly. The author has decided to devote an entire chapter to the technical and interpretive issues for the pianist. Kam wrote the original *Sonata* for the piano. The second adaptation of the work was the *Piano Quintet*. The other works, namely the *Duo*, *Trio* and *Quartet* followed in that order. The composer had already demonstrated his interest in the process of layering the new instrumental lines as a compositional method in his previous works.

The piano is the common component in all five versions of the *Sonata*. In the earlier chapters of this paper, the author mentioned Kam's interest in the perception of time. The composer himself best describes his thoughts on the subject of time as an artistic medium:

How music proceeds in time, represents the flow of time, or affects our experiences and perceptions of time have been fascinating issues for me during the 80's and 90's. It is probably a conscious or unconscious interest in these relationships or connections between music and time on the deepest level that has been a common thread throughout my works composed during these decades. Each work on this compact disc reflects some aspect related to time and how we experience time in music. On the surface, however, these works do differ somewhat from each other due to my interests in other aspects (some related to time) such as contextual novelty, different kinds of focus, continuity, perceptibility, and new tonal possibilities.<sup>18</sup>

Another medium of interest for Kam is the perception of sound expressed in different textures resulting from the use of various combinations of instruments. Here, the composer explores the various instrumental textures in creating different sound effects.

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<sup>18</sup> Dennis Kam, liner notes to Dennis Kam, *All About Time*, Living Artists Recordings, Vol 7, CD.

Perhaps the best way one could observe the evolution of the piece is to follow the development of the role of the piano in the work. The actual notes remain unchanged through the five adaptations, except for a few moments in the quintet version (see m. 147 in Example 31). However, the performer's approach to the use of dynamics, pedaling, articulation and phrasing changes dramatically from version to version. The differences in the execution of the piano part are mostly left to the discretion of the performer. They naturally result as a way of dealing with new issues regarding the ensemble and tonal balance. Kam, an accomplished pianist himself, fully realizes the challenges and possibilities that the *Sonata* score presents to the performer. He therefore writes only suggestions in his score, knowing that the pianist would have to reevaluate his or her approach in each version of the work. The piano part is of medium difficulty, and therefore suitable for advanced students as well as the accomplished pianists. The author hopes that the work will attract the attention of college students among others, and therefore offers some practical suggestions regarding the technical and interpretive issues.

### The Opening of the *Sonata*

Interestingly, although written first, the solo version of *Sonata* was premiered the last of all the versions of the piece. Pianist Amy Tarantino performed the *Sonata* as part of her Doctoral Recital in 2006.<sup>19</sup> The twelve-minute long *Sonata* offers a variety of programming options for a pianist. If the program is eclectic in choice of period, the pianist could perform the piece in the second part of the concert, perhaps immediately after the Intermission. If the program is devoted to contemporary music, the work would

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<sup>19</sup> Dennis Kam, *Piano Sonata*: February 13, 2006, Gusman Concert Hall, Amy Tarantino

serve very well as an opening piece. Strong dynamics at the beginning make an immediate impact on the audience, and the lingering *coda* would leave the listeners wondering what would follow in the program.

The solo version of the work presents some technical issues for the pianist. However, compared to the major pieces in the piano literature, it does not present a serious challenge for the seasoned performer. The opening statement of the *Sonata* is dramatic, yet powerful and simple at same time. The single-line writing of the part helps create this effect. However, this seemingly uncomplicated opening presents some issues to the pianist regarding the choices of tempo, pedal, and dynamic markings. When faced with the prospect of performing a sparse part for a prolonged period of time, most pianists feel exposed and self-conscious in front of the audience. Another problem here is how to sustain the energy and *ff* dynamics through the 14 measures, without the sonority of the lower register. The performer could try to make a *diminuendo* earlier, in m. 8, and then use the moving quarter and half notes to shape the line and bring the dynamic to *f* in m. 13 before submitting to Kam's *diminuendo* marking in m. 14. The composer's tempo marking is clear. His tempo flows, but it does not hurry forward (see Example 67).



## Example 67. Kam, Sonata, Solo Piano, mm. 1-9

Exactly in tempo but lyrical ♩ = ca. 120

The phrasing is reminiscent of a recitative, with dynamics ranging from *ff* in the opening measure, to *mf* in m. 15.

## Example 68. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, Solo Piano, mm. 14-15

In the quartet and quintet adaptations, the area from m. 23 to the beginning of the *B* section is quite different when compared to the solo work. The quartet offers a tumultuous buildup between the piano's insistent repetition of a G note, and the violin and cello's answers, which complement the piano line. The overall effect is the buildup of energy, resolving in the beginning of the *B* section (see Example 69).

## Example 69. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 23-28

23

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

In the quintet, Kam takes an opposite approach. The long chords played in a *diminuendo* dynamic accompany the repetitive G's in the piano part (see Example 70).

## Example 70. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 21-27

21

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

Pno.

The solo piano work present some challenges at this moment, as the linear writing of the piano part makes it difficult for the pianist to sustain the energy of the opening



### Technical Issues of the *B* section

Kam starts with “interchanging dialogue” in the *B* section in all versions, except the solo version. The pianist has the important role of controlling the pace and articulation of this segment. The composer writes “Strong, exact & detached” at the beginning of m. 35. These are, however, the general comments of a composer who leaves much of the interpretive nuances to the performer.

Within the 13 measures of the *B* section, the pianist has to make several choices regarding the phrasing of the sixteenth notes, the dynamic scope in various parts of the segment, and the choice of fingering and possible use of pedal for a touch of color. From a technical point of view, this section may feel uncomfortable for the pianist, for two reasons. First, the section flows in unison sixteenth notes for the most part, but there are a couple of moments where the writing differs. This sudden change of the pattern in a fast tempo may be challenging to implement on the spot. Generally, the technically difficult spots are secure when the pianist can play the passage without thinking about every note, therefore relying on reflexes. Here, the pianist must remember where and when the unison breaks. Second, the notes that differ fall on the weak beats, making this change more difficult for a player to implement. The change on the weak beat complicates the ensemble unity in the multi-instrumental versions of the work. The author’s own experience during rehearsals points to the use of a slight accent on certain notes. This includes the first beat of m. 35 and m. 37, the third beat of m. 39, and the first beat of m. 41. These self-imposed markings help the unity of the ensemble, and the coherence of the section, without sounding mechanical or fragmented. However, it would be a mistake to

over-do the accents, or to space them too close to each other, ruining the pulse of the ascending-descending passages (see Examples 72, 73, and 74).

Example 72. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 35-37

35 Strong, exact, & detached

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

Example 73. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 38-39

38

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

## Example 74. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 40-41

The musical score for Example 74, Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 40-41, is presented for four instruments: Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The Clarinet part begins with a box containing the number 40. The Violin and Viola parts feature various notes and slurs. The Piano part is characterized by a dense, fast-moving texture with many black notes (flats) and white notes (naturals).

Kam writes many accents in the other instrumental parts, so the piano accents would not sound out of place in this spot. The use of pedal should be restricted to only a color-touch in certain spots. The pianist should make this decision based on the acoustics of the hall and the clarity of the instrument. In a lively hall, playing on an instrument with a loud and heavy lower register, the pianist most likely will not need to use any pedal in this section.

The positions of the black notes in relation to the white ones are somewhat unusual, and force the pianist to use some unorthodox choices of fingering. In various spots, the pianist would probably use the thumb on the black key, particularly in the left hand. Kam's suggestion to play with detached articulation should help the pianist.

Using clear articulation, which in the fast tempo would sound slightly detached, the pianist has the option of using small jumps where the fingering does not allow for a smooth finger change.

### Ensemble Issues in the *B* Section

It has been mentioned earlier that the ensemble may prove challenging in this section. One of the most common mistakes is that, in an attempt to play clearly, everyone in the group plays too loudly. This may be an involuntary reaction to the increased tempo and dynamics. It is important to make the decision as to which instrument will lead the crescendo in the *B* section. The string players may be tempted to play too loudly here, to prevent the piano and clarinet covering their parts. This, in return, may influence the pianist to increase the dynamic as well. The solution is to establish an “assignment” for each instrument here. With assigned roles, each instrument will keep in perspective the scope of the articulation, dynamics, and tonal balance. This observation is true to any well-planned rehearsal schedule. However, the nature of certain musical pieces allows the performers to rehearse without discussing these issues in detail. Kam’s *Sonata*, like many other contemporary works, needs more work in that direction, as the musical ideas are not immediately obvious to the performers.

The ensemble should also decide where the dynamics should subside slightly before making a last big crescendo into the chorale section. The pianist can help the other players in the group by adjusting tonal balance throughout this section. In the case of the duo, where the clarinet plays in the high register, the pianist need not worry about covering the clarinet part. The issue of clarity remains in the duo, as well as the choice of tempo, but for the most part the balance of sound is not problematic. Kam wrote the duo version of the piece for the clarinetist Dmitri Ashkenazy, who premiered the work at a clarinet conference.<sup>20</sup>

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The trio, premiered by the Ibis Camerata, is the easiest of the three works regarding tonal balance.<sup>21</sup> The balance, however, changes with the presence of the violin. The danger lies in taking the *f* marking too literally and covering the cello in this section.

The Ibis Camerata premiered *Sonata Ibis* at Festival Miami.<sup>22</sup> During rehearsals with the composer, it became evident that some adjustments would have to be made to the dynamic and phrase markings. The string players were instructed to play somewhat softer, particularly the violin.

### The Chorale Section

The return of the *A* section starts at m. 48. For the purposes of this analysis, the author has called this section the chorale in previous chapters. The piano part, is for the most part, identical to the opening *A* section. The author here uses examples from the quartet and quintet for the piano part, as the part is identical to the solo and other versions of the piece. In the solo version, the pianist has the option of recreating the original *A* section using the same articulation, phrasing and pedaling as in the beginning. Another choice would be to take a slightly slower tempo here, as indicated by the composer in the following examples (see Examples 75, 76, and 77).

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<sup>20</sup> Dennis Kam, *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*: June 3, 2004, International Clarinet Convention, University of Oklahoma, Dimitri Ashkenazy/Amy Tarantino

<sup>21</sup> Dennis Kam, *Sonata for Clarinet, Cello, & Piano*: February 25, 2005, CMS Southern Chapter Conference, University of Florida (Gainesville, FL), Ibis Camerata

<sup>22</sup> Dennis Kam, *Sonata Ibis*: October 5, 2005, Festival Miami, University of Miami (Coral Gables, FL), Ibis Camerata



## Example 75. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 48-54

48 Lyrical; slightly slower an option

Clar. *ff*

Vln. *ff*

Vlc. *ff*

Pno. *ff*

*loco*

## Example 76. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 55-60

55

Clar. *mf*

Vln. *mf*

Vlc. *mf*

Pno. *mf*

*loco*

## Example 77. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 61-66

The musical score for Example 77, Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 61-66, is presented for four instruments: Clarinet (Clar.), Violin (Vln.), Viola (Vlc.), and Piano (Pno.). The score begins at measure 61, indicated by a box containing the number 61. The Clarinet part features a long, flowing line with a fermata over the final measure. The Violin and Viola parts provide harmonic support with sustained notes and some movement. The Piano part features a complex, rhythmic accompaniment with many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) at the end of measure 66.

After the energetic *B* section, a relaxed, lyrical chorale may indeed be a good choice for a performer wanting to bring sharp characteristic contrasts to the piece. One must remember that the solo version cannot rely on the other instrumental parts to introduce new musical elements here. Therefore, the only choice the pianist has is to vary the tempo, dynamics, phrasing and use of pedal. In the other four versions, the choices regarding the above-mentioned interpretive choices should be made with the rest of the ensemble.

The duo offers a lively dialogue between the piano and clarinet. Taking into account the range of the clarinet in this part, and the dynamics indicated by the composer, the piano would probably have to sustain a good portion of the section in the *f-ff* dynamic range. As mentioned earlier, a slower tempo is an option. That choice, however, would greatly depend on the clarinetist's ability to sustain a slower and therefore longer phrase. In addition, if *rubato* phrasing were introduced here, the rhythmic interchanges may

become more difficult to implement. The trio version has proven to be somewhat difficult to balance in this section.

The first performance of the trio version of the *Sonata* took place in 2005. The Ibis Camerata, then known as the Ibis Trio, presented this work at the College Music Society Conference.<sup>23</sup> The acoustics of the hall were well suited for the cello, having more reverberation than most concert halls. Nevertheless, the cello had to play *ff*, to balance the writing in this section. The pianist, with liberal use of pedal here, and clarinetist, playing in the mid-treble register, unwittingly covered their colleague in this spot. The author would suggest dynamic changes in this section. Perhaps the clarinet and piano both should consider softer, more lyrical phrasing in this section.

The quartet offers several options to the performers. The violin and cello, aligned with each other in the chorale in a manner reminiscent of the Renaissance period, have no difficulty balancing the sound in the ensemble with the clarinet and piano. The Ibis Camerata premiered the work at Festival Miami in 2005.<sup>24</sup> While rehearsing, the group discovered several options for the performance. The whole section floats naturally, and the diversity of sound of the four instruments brings to it an especially beautiful color. The dynamic markings do not need additional adjustment on the part of the performer. The tempo can also be slightly slower than at the beginning of the piece to help bring contrast to the section. The ensemble could introduce the use of the *rubato* in this segment, and the novelty of that phrasing would bring a completely different mood here.

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<sup>23</sup> Dennis Kam, *Sonata for Clarinet, Cello, & Piano*: February 25, 2005, CMS Southern Chapter Conference, University of Florida (Gainesville, FL), Ibis Camerata

<sup>24</sup> Dennis Kam, *Sonata Ibis*: October 5, 2005, Festival Miami, University of Miami (Coral Gables, FL), Ibis Camerata

If the group chooses to return to the faster, original tempo, the section would still sound lyrical, but would acquire a processional character. Speaking from a performer's point of view, this is the most versatile version of the work. Performers have several choices for making their artistic decisions.

The quintet offers a somewhat subdued chorale section, balancing nicely the dialogue between the piano and the string quartet (see Examples 78 and 79).

Example 78. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 49-53

Slightly slower an option

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vcl.

Lyrical; slightly slower an option

*ff*

*loco*

## Example 79. Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 54-61

The musical score for Example 79, Kam, Sonata, Quintet, mm. 54-61, is presented for a string quartet and piano. The score is divided into five staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vcl., and Piano. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor). The time signature is 4/4. The score begins with a rehearsal mark at measure 54. The string parts (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vcl.) are marked with *mf* and *ppp*. The piano part is marked with *mf*. The score includes a rehearsal mark at measure 54.

In Chapter 3, the author mentioned the accompanying role of the string quartet in the work. Indeed, their parts are similar to those of a church chorus. The simplicity of the music is well balanced by the composer's use of diverse dynamic markings. Because of the composer's use of *ppp* in this section, the effect is not grand, as it is in the quartet version. The new elements here are the attention to detail in the ensemble and the quality of sound of the string quartet.

## The "Melting" Section and its Challenges

The section referred to as the "melting" section by the composer is interesting from the pianist's perspective. In the solo version of the *Sonata*, the pianist can employ a sudden change of dynamics and articulation in order to bring stark contrast to the section. Kam does not write many markings in the score, but the contrasting lines here allow the

performer to use his or her imagination in implementing various pianistic approaches. In all the versions of the *Sonata* with other instruments, the pianist cannot implement such a sudden change in the dynamics or the section would acquire an unnatural flow. It would be a better choice to let the clarinet lead this section in the case of the duo, trio, and quartet versions of the piece. In the trio and quartet versions, the sheer variety of parts already brings enough new material to sustain the dramatic build-up of this segment. In the quintet version, the piano and string quartet exchange a dialogue full of contrasts. The strings play with a variety of sounds using alternate *arco* and *pizzicato* articulation. If we compare this work to the quartet, where only the cello has some *pizzicato* notes in the “dream-like” section, the composer’s writing here is richer and more varied.

### The “Dream-Like” Section

The author commented on this section in the earlier chapters as a new element in the *Sonata*. Earlier, the composer explored the two contrasting ideas, the chorale-like *A* section and the energetic *B* section. Towards the middle of the work, Kam decided to experiment with these sections, with a fusion or, in his own words, a “melting” of the *A* and *B* sections. The *C* section, or the “dream-like” section, while bearing elements from the *A* and *B* sections, has an entirely new identity. The author herself, while rehearsing and performing the work, frequently felt an analogy with the character *Pierrot*.<sup>25</sup> The surreal feeling here is most effectively portrayed in the quartet adaptation of the *Sonata*. All technical and phrasing issues are identical with the other versions of the work, so the author will only present observations regarding the quartet version.

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<sup>25</sup> The author is referring to Arnold Schoenberg’s work *Pierrot Lunaire*.

The violin has the difficult role of accompanying the clarinet while playing in an extremely high register. The technical difficulty is obvious. The notes in question are naturally drawing the attention of the listener, due to their high register. Usually in the violin, such high notes are written as part of an important solo. Here, however, the soaring high notes are part of the clarinet accompaniment: implementation of the utmost *pp* is very important. The pianist, while playing the melody in the right hand, has the delicate task of balancing the left hand and accompanying the clarinet and violin. Because both the left and right hands are in the high register, the section requires generous use of the pedal. However, there is a risk of overdoing it, causing the part to sound unclear. Kam, well aware of this, carefully indicates the pedal markings for the entire section (see Examples 80, 81, and 82).

Example 80. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 217-219

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

pizz.

*f*

8<sup>va</sup>

Rea — Rea — Rea — Rea — Rea — Rea —

## Example 81. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 220-224

220

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

*loco*

## Example 82. Kam, Sonata Ibis, mm. 225-229

225

Clar.

Vln.

Vlc.

Pno.

*arco*

This segment is 34 measures long. It allows for the possibility of slightly increasing and decreasing the dynamics through the section. This change, if implemented, should only slightly increase the *pp* to a possible *mp*, and it would serve to bring some color enhancement to the section. During rehearsals, members of the Ibis Camerata



decided to make some additional dynamic changes in mm. 235-243. The gradual crescendo here brought intensity to the development of the *C* section, and allowed the musicians to gradually return to *pp* at the end of the section in m. 250.

### Pianistic Issues of the “Dream-Like” Section

The technical difficulties faced by the pianist in this section are similar to those in the previous *A* and *B* sections. In addition, they serve a higher artistic purpose here so the emphasis is never on the technique per se. The “dream-like” section, however, demands some clever choice of fingering by the pianist. The left-hand part flows in crystal-like eighth-note patterns. The sound and mood of the section requires sensitivity and careful articulation. Some notes in the pattern are not technically comfortable for the pianist. The leaps are too large to connect the notes, and the possible jumps could jeopardize the fluidity of the phrasing (see Example 80). The leaps are irregular, in the sense that there is no particular pattern in their appearance. Kam varies these leaps, so they also appear on the other parts of the beat in the measure. The challenge is in finding a technical approach which would facilitate the performance and assure the absence of accents.

The use of a flexible wrist is very important in this section. If the wrist stays loose and follows the outline of the pattern, the fingers will be able to harmonize these movements into a flawless *legato*. The careful use of pedal also helps in this section. The pianist should change the pedal frequently, but not mechanically.

## Conclusion

Dennis Kam's *Sonata* offers a variety of reworking issues for an aspiring pianist. The level of technical difficulty is not virtuosic, so the work is accessible to younger college students as well as gifted amateurs. Because of its interesting musical qualities, the piece is valuable to professional musicians as well. The five versions offer additional choices for the pianist. The solo work could be performed in student recitals as well as competitions, when the program calls for a contemporary piece. Experienced pianists also could use this lively, contrasting work in their recitals. The duo version would be a welcome addition to the clarinet-piano repertoire. Lasting only twelve minutes, the work allows many possibilities regarding programming choices. The trio and quartet versions are an important contribution to the small, but growing repertoire for this type of ensemble. The quintet also offers possibilities to the student quintet or the experienced ensemble wishing to incorporate this work into their repertoire. Another possibility to explore and expand the chamber music repertoire would be to program two or three versions of this work in the same program. A concert of contemporary music or a composer's conference would be a good choice for this type of programming. It would allow the audience to appreciate and follow the metamorphosis of the *Sonata*. The performers would also have the opportunity to show their understanding of the development of musical ideas in the *Sonata*. Dennis Kam's *Sonata* deserves to become a regular part of the piano and chamber music repertoire. The author hopes that this study will increase the interest of pianists, chamber ensembles, and audiences in discovering this wonderful work, as well as the other compositions of Dennis Kam.

## APPENDIX A - A COMPOSITIONAL PROFILE OF DENNIS KAM

### Before College – Early Oberlin (1960 – 1962)

Major influences on Kam at this time included Bartók (piano pieces,), Prokofiev (piano concertos), Shostakovich (piano concertos, symphonies), and Bernstein (*Fancy Free*), as well as other twentieth-century composers such as Roy Harris.

### 1962 – 1964

Kam's music became atonal due to Second Viennese (especially Webern) influences. He assimilated serial techniques into his own works.

### 1964 -1970

Music became generally atonal and Post-Webern. Kam was fascinated with the music of Karlheinz Stockhausen (*Zeitmasse* in particular) and Pierre Boulez (*Le Marteau sans Maître*, *Pli Selon Pli*). Larger influences included Luciano Berio (*Sinfonia*; *Sequenzas*, etc.), Witold Lutoslawski (*Jeux Venetiens*). Lutoslawski's *String Quartet* in particular inspired Kam's own *String Quartet No. 1*. Kam also admired the works of Iannis Xenakis (*Eonta* for brass and piano, for instance, influenced his later work *Reactions* for piano, trombones, and timpani). During the mid-1960's, Kam became fascinated with the music of Steve Reich (*Piano Phase*, etc.) and Terry Riley (*In C*, *Rainbow in a Curved Air*, *Poppy-No-Good* and the *Phantom Band*). Kam was also influenced by Reich's essay *Music as a Gradual Process* found in the *Writings of Steve Reich*.

## 1970's

Kam experimented with new “tonal” possibilities and new formal structures. He began to compose works with different layers and formal structures resulting in different “versions” (e.g. Kam’s piece *Strata-spheres* from 1974). The mid 1970’s was a transition period in which he began to move away from harsh sonorities and aggressive gestures while allowing consonant sounds and structures to gain importance. In this regard, he admired the work of John Adams.

## 1980's

Kam put forth a more conscious effort to establish focus through repetition – often leading to centricity if not clear tonality. He experimented with gestures that were more “traditional.” He also admired and studied the works of Sir Michael Tippett, especially his *Piano Sonatas I-IV*, and his *Symphonies I-IV*. Kam was also interested in composing “sonatas” as Hindemith did, for every instrument, having completed works for flute, clarinet, and of course, piano.

## 1990's to Present

Kam became more conscious of making works with different versions and connecting/related pieces, for example the “Green” pieces based on the piano piece *Paradigm Green*. The *Sonata Ibis* is another multi-version work from this period. Composer Lansing McLoskey offers his comments regarding Kam’s compositional style of this period:

Although Kam has explored a wide range of styles, techniques, and compositional "movements" over the years, from serialism, graphic scores, and Cage-ian "concept art" to avante-garde modernism and quasi-minimalism, his works from the past two and a half decades have a unified

and distinctly original voice. Kam's music is the soundtrack of a parlor where Steve Reich and Keith Jarrett sit together, sipping tea and engaged in the thoughtful, affectionate conversations of good friends with the ghosts of Benjamin Britten and Bill Evans...now and again Schoenberg's specter will take a seat, joining the conversation.

Immaculately refined surfaces and attention to detail belie a serious, profound undercurrent. This is music that while immediately "accessible" (define that as you may), is in no way shallow or obvious. The harmonies are always compelling -- familiar but curious, at times drop-dead gorgeous -- and though repetition plays a prominent role, the music is always forward-moving, with counterpoint and development that rivals even the most intellectually demanding music. Another important aspect of Kam's music I find impressive is his sense of timing and pacing. Events always seem to happen at just the right moment, and ideas are allowed to unfold in a natural, organic way without feeling forced or rushed.<sup>26</sup>

Grep Stepanich also offers his perspective on Kam's compositional style in his review of the premiere performance of the piece during the 2005 Festival Miami:

Kam's piece, played by the Ibis Camerata for which it was written, is a tightly argued, serious work in one 12-minute movement that makes wide and satisfying use of its basic material. The *Sonata* begins with a strong statement from the piano that soon draws the other instruments in, making us aware from the first bars that this is a piece that will involve everyone in an integrated way.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> A letter to the author dated February 3, 2008.

<sup>27</sup> Stepanich, Greg. "Review: UMiami Composers, Part I," *PalmBeachPost.com*, 15 November 2005 [journal on-line]; available from <http://www.palmbeachpost.com/blogs/content/shared-blogs/palmbeach/stepanich/entries/2005/11/>; Internet; accessed 18 December 2005.

## APPENDIX B – LIST OF WORKS BY DENNIS KAM

*Piano Suite* (1960)

*Sonata* for trombone and piano (1962)

*Quintet* for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and piano (1962)

*Five Pieces* for string orchestra and percussion (1963)

*Sections* for chamber orchestra (1963)

*Epigrams* for piano or harpsichord (1964)

*Five Phases* for flute (1965)

*Ensemble I* for flute, clarinet, bassoon, violin, viola, and cello (1964-1965)

*Ensemble II* for female voice, violin, clarinet, piano, and timbales or tom-toms (1965)

*Rendezvous I* for 2 pianos (1966)

*Interplay* for two ensembles and chamber orchestra (1966)

*String Quartet No. I* (1966)

*Mood Music* (1966-1970)

*Rendezvous II* for bass trombone and piano (1967)

*Nocturnes I & II* for female voice, flute, violin, and guitar (1967)

*Screams and/or Other Things* (1968)

*Gradual and Alleluia for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany* for mixed chorus - a cappella (1968)

*Alleluia for the Sunday after Ascension* for mixed chorus, 2 oboes and organ (1968)

*Gradual and Tract for the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple* for mixed chorus and organ (1969)

*Alleluia for the first Sunday after Easter* for mixed chorus and organ (1969)

*To Heinrich* for clarinet, trombone, and cello (1969)

*Crossings* for 2 pianos (1969)

*Sonatinanette* for piano duo (1969)

*Christmas '69* for cello and piano (1969)

*Rendezvous III* for flute and piano (1970)

*Choral Amen* for mixed chorus and piano (1970)

*A Title is Better Than No Title* for 4 singers (1970)

*Blue Maroon* for 3 trumpets, 2 horns, and 3 trombones (1971)

*Recitative* for pianist (1971)

*Several Times* for piano (1971)

*Connections* for 2 pianos (1971)

*Morphi* for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, horn, double bass, piano, and percussion (1971)

*Gagaku Impressions* for wind ensemble (1971)

*Mixed* for 3 flutes, 2 clarinets, 3 trombones, piano, and percussion (1971)

*Go* for trombone, clarinet, and cello (1971)

*Ad Hoc* for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, horn, violin, viola, cello, double bass, piano, and percussion (1971)

*Strata-spheres* for 8 flutes or 3 double basses or 4 sopranos and piano or 2 pianos, 8-hands or any combinations of the above (1972)

*Two Moves and the Slow Scat* for mixed chorus (1972)

*A Very Valentine* for soprano and piano (1972), text by Gertrude Stein

*Re-Actions* for piano, 3 trombones, and timpani (1972)

*Scatter Four* for wind ensemble (1972)

*Scatter Five* for flute, oboe, clarinet, vibraphone, and piano (1972)

- Continuing* for ukulele and 3 flutes (1972)
- Most of the Time* for mixed chorus (1972)
- Psalm 15* for speaker, B<sup>b</sup> clarinet, piano, and organ (1973)
- Ditto Varianti* for Orchestra (1974)
- Number 216* (Bach Variations) for 2 pianos (1975)
- Timpani Accompanied* for timpani, trombones, and horns (1977)
- Fast, Brassy, and Always Loud* for 3 trombones (1977)
- Three Views from a Looking Place* for bass clarinet and piano (1978)
- Alleluia* for mixed chorus (1979)
- Antiphonal Fanfares* for 2 trumpets (1979)
- Big Blue* for mixed chorus (1980)
- Continuum* (Handel Variations) for mixed chorus (1980)
- Fantasy Variations* for flute and piano (1980)
- Prime Line* for flute, vibraphone, and piano (1981)
- Music for Celebration* for Orchestra (1981)
- String Trio* (1981)
- Focusing* for trombone and piano (1981)
- Fantasy Sonata* for clarinet and piano (1981)
- Ontologies* for piano (1981)
- In Response to Mr. Roos* for 2 clarinets, 2 accordions, and 2 pianos (1982)
- The Epistemology of Delicate Time in Blue Three* for 2 pianos or solo piano (1982)
- Wittgenstein Considered* for chamber ensemble (1984-1985)
- Trio* for violin, cello, and piano (1985)



*Sonata for Cello and Piano* (1985) Commissioned by the Florida State Music Teachers Association

*One Possibility Emerging* for flute, cello, and piano (1985)

*Piano Epic* for solo piano (1986)

*Inventions* for violins and violas (1986) Commissioned by Laura Woodside, Suzuki string teacher

*String Quartet No. 2* (1986) Composed for the Composers String Quartet

*Triple Play* for chamber orchestra (1987)

*Preludes* for piano (1988)

*Music for Strings* for string orchestra (1988)

*Dominant Spread* for 5 tubas (1988-1990)

*Alleluia* for flute choir (1990) Transcription of 1979 choral work

*A Very Valentine* for soprano and chamber ensemble (1990) Expanded to a song cycle based on Gertrude Stein's poetry

*Fanfares (Etude 1a)* from *21 Etudes* for 2 pianos and orchestra (1992)

*Prime Line* for wind chamber ensemble (1992) Expanded version of the 1981 work

*Miami Mix* for oboe and percussion (1992) Commissioned by Keith Aleo and John Dee

*Ad Hoc* – orchestra version (1992)

*Paradigm Green* for piano (1993)

*Then Green Was That and This Is Now* for violin and Piano (1993)

*That Now This Green Again* for violin, viola, and piano (1993)

*Green By Five* for five strings (1993)

*Only Green* for conductors alone – In Memoriam: John Cage (1993)

*Doxology* for oboe and piano (1993)

*Florida Keys* – tuba concerto version (1993)

- With Some Green* – improvisation format (1993)
- Song in Green* for flute and 5 strings (1994)
- Mean Green* for viola and piano (1994)
- Prime Line* for wind chamber ensemble (1994) Expanded version of the 1981 work
- Between Green . . . Softly* for violin and piano (1995)
- Vermillion Lines* for 1 or 2 clarinets and piano (1996)
- Everglades* for orchestra (1997)
- Prelude #4* for piano (1998)
- Prelude, Puzzles, and Postlude* for mandolin and tuba (1998)
- Concerto for Glasses and Orchestra* (1998)
- String Quartet No. 3* (1998)
- Lokahi* for clarinet, tuba, and piano (1999)
- Simply* for clarinet, tuba, and piano 4-hands (1999)
- A Posteriori* for piano (1999)
- Seeing Frankenthaler* for flute, bassoon, and harp (2000)
- Prime Line* for flute, vibraphone, and piano (2000)
- Between Green . . . Softly with a Clarinet* for violin, clarinet, and piano (2000)
- Simply* (arranged for string orchestra) (2000)
- Symphony No. 1* for orchestra (2001)
- Simply* (arranged for orchestra, and for clarinet choir) (2001)
- Sonata* for piano (revised, expanded) (2002)
- Every Tongue Should Confess That Jesus Christ is Lord* for soprano and piano (2002)

*Miami Mix II* for chamber ensemble (commissioned by the Cleveland Chamber Symphony) (2003)

*Lokahi* (transcribed for piano trio) (2003)

*Sonata* for clarinet and piano (2004)

*Sonata* for clarinet, cello, and piano (2004)

*Sonata Ibis* for clarinet, cello, and piano (2005)

*Summer Dialogues* for flute, bassoon, and piano (2005)

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