

Three stages represents one of a handful of works composed between 2005 and 2008 that deals with what I have termed ‘non-development’. These non-developmental works present musical material that is set in dialogue/conflict/etc with other material (or itself), but without resorting to traditional means of development either to produce a dialectic, or to provide the primary impetus for the work’s trajectory.

In the third movement of *Three stages*, non-development is produced at the global level by employing a serial approach to pitch as was the case in the first movement (in the third movement this is a 12-tone row, divided into an 11 note row (D# – A# – A – G# – C – F – C# – F# – B – G – D) followed by the first 5 notes repeated plus the missing E in between the A and G# (D# – A# – A – E – G# – C). The piece’s somewhat serial approach to pitch treats serialism as a metaphor for a static, unified, non-hierarchical (and thus perfectly suited to non-development) approach to pitch. I took a similar

approach to voicing chords (including abundant use of octaves) and decorated this material using extended recorder techniques in order to disguise it (see **Figure 1**, below). This *façade* gives the material the impression of something new, when in fact it is actually the exact same material, but presented through superficially differing means. Despite this, it is the suggestion of the possibility of something new, of a line of development potentially arising from the extended techniques that propels the work forward. As the material gradually sheds the extended technique ornamentation

♩ = 44

1 8

Unsettled and inquisitive, although you know exactly where you are going.

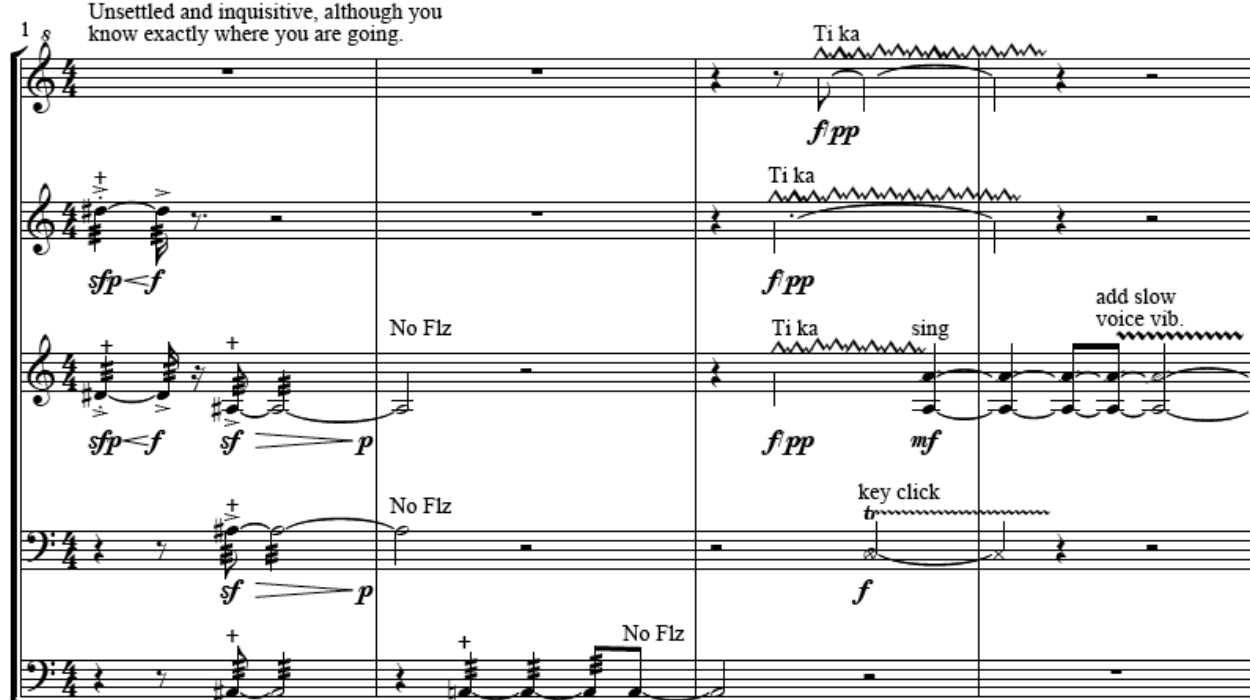


Figure 1: *Three stages*, 3rd movement, mm.1-4

and reveals its mono-dimensional character, the work must come to an end.

This slightly nihilistic approach to the music/material is the root from which the sense of drama in the piece stems. The struggle for development and the internal conflict that this provides is ultimately the intended focus for the listener. The fact that this struggle does not have a happy ending with the music heroically overcoming itself is nothing new, nor does it imply that the material is lifeless or dull. Quite the contrary: without presenting music that is full of potential and character, a failed pursuit of development would sound more akin to dull material fulfilling its dullness.

Non-development as a dead end.

The more I worked with this idea of non-development the more I began to see its similarity to variation. The developmental nature of variation led me to question if any progression of music in time could avoid development. Even the exact repetition of an idea will take on new qualities in relation to the original and can thus be seen as a development, no matter how slight. Therefore, instead of trying to avoid development, I have in my more recent work (post 2008) embraced it along with variation albeit with a greater understanding of the infinite degrees of development that are possible within an idea and I have used this in relation to a more refined sense of pace in my works.

Luke Styles moved from Australia to the United Kingdom in 2001, to study at the Royal Academy of Music, following which he completed postgraduate degrees with Detlev Müller-Siemens in Vienna and with Wolfgang Rihm in Karlsruhe, Germany. Luke returned to the UK to study with George Benjamin at Kings College London and is currently enrolled in PhD studies at Trinity College. Luke has been the recipient of numerous awards and commissions including the Wolfgang-Rihm Scholarship 2008, an Arts Council England Study Tours Scholarship, DAAD scholarship for 06/07, PRS New Works commission, RVW Trust commission, Prize Winner 'Remasterpiece' Competition 2006, Sonic Arts Network Expo 2005 commission, Luke's music has been played at festivals such as the Deal Festival, Darbar Festival, Berio Omaggio, Wien Modern and the Karlsruhe Silent Film Festival. Luke has attended courses such as the Darmstadt International Summer Course for New Music, European Choral Composers Course and has been selected for the 2010 Jerwood Opera Writing Programme.