

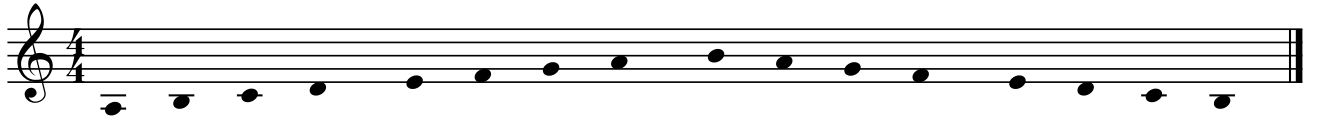
# Melody types

Post Graduate Study  
Maastricht, October 2024

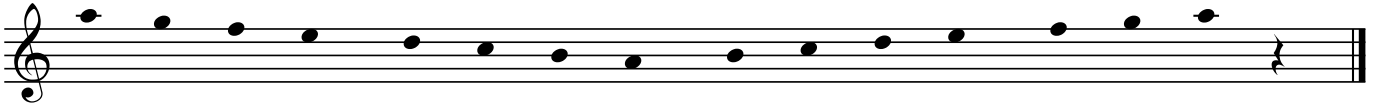
Idea: choose four melody types of this list. Mold the melody types into motifs.  
Make a list of rhythms as well and connect the rhythms to the melody types.

1. Slowly ascending followed by slowly descending:

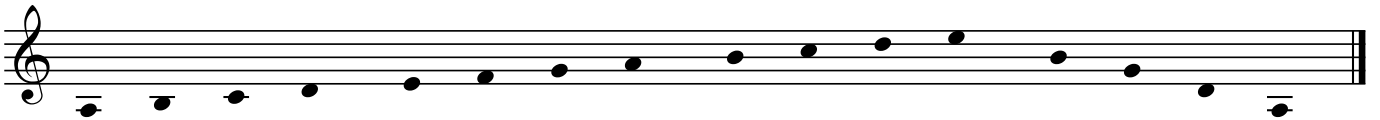
Mathieu Daniël Polak



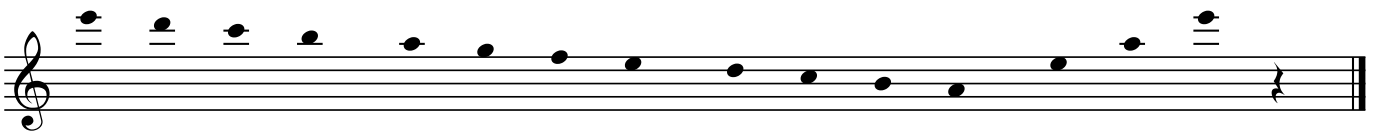
2. Slowly descending followed by slowly ascending:



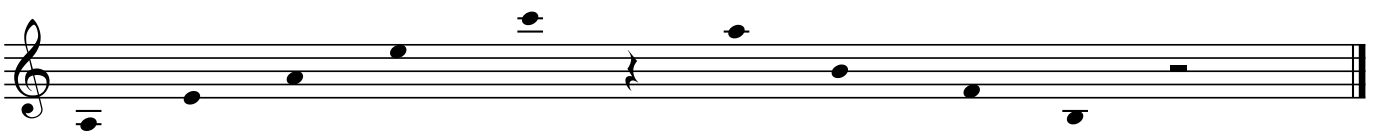
3. Slowly ascending followed by quickly descending:



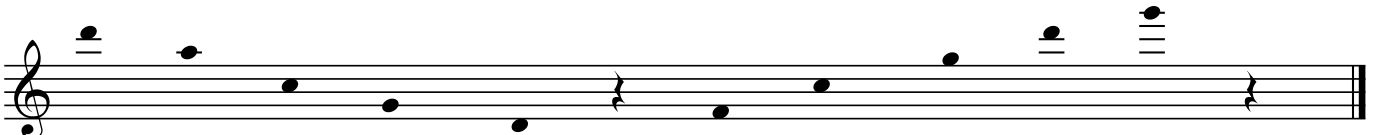
4. Slowly going down followed by quickly going up:



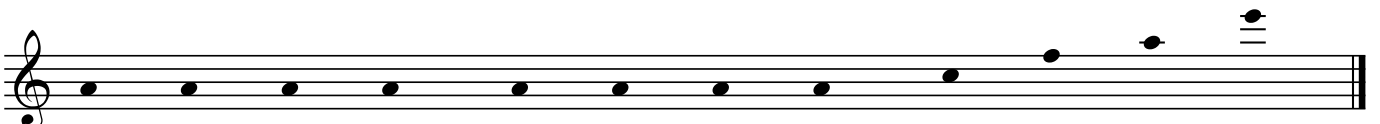
5. Quickly going up followed by quickly going down:



6. Quickly going down followed by quickly going up:



7. Staying for a long time on the same note, then going up or down:

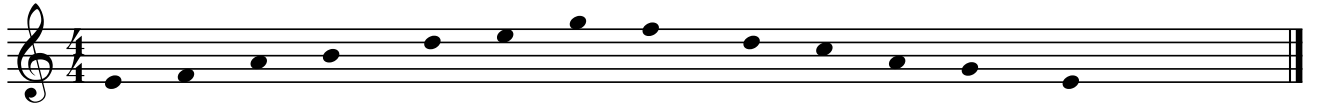


# Thoughts on Melody

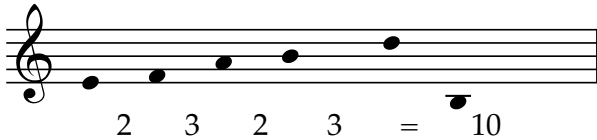
Slowly going up, quickly down

Mathieu Daniel Polak  
October 2024

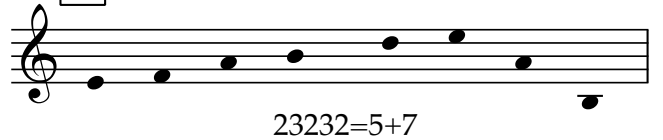
Suppose this would be my melody, based on the Phrygian scale, constructed from seconds and thirds.



**A** Upwards set: 5 notes, downwards: 2 notes.

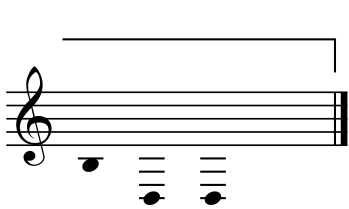
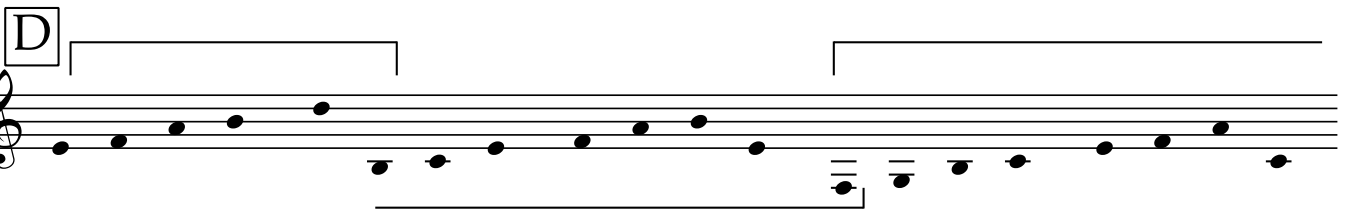
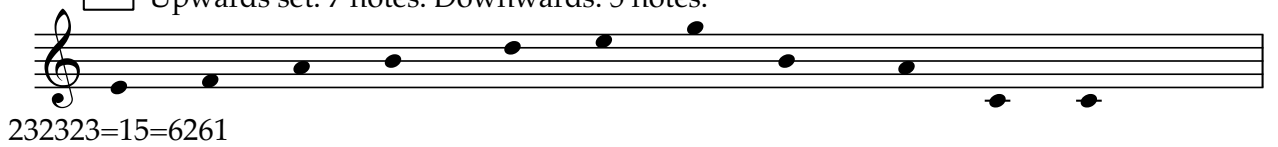


**B** Upwards: 6 notes, downwards: 3 notes.

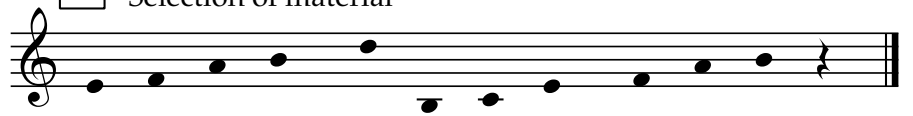


(the downward movement starts with high E and is counted as part of downwardity).

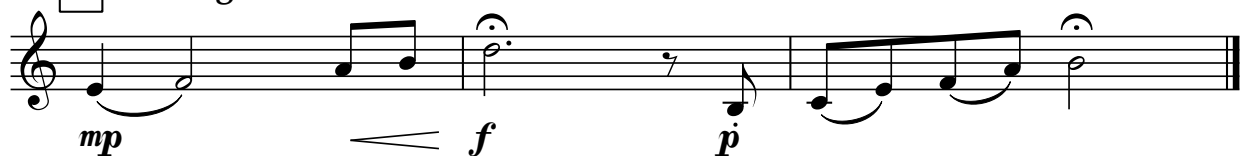
**C** Upwards set: 7 notes. Downwards: 5 notes.



**E** Selection of material



**F** Bewegt (rhythm at random)



**G** Bewegt (accidentals chosen randomly)





Section F shows a motif, a branch of the composition tree so to speak. Here, rhythm, though randomly chosen, is added. Moreover, it has expression marks. Actually, it sounds very good. Notice that I have changed the slurs into staccato in bar 3. Interesting might be to work with melodies built from 3 bars instead of 2 or 4 bars. This in itself is not common practice. I would say that section F is already a way of composing instead of pre-composing.

**F** Bewegt

In section G I have changed the Ab of bar 3 into an A natural to give it more a 12-tone flavor. Now I have a problem. As an experiment, I added accidentals. It sounds great. But is it me? Is this what should be my contribution to music? Or should it be another's composers task? Those kind of problems appear many times. One composes something that sounds nice but if it sounds like Romantic music or Baroque; what would the music then add to the canon? Let me try to compose a section H in which I would reorganize the accidentals.

**G** Bewegt

In section H, I thought about the succession of minor and major intervals. (E-F is a minor second, F-A is a major third, A-Bb is a minor second). It sounds good but I doubt to use it.

**H**

*Some perhapsian conclusions: the Phrygian mode stays. That is nice and in a way modern. The idea of alternation between a B and a Bb as shown in the H section is interesting. I will keep that in mind while composing. I notice that section H is actually an example of A Phrygian (A-Bb-C-D-E-F-G-A) starting on the dominant and ending on the tone that could easily resolve into the tonic A. I think I should make some drafts/draft compositions in which this material is used. Then I can evaluate if the material of this research has a future in a new piece.*

# Phygrian Song

Voice, Flute & Harp

Mathieu Daniël Polak

Postgraduate Maastricht, 27 October 2024

**Comodo** (♩ = c. 100)

(3+2)

Flute

Oboe

Piano

*p*

*Ostinato built from the C section of thoughts about melody  
The meter comes from the number of eights. (10/8's make 5/4 time).  
The division seems: 3 + 2*

**A**

**Andante** (♩ = c. 100)

The rhythm is not at all thought about! Just intuition.  
The melody is derived from the accompaniment. I call this the "Echad" technique.

Fl.

Hp.

Fl.

Voice.

Hp.

## Phygrian Song

**B**

Although it has more structure, the last two bars are not beautiful:

Fl.

Voice.

Hp.

Not so good

Fl.

Hp.

**C**

Here the rhythm is derived from the total Phygrian scale where a minor second would be 1,5 and a major second 2. (EFGABCDE = 1,5,2,2,2,1,5,2,2). Nicely thought but NO.

Fl.

Voice.

Hp.

Castanets

1 This one is nicer. It is like B but without the descending notes.

Musical score for measures 1-3. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Castanets (Cast.), and Harp (Hp.). The Flute part begins with a dynamic marking of *p*. The Castanets part begins with a dynamic marking of *p*. The Harp part features a continuous arpeggiated accompaniment.

Musical score for measures 4-6. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Castanets (Cast.), and Harp (Hp.). The Flute part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Castanets part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Harp part continues with the arpeggiated accompaniment. A "Voice" part is indicated in the Castanets staff for measures 5 and 6.

Musical score for measures 7-9. The score includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Voice, and Harp (Hp.). The Flute part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Voice part begins in measure 7. The Harp part continues with the arpeggiated accompaniment.

Phygrian Song

10

Fl.

Voice.

Hp.

12

Fl.

Voice.

Hp.

To Cast.

Castanets



# Day Dream

Postgraduate Maastricht  
27 October 2024

Flute, Clarinet, Castanets, Harp & Violoncello  
(I chose this title because of the atmosphere, which by  
the way, reminds me of John Cage "In a Landscapae.")

Mathieu Daniël Polak

Moderato

Flute *mp*

Clarinet

Castanets

I changed the voice into clarinet because the melody does not have the potential to carry text.  
Perhaps I could add recitation to it like I also did with the piece "Do not go Gentle into  
that good night."

Harp *p*

Bassoon

Detailed description: This system contains the first three measures of the piece. The Flute part begins with a melody in 5/4 time, marked *mp*. The Clarinet part is silent. The Castanets part has a rhythmic pattern of vertical strokes. The Harp part plays a continuous arpeggiated accompaniment in both hands, marked *p*. The Bassoon part is silent.

4

Fl. *p*

Cl.

Cast. *p*

Harp

Bsn. *p*

Bassoon plays selection of Harp notes to make feeling of the beat

Detailed description: This system contains measures 4-6. The Flute part continues the melody, marked *p*. The Clarinet part remains silent. The Castanets part has a rhythmic pattern, marked *p*. The Harp part continues the arpeggiated accompaniment. The Bassoon part plays a selection of notes from the Harp accompaniment, marked *p*, to create a sense of the beat.

Day Dream

7

Fl.

Cl.

Cast.

Hp.

Bsn.

*mf*

*the melody is a little bit stiff. Should I add some Chopin-like embellishment to it?*

*Maybe not necessary if this piece would be background of a reciting voice. That makes me think: there are already so many songs. It would be better to have recitation when voice would be added.*

As mentioned in the sub title, the piece reminds me of In a Landscape by John Cage. Therefore, I asked Chat GPT to give me information about this piece (see text after this composition). He (ChatGPT) mentioned that the piece was decorative and a dancer was needed. It resembles my wish to implement a reciting voice. (The music as decoration of the recitation). Also the music can be as a cycle. This is an Eastern thing to do. Western would be music that develops.

10

Fl.

Cl.

Cast.

Hp.

Bsn.

13

Fl.

Cl.

Cast.

Hp.

Bsn.

*Castanets are small, hand-held percussion instruments that originated in Spain and are commonly used in Spanish and Latin American music and dance, such as flamenco. They usually consist of two hollow, shell shaped wooden or plastic parts connected by a string. By clapping the two halves together, a sharp, clicking sound is produced. If I would add recitation, the 'singer' would play the castanets.*

16

rit. . . . .

Fl.

Cl.

Cast.

Hp.

Bsn.

ppp

rit. . . . .

## **Notities over "In a Landscape" van de componist John Cage (Nederlands en Engels)**

"In a Landscape" is een minimalistisch en meditatief stuk voor piano (of harp), gecomponeerd door de Amerikaanse componist John Cage in 1948. Dit werk wijkt af van Cage's latere avant-gardistische en experimentele composities en toont een serene, bijna impressionistische stijl. Het stuk is subtiel, repetitief en kalm, en vertoont invloeden van zowel Oosterse muziek als van de Westerse minimalistische stroming die toen nog in opkomst was.

### **Kenmerken van het stuk**

#### **1. Tonaliteit en stemming:**

- "In a Landscape" is gecomponeerd in een tonale en relatief conventionele stijl, wat zeldzaam is in Cage's oeuvre, vooral gezien zijn latere experimenten met atonaliteit en toeval elementen.
- De noten zijn zorgvuldig gekozen om een bijna hypnotische, meditatieve sfeer te creëren, waarbij Cage gebruik maakt van eenvoudige harmonieën en terugkerende patronen.

#### **2. Oosterse invloeden:**

- Cage liet zich inspireren door Zen-boeddhisme en de esthetiek van Oosterse muziek, wat tot uiting komt in de rustgevende en introspectieve aard van het stuk. De muziek lijkt eerder een stemming of gevoel te suggereren dan een duidelijke melodische of harmonische ontwikkeling te presenteren.
- Het herhalen van motieven en het ontbreken van een duidelijke climax geven het stuk een cyclisch gevoel dat doet denken aan traditionele Oosterse muzikale structuren.

#### **3. Structuur en ritme:**

- Het stuk heeft een vaste structuur en wordt uitgevoerd op een rustig, bijna gelijkmatig tempo.
- Cage experimenteerde hier met wat hij "tijdstructuren" noemde, waarbij het ritme en de frasering losjes zijn gebaseerd op de natuurlijke ademhaling, in plaats van op strakke maatsoorten. Dit draagt bij aan de vloeiende, organische kwaliteit van de muziek.

#### **4. Uitvoering en interpretatie:**

- Cage schreef "In a Landscape" specifiek voor danseres Louise Lippold, die vroeg om muziek die haar choreografie zou ondersteunen zonder de aandacht te veel af te leiden. Daarom heeft het werk een ondersteunende, decoratieve rol die niet overheersend wil zijn.

### **Betekenis en invloed**

"In a Landscape" wordt vaak gezien als een van de meest toegankelijke en lyrische stukken van John Cage. Het past niet bij zijn latere werk, dat beroemd werd om het gebruik van toeval elementen, zoals in "4'33'" (zijn stiltecompositie) en werken waarbij hij objecten op onorthodoxe manieren gebruikte, zoals de "prepared piano". Toch blijft het stuk geliefd bij zowel klassieke muzikliefhebbers als degenen die Cage's latere werk volgen, omdat het een zeldzame kant van de componist toont waarin hij eenvoud en contemplatie omarmt.

"In a Landscape" is a minimalist and meditative piece for piano (or harp), composed by American composer John Cage in 1948. This work departs from Cage's later avant-garde and

experimental compositions, showcasing a serene, almost impressionistic style. The piece is subtle, repetitive, and calm, reflecting influences from both Eastern music and the Western minimalist movement that was still emerging at the time.

### **Characteristics of the Piece**

#### **1. Tonality and Mood:**

- "In a Landscape" is composed in a tonal and relatively conventional style, which is rare in Cage's oeuvre, especially considering his later experiments with atonality and chance elements.
- The notes are carefully chosen to create an almost hypnotic, meditative atmosphere, with Cage using simple harmonies and recurring patterns.

#### **2. Eastern Influences:**

- Cage was inspired by Zen Buddhism and the aesthetics of Eastern music, which manifests in the calming and introspective nature of the piece. The music seems to suggest a mood or feeling rather than presenting a clear melodic or harmonic progression.
- The repetition of motifs and the absence of a clear climax give the piece a cyclical feel reminiscent of traditional Eastern musical structures.

#### **3. Structure and Rhythm:**

- The piece has a set structure and is performed at a calm, almost even pace.
- Here, Cage experimented with what he called "time structures," where rhythm and phrasing are loosely based on natural breathing rather than strict time signatures. This contributes to the music's flowing, organic quality.

#### **4. Performance and Interpretation:**

- Cage wrote "In a Landscape" specifically for dancer Louise Lippold, who requested music that would support her choreography without drawing too much attention. Therefore, the piece has a supportive, decorative role that avoids dominating.

### **Significance and Influence**

"In a Landscape" is often seen as one of Cage's most accessible and lyrical pieces. It stands apart from his later work, which became famous for incorporating chance elements, as in "4'33'" (his "silent" composition), and for his use of objects in unconventional ways, as with the prepared piano. Yet, the piece remains beloved by classical music enthusiasts and followers of Cage's later work alike, as it shows a rare side of the composer that embraces simplicity and contemplation.

Through its meditative quality and subtle use of repetition, "In a Landscape" exemplifies Cage's interest in music that calms the mind and brings awareness to the present moment. This piece has also influenced minimalist composers like Philip Glass and Steve Reich, who incorporate meditative and repetitive structures in their work.

Overall, "In a Landscape" offers unique insight into the versatility of John Cage as a composer and his openness to influence from diverse cultures and styles—even before he fully embraced his experimental approach.

## Thoughts on Essential Elements in Music, Mathieu Daniël Polak, 29 October 2024

- Piano students are often far more sensitive to wrong notes than I am. It happens frequently that they play an entire piece, but because of two wrong notes, they feel their performance was a failure. Alfred Cortot (1877-1962), who was known for playing wrong notes consistently, still built a legendary reputation that was unaffected by this flaw (at least among his admirers). This can be attributed to his approach, in which emotional expression was valued over technical perfection. Cortot compensated for his mistakes by playing with a heightened sense of beauty.
- Personally, I find an occasional wrong note quite intriguing. Often, missing, say, a sharp can produce a church-mode-like sound that, to my ear, has a pleasant quality.
- In one video, Leonard Bernstein demonstrates how Beethoven revised a piece, changing certain notes because, while they sounded good, another option sounded even better. Bernstein illustrated this by showing and playing from Beethoven's sketches and original scores.
- This raises the question: to what extent are notes replaceable by others?
- The next point for consideration is meter and rhythm. Nothing is quite as challenging as holding a long note for its full duration. Likewise, "playing" rests is just as complex. The composer thought carefully about this, and note durations are included for a reason. But what if something goes wrong, or the musician deliberately incorporates rubato? Would the piece be damaged? It's worth noting that very young children seem especially sensitive to this. If someone "messes up" *Frère Jacques* by altering the rhythm, they'll likely say, "I don't recognize this song."
- In the synagogue songs I accompany during services, the melodies are often unharmonized, and I create my own harmonies as the pianist. There is considerable freedom here. Naturally, I aim to harmonize the melodies in a way that enables the chazan to sing effortlessly. With some songs, however, previous accompanists have established certain harmonies, which creates a sense of familiarity and somewhat limits my freedom. You might say that the melody acts as the drawing, while the chords serve to "color it in." A minimalist musician would likely choose a different harmonic approach than someone who plays primarily late-Romantic music.
- But suppose melody, meter and rhythm, and harmony are not entirely definitive in determining a composition—what, then, is?
- Even form can sometimes be altered without ruining a composition. This is evident in sonatas where the musician performs only the first movement, yet it seems acceptable that the other movements are omitted.
- I'm still contemplating timbre. As a carillonneur, I regularly play pieces originally written for other instruments. A critic could argue that an "A" on a violin doesn't sound the same as an "A" on a carillon. In effect, an arrangement creates a new composition: "It sounds like a piece by Mozart, but at the same time, it's something else entirely."
- Vyintas Baltakas recently spoke about the concept of *drive*. I'm inclined to interpret this as "direction." In Debussy's *Clair de Lune*, the composer initiates a single, sweeping downward movement in the opening section. If one were to disrupt this, an entirely new composition would emerge. Drive implies momentum, flow, inevitability, motor skills, and gesture. It's not so much the individual notes and their values that create completeness but rather the constellation of these elements as a whole, carrying an inherent sense of direction.

## Gedachten over essentiële elementen in muziek, Mathieu Daniël Polak, 29 oktober 2024

- Pianoleerlingen zijn vaak gevoeliger voor verkeerde noten dan ik. Het gebeurt regelmatig dat ze een stuk spelen, maar door twee verkeerde noten, vinden ze dat hun optreden mislukt is. Alfred Cortot (1877-1962), die erom bekend stond vaak verkeerde noten te spelen, bouwde toch een legendarische reputatie op die (althans onder zijn bewonderaars) niet door deze tekortkoming werd aangetast. Dit kan worden toegeschreven aan zijn aanpak, waarin emotionele expressie werd gewaardeerd boven technische perfectie. Cortot compenseerde zijn fouten door te spelen met een verhoogd gevoel voor schoonheid.
- Persoonlijk vind ik af en toe een verkeerde noot best intrigerend. Vaak kan het ontbreken van bijvoorbeeld een kruis, een kerkmodus-achtig geluid doen laten ontstaan dat in mijn oren een aangename kwaliteit heeft.
- In een video op YouTube laat Leonard Bernstein zien hoe Beethoven een stuk herzag en bepaalde noten veranderde omdat ze weliswaar goed klonken, maar een andere optie nog beter klonk. Bernstein illustreerde dit door Beethovens schetsen en originele partituren te tonen en te spelen.
- Dit roept de vraag op: in hoeverre zijn notities vervangbaar door andere?
- Het volgende aandachtspunt is maat en ritme. Niets is zo uitdagend als het vasthouden van een lange noot voor de volledige duur. Evenzo is het "spelen" van rusten net zo complex. De componist heeft hier goed over nagedacht, en de duur van de noten is er niet voor niets. Maar als er iets misgaat, of als de muzikant opzettelijk rubato incorporeert? Zou het stuk beschadigd raken? Het is vermeldenswaard dat zeer jonge kinderen hier bijzonder gevoelig voor lijken. Als iemand *Frère Jacques* "verknoeit" door het ritme te veranderen, zullen ze waarschijnlijk zeggen: "Ik herken dit lied niet."
- In de synagoge zijn de liederen die ik tijdens de diensten begeleid, de melodieën vaak niet geharmoniseerd en creëer ik als pianist mijn eigen harmonieën. Er is hier een grote vrijheid. Natuurlijk streef ik ernaar om de melodieën zo te harmoniseren dat de chazan moeiteloos kan zingen. Bij sommige melodieën hebben eerdere begeleiders echter bepaalde harmonieën tot stand gebracht, wat een gevoel van vertrouwdheid creëert. Dit beperkt mijn vrijheid. Je zou kunnen zeggen dat de melodie fungeert als tekening, terwijl de akkoorden dienen om het 'in te kleuren'. Een minimalistische muzikant zou waarschijnlijk voor een andere harmonische benadering kiezen dan iemand die voornamelijk laatromantische muziek speelt.
- Maar stel dat melodie, metrum en ritme, en harmonie niet helemaal bepalend zijn voor het bepalen van een compositie, wat dan wel?
- Zelfs de vorm kan soms worden gewijzigd zonder een compositie te verpesten. Dit is duidelijk te zien in sonates waar de musicus alleen het eerste deel uitvoert, maar het lijkt acceptabel dat de andere delen worden weggelaten.
- Vykintas Baltakas sprak onlangs over het concept van *drive*. Ik ben geneigd dit te interpreteren als 'richting'. In Debussy's *Clair de Lune* zet de componist in het openingsdeel een neerwaartse beweging in. Als men dit zou verstoren, zou er een geheel nieuwe compositie ontstaan. Drive impliceert momentum, flow, onvermijdelijkheid, motoriek en gebaar. Het zijn niet zozeer de individuele noten en hun waarden die volledigheid creëren, maar eerder de constellatie van deze elementen als geheel.