A PORTFOLIO OF FOUR COMPOSITIONS

Part I

A Dissertation
Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Cornell University
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

by
Spencer N. Lambright
May 2008
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Spencer Lambright

Four Short Pieces

for

large chamber group
INSTRUMENTATION

Flute
Oboe
Clarinet in B-flat
Bassoon

Horn in F
Trumpet in B-flat
Trombone

Percussion (vibraphone, celeste, marimba, glockenspiel)

Piano

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

Score in C. Standard octave transpositions apply.

Duration ca. 7:00
IV. Chorale
Spencer Lambright

Four Studies

for two pianos
FOUR STUDIES FOR TWO PIANOS

Program Note

*Four Studies* explores different ways of organizing harmony and form and uses several types of process in order to create an audible sense of organicism. Movement I, *Meccanico*, creates a sense of inevitable growth and expansive harmony by deriving a twelve note chord from a single pitch in gradual fashion, leading to a rousing climax. Movement II, *Canon 1*, explores an expanding harmonic progression in exact canon in both pianos at a perfect fifth. Movement III, *Halting*, contrasts disjunct, staccato, unpredictable rhythms with a smoother texture. The final movement, *Canon 2*, consists of endlessly rising lines in exact canon in both pianos.

Note to the performer:

This work should be read with the strictest observance of the written rhythm. It is meant to sound mechanical and any rubato or rhythmic subtlety is inappropriate to the aesthetic.

Duration: ca. 14:00
I. Meccanico

Meccanico, $\text{\textcopyright} 116$

Piano 1

Piano 2

senza pedal

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II. Canon 1
III. Halting

Haltingly, senza rubato, – 92

Piano I

Piano II

A

Piano I

Piano II
IV. Canon 2

Allegro scorrevole, non rubato e sempre legatissimo

\( \frac{4}{6} \) (the barlines and time signature are for coordination purposes only, and do not have any vertical significance)

Spencer Lambright

Piano I

\( \text{ marcato, poco a poco } \)

change pitch infrequently,
allowing a thick buildup of sound

Piano II

change pitch infrequently,
allowing a thick buildup of sound

Piano I

Piano II

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Spencer Lambright

lyhennys

for

orchestra
INSTRUMENTATION

Piccolo
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
English Horn
2 Clarinets in B-flat
Bass Clarinet in B-flat
2 Bassoons
Contrabassoon

4 Horns in F
3 Trumpets in B-flat
3 Trombones
Tuba

Timpani
Percussion (1 player): glockenspiel, crotales, chimes

Harp
Celeste

Strings (10, 8, 6, 6, 4)

Score in C. Standard octave transpositions apply.

Duration: ca. 4:00
Granite Statues

for

chamber orchestra
INSTRUMENTATION

Piccolo
Oboe
Clarinet in B-flat
Bassoon

Horn in F
Trumpet in B-flat
Trombone

Vibraphone

Piano

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass

Score in C. Standard octave transpositions apply.

Duration ca. 8:50
breathe discreetly when necessary
L’AMOUR DE LOIN AND THE VOCAL WORKS OF KAIJA SAARIAHO

Part II

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by
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May 2008
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born 19 November 1975 in Idaho, Spencer N. Lambright currently teaches Composition, Music Theory, and History of Popular Music and Rock and Roll at Middle Tennessee State University. He began his composition studies at the University of Oregon with Robert Kyr. Further studies at the Yale School of Music, where he earned a Master of Music degree, were under Ezra Laderman and Joseph Schwantner. He completed his education at Cornell University under the tutelage of Steven Stucky and Roberto Sierra. Spencer Lambright's music has been performed in the United States, Canada, and Russia by a growing number of ensembles, including the Blue Elm Trio, the Festival Chamber Orchestra in Ithaca, the Philharmonia Orchestra of Yale, and the Cornell University Chamber Orchestra. His ballet *The Unsilvered Glass*, inspired by the poetry of André Breton, was performed in 2002 by *L'Ensemble Synapse*, a Montréal-based chamber orchestra. *Clever Mixture of Little Lies* was commissioned by violinist Jeanine Wynton for a concert of American solo violin works performed in St. Petersburg, Russia. In 2002 he was awarded the John James Blackmore Prize for excellence in composition. Spencer Lambright's music has been described as "brilliantly striking" and "colorful and evocative" with textures that create a "persuasive and involving tapestry." He is currently a member of BMI.
dedicated to my niece, Madeleine Mae
I would like to express my gratitude to the members of my committee, Steven Stucky, Roberto Sierra, and Arthur Groos for their insight and help with my education. I further want to thank Steven Stucky and Roberto Sierra for their help in my development as a composer. I also want to thank Steven Pond, Judith Peraino, Marty Hatch, David Yearsley, Kristin Taavola, and James Webster for their contributions to my education.

I also want to thank my parents, Keith and Carol, and my many siblings, Melissa, Cameron, Andrew, and Audra. They have provided invaluable moral support (not to mention expensive phone bills!) I would not be successful at anything I do without their combined guidance and support.

I wish to thank Kaija Saariaho. Her music is a great inspiration to me – I would be a very different composer and person without her example.

In addition, I wish to thank my fellow students at Cornell, and in particular Daria Kwiatkowska, Kristin Kane, and Stephen Gorbos for the friendship and counsel they provided me. They helped me through one of the toughest and at the same time best times of my life, and I will always cherish their friendship. I want to thank all of my friends at the Tompkins County SPCA, who provided me with a necessary diversion from my studies and the best four legged friend I could hope for. Finally, I want to thank Maya Stone for her last minute moral support as I entered the final stretch of my doctoral studies.
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I haven’t found a way to use the voice as I wanted. Last year I wrote a piece for the vocal quartet Electric Phoenix called *Nuits adieux* and I feel I’m getting closer. I like the voice very much, but I feel that using a purely classical singing technique doesn’t fit my music. Also to make a singer do things that she or he doesn’t want to do - I don’t feel good about that either. Yet there are so many ways of using the voice that I want to do it.¹

-Kaija Saariaho speaking about vocal writing, June 1992

Saariaho’s relationship to the human voice is complex; currently she is best known for two recent operas and several often-performed works for voice and orchestra. Equally, her earliest compositions dating back to her student days involve the human voice. In the 1980s, however, she wrote few vocal works, building a career and reputation with a musical language that relied on harmony and texture rather than melody for its expressive power. She was also associated with the abstract fields of electronic music and computer assisted composition. As evidenced by the quote above, Saariaho was fascinated by the human voice and worked to incorporate it into her own compositional language. By the mid 1990s she had succeeded, and vocal works increasingly began to dominate her output. This culminated in 2000 when she published the full-length opera *L’Amour de loin*, seamlessly incorporating the techniques showcased in works of the 1980s with a fully developed, relatively traditional style of vocal writing. At the present time her reputation is that of an opera composer and a composer of vocal works rather than an abstract instrumental and electronic composer.

L’Amour de loin

Saariaho’s first serious contemplation of writing an opera was in 1992 after attending a performance of Messiaen’s opera Saint François d’Assise at the Salzburg Festival. Prior to this she believed the dramatic conventions of the operatic tradition were incompatible with her aesthetic. Saint François d’Assise showed her an attractive alternate approach: “Before that, I could never imagine physical, dramatic action in my opera. It was my narrow-mindedness that opera had to have that. With Saint François, everything is very internal.” The idea of an opera where little or no action occurs and the dramatic core is in the emotions and psychological motivations of the characters strongly appealed to her. Conventional drama did not.

Saariaho soon was able to line up a commission with Gerard Mortier, director of the Salzburg festival. Mortier was enthusiastic about her music and suggested she write for the same venue she had previously heard present Saint François d’Assise. Saariaho wanted to write an opera based on the life of twelfth-century troubadour Jaufré Rudel. His vida, or traditional biography, had long fascinated her. It provided the opportunity to explore in one story several themes important to her: the themes of desire, love, travel and displacement, artistic transmission, and artistic identity. In 1993, French poet Jacques Roubaud was commissioned to write the libretto but soon withdrew from the project. In 1996, after a delay of three years, work on the libretto was resumed by the French-Lebanese writer Amin Maalouf, a writer of historical

fiction whose work explores the clash between Arabic and European cultures, often in the context of romantic relations. While this work, written in French and Provençal, was his first libretto, his novels address many of the same topics found in *L'Amour de loin*. Saariaho was able to begin writing in 1999 when the libretto was finished. The score was finished the following year, less than two years after Saariaho began working on it.

*L'Amour de loin* was premiered at the Salzburg Festival on August 15, 2000, in a production directed by Peter Sellers and conducted by Kent Nagano with principle roles sung by Dawn Upshaw and Dwayne Croft. It received highly positive reviews. According to *New York Times* critic Anthony Tommasini, it is “A haunting and resonant work [. . .] *L'Amour de loin*, the most important offering of this summer's ambitious Salzburg Festival, is an often transfixing and utterly distinguished work.” Unusual for a contemporary opera, several further performances were scheduled, notably at the Santa Fe Opera Festival in 2002. The opera was honored further in 2003 when Saariaho was awarded the coveted Grawemeyer Award. Also rare for a contemporary opera, a DVD of a performance of *L'Amour de loin* by the Finnish National Opera was released in 2005 by Deutsche Gramophone. The success of this opera solidified Saariaho's reputation as one of the most important composers working today.

Maalouf’s libretto loosely follows Jaufré’s *vida*. While the basic story is the same, specifics of characters and events differ. In Chapter Four the

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similarities and differences between the two versions of Jaufré Rudel’s life story will be elaborated on in further detail. At this point, however, a basic outline of Maalouf’s libretto is in order. Disenchanted with a life of pleasure, Jaufré Rudel, Prince of Blaye, yearns for his idealization of the perfect female personage, a woman who is virtuous, beautiful, modest, without flaws. A pilgrim who has returned from the Holy Lands tells Jaufré that Clémence, the Countess of Tripoli, possesses all of the desired virtues. Jaufré’s obsession grows to a fevered pitch, and he can think of nothing other than Clémence. On his next excursion to the East, the pilgrim informs the Countess about Jaufré’s infatuation with her and tells her that he has composed songs inspired by her reputation. Clémence initially takes offence, but then begins to fantasize about Jaufré. Meanwhile, Jaufré decides to travel to Tripoli to meet Clémence. While traveling across the sea, his anxiety causes him to become ill and he arrives in Tripoli dying. Clémence meets him, but he dies in her arms after both declare their love. Devastated by his death, Clémence decides to enter a convent.

The libretto explores several themes that have long preoccupied Saariaho, among them that of love and death. According to Saariaho, “I felt that I must create an opera about love and death. [. . .] I wanted to go toward these great mysteries of our life that we cannot really approach through reason but that I feel can be approached through music.”4 The twin poles of love and death dominate much nineteenth-century opera, notably Wagner’s Tristan und Isolde and Debussy’s Pelléas et Mélisande. As mentioned above, love in its various incarnations is an important theme to Saariaho. The idea of

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death has been used less in her work, and Saariaho has commented less on the importance it has in her work. However, as a composer intimate with the nineteenth century repertoire, the pairing is natural. Also important to Saariaho is the concept of artistic and personal identity. She has stated often that she strongly identifies with both protagonists: “I understood why the story fascinated me so much: it concerns me personally. The two main characters - the troubadour who wants to express love through music and the woman who has been sent to a foreign country - are two sides of my own personality.”

Saariaho identifies with Jaufré as he attempts to express himself as an “artist seeking something unreachable.” Finally, as a composer living in France rather than her native Finland, she identifies with Clémence, an individual also displaced from her homeland and culture.

**Antecedents to L’Amour de loin**

According to Saariaho, everything she wrote between 1993 and 1999 was “directly connected to my opera.” The roots of her opera date back to her childhood, however. Before she began formal composition studies, her works were all written for the human voice. At the Sibelius Academy, her first composition teacher, Paavo Heininen, did not allow her to write for the voice.

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He believed that her insistence on writing solely for the human voice prevented her from exploring other musical possibilities and was inhibiting her development as a composer. Inspired by his devotion to teaching and fascinated with other musical avenues, Saariaho followed this advice.

A number of her vocal works from the 1990s, illustrative of the gradual incorporation of modal and even tonal melodic elements into her musical syntax, deserve discussion. While they will be covered in depth later in Chapter Three, a brief consideration will be fruitful at this point. The first is a group of songs written between 1993 and 2004 for vocal soloists and mixed chamber ensembles, using texts from Shakespeare’s *Tempest*. Striking in comparison to her earlier modernist works, modal vocal writing is integrated with her previous harmonic and textural techniques. The vocal writing is also traditional in contrast to Saariaho’s prior vocal works. For example, melodies have a falling contour shaped much like that paradigmatic of tonal music. Similarities between these works and the music written in her youth exist; in the context of her overall oeuvre, however, they are a shocking development.

Another important vocal work is *Château de l’âme*, Saariaho’s first work for voice and orchestra, premiered by the Salzburg Festival in 1995 and featuring soprano Dawn Upshaw. It is divided into five movements, each a meditation on a different type of love, with texts from ancient India and Egypt. *Château de l’âme* utilizes a harmonic and timbral language much like that of her work of the 1980’s but here combined with vocal lines that have strong melodic interest and are very idiomatic for the human voice. While not strictly modal, these lines often have intervalllic and contour patterns reminiscent of modal melodies.
Particularly notable is *Lohn*, written in 1996 for soprano and a lush electronic backdrop. Again, the vocal part was written for Dawn Upshaw. This is Saariaho’s first work to use poetry by Jaufré Rudel, specifically his poem *Lanquan li jorn son lonc en mai* (‘When the days are long in May’), which famously describes his desired ‘love from afar’, the theme of his *vida* and of Saariaho’s *L’Amour de loin*. The modal music of *Lohn* uses melodic material found in Jaufré Rudel’s manuscripts. The connection between his manuscript and *Lohn* foreshadows *L’Amour de loin* and will be discussed in depth in Chapter Three.

*Oltra Mar*, a piece scored for chorus and orchestra, is largely a sketch of parts of *L’Amour de loin* and written in 1998. It was commissioned by the New York Philharmonic and premiered under the baton of Kurt Masur in 1999. Saariaho has stated that she used *Oltra Mar* as an opportunity to compose music for *L’Amour de loin* while the libretto was still unfinished. There are direct links to the opera identifiable in the score. For example, the first movement of *Oltra Mar* is almost identical to the music that begins Act IV of the opera. The two pieces are also related via the languages and text they use. While the words sung by the chorus in *Oltra Mar* are in French, the title means ‘across the sea’ in Provençal, the language in which Jaufré wrote. The title is also a probable reference to Jaufré’s *vida*, where he travels across the sea to visit his distant love. Further linking the opera to this work is the text used in the fourth movement, taken from Amin Maalouf’s novel *Samarcande*, Saariaho’s first setting of a text written by her future librettist.

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8 Saariaho is vague on this point. In the same interview she professes that *Oltra Mar* was written “for this purpose” but is not a study for the later opera. Beyer: 309.
Early Life and Education

Kaija Saariaho was born in Helsinki on 14 October 1952. When she started school as a child she also began her music education, studying violin at age six and piano at eight. This is common practice in Finland, where music education is ardently stressed in the school system and all children are treated to a comprehensive musical education. Saariaho attended a Waldorf school where competition was discouraged and children were grouped together based on character analysis. Later in her childhood she attended the Helsinki Conservatory. Saariaho made her first attempts at composition while still a child. At ten or eleven years of age, however, her confidence in her aptitude for writing music was strongly challenged when she read a biography of Mozart. A sensitive child, Saariaho compared herself to Mozart and, overwhelmed by his childhood accomplishments, became convinced that not having written any important works yet she did not have the talent to be a great composer.\(^9\) This was compounded by the reputation and image of Jean Sibelius, who enjoys an unusual position in Finland as its best known cultural export and national hero. Sibelius was the primary role model for young composers in Finland, and he intimidated Saariaho: “When one, as a child and music student, reads about great composers, it forms one’s image [of a composer] and, in addition [. . .] the image one has of Sibelius. What kind of understanding you have about overall musicality [is influenced by the fact that a composer is] an overwhelmingly extroverted creative person. These were the thoughts which paralyzed me, because I never could think of enacting

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these images.” Issues of gender also played a role. In the 1970s there was no female composer of consequence in Finland to serve as a role model for a young female composer. Saariaho found early role models in renowned female writers such as Sylvia Plath, Virginia Woolf, Anaïs Nin, and Edith Södergran. This was not entirely satisfactory, however, and Saariaho explored possible careers outside music.

Saariaho was still apprehensive about a career as a professional composer and avoided studying composition when she began her university studies. She entered the University of Helsinki in 1972, at first studying musicology. She also attended lectures at the University of Helsinki School of Fine Arts. She was still interested in a career as a musician and at this time considered training to be a church organist. A personal crisis led Saariaho to return to composition in 1975 at 22 years of age: “I became obsessed with the fear that I was living every day for nothing, and I realized that I had to try to compose. It was the only thing that had any meaning.” She began composition studies in earnest at the Sibelius Academy in 1975. Under the tutelage of the modernist composer Paavo Heininen, she was given a thorough education in serial techniques with emphasis on abstraction, atonality and counterpoint. In Heininen’s classes Saariaho also began important friendships with several composers who would eventually pursue

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11 Moisala: 169.

12 Beyer: 303.

13 Beyer: 303.
similar aesthetic and technical directions, chief among them Magnus Lindberg and Esa-Pekka Salonen. They remain her close colleagues and musical allies to this day.

Saariaho continued her studies in continental Europe, where in 1978 she attended courses at Darmstadt. This was a pivotal moment in her artistic development. At Darmstadt she attended performances of compositions by Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail. Based at the computer music research center IRCAM (Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique) in Paris, Grisey and Murail were the primary innovators of the composition techniques collectively referred to as ‘spectralism’, which use computer analysis and modeling of sound to derive base material for the harmonic and rhythmic language of a composition. The same techniques are also used to determine large scale form. Saariaho, at the time concerned with the inability of most trained listeners to hear serial compositional structures, was stuck by spectralist techniques and the relative ease with which they can be followed by a listener. Of particular interest was the technique of interpolation, a procedure in which one or more aspects of a texture gradually transform. A later hallmark of her style, it will be discussed in depth in Chapter Two. Saariaho would eventually relocate to Paris and begin a long-term association with IRCAM. Saariaho studied further in Siena with Franco Donatoni alongside fellow Finns Magnus Lindberg and Esa-Pekka Salonen. She finished her studies in Darmstadt in 1980 under Brian Ferneyhough and Klaus Hüber.

Literature on Kaija Saariaho

As is frequently the case with contemporary composers, there is
considerable work left to be undertaken analyzing and interpreting Saariaho’s music. There are, however, several excellent resources that help in approaching her music. In 1987 Saariaho published a valuable article entitled “Timbre and harmony: interpolations of timbral structures,” in which she explains many of the techniques she uses in her music with many examples from her work. This article is a good starting point for a study of her music. Another useful article is “The Works of Kaija Saariaho, Philippe Hurel and Marc-André Dalbavie - Stile Concertato, Stile Concitato, Stile Rappresentativo,” by Damien Pousset, who describes the techniques and aesthetics of three composers trained in the serial tradition but strongly influenced by spectralism. The factor that sets these composers apart from their older colleagues is the consolidation of spectral and serial techniques. Previous spectralist composers were openly hostile to serialism, and developed their techniques in part as a reaction against it.

There are a number of articles about Saariaho and her music written from the perspective of feminist musicology. Pirkko Moisala wrote an important article titled “Gender Negotiation of the Composer Kaija Saariaho in Finland: The Woman Composer as Nomadic Subject” for Music and Gender, a compilation of essays from the point of view of feminist musicology. This essay discusses Saariaho’s career from the perspective of gender and Saariaho’s presentation of herself to the press, music establishment, and composition

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social scene. It discusses, among other topics, the complete absence of female composers as role models, her initial lack of confidence as the only female composer in her social and professional circle, and her later refusal to fulfill a role mandated by feminism and political expectations foisted onto a successful female composer.\textsuperscript{16} In addition, there are several essays that apply feminist concepts to a musical analysis of her compositions.\textsuperscript{17} Particularly interesting is the essay “Desire and Distance in Kaija Saariaho’s Lohn,” which explores \textit{Lohn} and the themes of desire and romantic sensibilities from the perspective of feminine subjectivity.

There have been two brief articles published on \textit{L’Amour de loin} itself. The first of these, “Kaija Saariaho, \textit{L’Amour de loin: Une approche lyrique postmoderne},”\textsuperscript{18} gives the basic facts of the opera and its first production. It includes simple musical analysis, particularly of the modal nature of the some of the vocal lines. It also, very briefly, discusses the aesthetics of the opera, comparing it to other operas and describing it as postmodern due to its musical language and subject matter. Sanna Iitti published “\textit{L’Amour de loin: Kaija Saariaho’s First Opera}” for the online journal \textit{Women and Music: A


\textsuperscript{18} Iliescu, Mihu. “\textit{L’Amour de loin de Kaija Saariaho: Une Approche lyrique postmoderne}.” \textit{Analyse musicale} 46 (2003): 33-43.
This essay provides the basic facts of the opera and its first production. It discusses the connections between *L’Amour de loin* and Saariaho’s music from the 1990’s.

In this paper I intend to further the work begun by Iitti and others and provide a map of Saariaho’s expressive language in the context of an overview of her musical language and vocal writing, culminating in an analysis of *L’Amour de loin*. Chapter Two describes the basic techniques and procedures of Saariaho’s musical language, and important influences on Saariaho such as Jean Sibelius and the spectralist school of composition. The ways in which Saariaho deals with hierarchy in her music and formulates new ways to construct dynamic oppositions are focused on. Chapter 3 covers vocal works that precede *L’Amour de loin*, representative of each period of her career. Particular focus is placed on further hierarchical constructions in her work, in particular the inclusion of tonal procedures, such as embellishing pitches that resolve to structural pitches. Covered in Chapter Four are the opera’s libretto and other preliminary work to a larger analysis. Chapters Five and Six present an analysis of the music of *L’Amour de loin* and how it serves the text. Particular emphasis is given to the use of modal melodies and the tonal methods of melodic tension and release in the context of a post-spectralist, post-serial musical language, and the manner in which Saariaho uses her music to depict the text. Finally, Chapter Seven discusses Saariaho’s opera and style in the wider context of contemporary music.

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CHAPTER TWO: OVERVIEW OF MUSICAL TRAITS, PROCEDURES

This chapter will present a brief overview of the basic techniques and procedures found in Kaija Saariaho’s mature style as background information facilitating discussion of her vocal works and opera in later chapters. It breaks into several sections. First will be a brief discussion of the Nordic tradition Saariaho hails from. Nordic, and Finnish music in particular have a rich history dominated by Jean Sibelius. This highly innovative composer left an indelible mark on his successors. His specific innovations and how they influenced Saariaho are given particular focus. Second is a brief description of the methods utilized by Paavo Heininen at the Sibelius Academy and the serial techniques thus imparted to Saariaho. Third, I explain techniques developed by the French spectralist composers that are important to the subject at hand. Finally, the bulk of the chapter is an overview of the techniques specific to Saariaho’s mature style. Several topics will be covered: the pitch or harmonic field, essential to Saariaho’s technique but not written about until this volume; hierarchical juxtaposition of musical elements; repetition and stasis; process; electronics. Ultimately, Saariaho uses each element of her technique to create dynamic forms creating a new musical dialectic to take the place of the oppositions lost with the abandonment of tonality.

Nordic Tradition

Saariaho has a multifaceted relationship with the music and reputation of Sibelius. While Saariaho was initially intimidated by his patriarchal position in Finnish culture, her compositional technique was strongly influenced by his
music and technical procedures. Three facets of his technique relate strongly to Saariaho’s work. The first and most superficial of these involves paying close attention to registral spacing and coloristic orchestral sonority in order to acquire unusual sonorities that favor a high degree of resonance. One example of this is in the late tone poem *Tapiola*. Between rehearsal letters C and F, the major second E and F sharp sound simultaneously in every available octave in the strings. Example 2.1 contains one page of this sonority. While *Tapiola* functions tonally, the above passage is dissonant and difficult to examine by means of conventional tonal analysis. Striking sonorities such as this feature frequently in his late works and strongly influenced the French spectralist composers as they develop their lush, resonant harmonic language in the 1970s.²⁰ Saariaho, steeped in Finnish musical culture, undoubtedly recognized this aspect of Sibelius, and may have been drawn to spectralism due to its similarities to his music. A similarly resonant harmonic language is essential to Saariaho’s aesthetic as it appears in most of her mature works.

A second area in which Saariaho betrays the influence of Sibelius is in the use of time, in keeping with his tendency to hold sonorities for an unusual duration. Lengthy pedal points characterize the work of both composers and stretch time longer than a listener conventionally expects. The above-mentioned excerpt, which lasts for roughly a minute, is a particularly extreme example in Sibelius’s oeuvre. Saariaho’s work features even more radical use of extended time. The prelude to Act I of *L’Amour de loin* contains an illustrative passage. A sonority based on a resonant B sharp chord (example 2.2)

continues for over three minutes, gradually transformed and elaborated.

Example 2.1 *Tapiola* op. 112 (1925) by Jean Sibelius, mm. 151-160
Perhaps the most important common feature of Saariaho’s and Sibelius’s style is the approach both composers bring to large-scale, goal-oriented thinking. As described by James Hepokoski, Sibelius’s late works, rather than using traditional concepts of form built on contrasting material, make use of ‘rotational forms’ where variations of repeated musical patterns direct the motion of a phrase or larger musical fragment towards a specific musical goal. Forward momentum is created by repeating and varying a theme or themes established at the beginning of the composition (the first ‘rotation’). Sibelius developed this approach in order to create the effect of organic growth. “The musical thoughts - the motives, that is, are the things that music create the form and stabilize my path.”21 This specifically organic approach influenced many of Sibelius’s successors, and is common to Nordic music. Composers influenced by Sibelius’s approach to form are a diverse group, ranging from the French spectralists to the Danish composers Hans Abrahamsen and Per Nørgård22 to recent Finnish composers including

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22 For a detailed discussion of the formative influence Sibelius had over Nørgård see
Magnus Lindberg, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Saariaho. Sibelius’s rotational forms are a powerful alternative to the Brahmsian/ Schoenbergian method of developing variation available to a composer who strives to produce strong forward momentum driven by organic growth and transformation of musical materials.

**Paavo Heininen and Serialism**

Another fundamental component of Saariaho’s musical thinking is an intervallic approach to pitch that descends from serialism. Her education, under the tutelage of Paavo Heininen at the Sibelius Academy in the 1970s was entrenched in serial orthodoxy. The first prominent Finnish composer devoted to writing in a twelve-tone style, Heininen began his career in the late 1950s and quickly developed a reputation as an *avant-garde enfant terrible* in a conservative musical climate. He developed a style combining baroque dance forms with limited aleatorism and dodecophony while avoiding serializing non-pitch musical elements as was fashionable in continental Europe. In the 1970s, although poorly treated by the Finnish public and musical establishment, Heininen taught a generation of composers, including Magnus Lindberg, Jouni Kaipainen, Jukka Tiensuu, and Saariaho.\(^{23}\) While her later music cannot be strictly referred to as serial, Saariaho’s early serial education had a formative effect on her mature musical thinking. Many

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composers in the spectral school formed their styles in direct revolt against serialism; due to her serial education Saariaho was able to avoid this partisan mode of thought and is comfortable thinking intervallically while using spectralist techniques. Along with other composers from Heininen’s class, she has consistently used serial techniques while demonstrating openness to a wide variety of techniques. A nonpartisan approach to the use of modernist techniques characterizes many active composers today and will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

**Basic Techniques of Spectral Composition**

As mentioned in Chapter One, many of the harmonic techniques of Kaija Saariaho’s mature style are based on a group of techniques described as spectralist and developed by IRCAM associated composers Gérard Grisey and Tristan Murail. These techniques were created as a reaction against the acoustic unpredictability of many serial pitch structures and an attempt to bring audible harmonic function back to the modernist idiom. One of the techniques used by these composers, relevant to the work of Saariaho and influenced by the work of Sibelius’s rotational forms, is the use of slowly changing musical forms called process. "Process' is broad topic and relevant to the work of

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24 Saariaho is quite open about her use of many different types of styles and techniques. She describes her technique in quasi-mystical terms unusual for a late-20th century composer: “I cannot be very analytical about my aesthetics because I don’t feel that I choose them. It always seems to me that I have the only possible aesthetic for my music, and that my music can exist only in one way, which is the synthesis of so many things that I cannot analyze it.” She has made numerous statements like this one which can be found on page 304 of Anders Beyer’s interview with Saariaho.

25 Sibelius’s music was held in very low esteem by the French composers centered around Messiaen in the 1950s and 1960s. This changed with the departure of Pierre Boulez from France in 1966, and the later ascendance of composers such as Gerard Grisey and Tristan
many composers in many contemporary music genres and will be addressed in detail later in this chapter. Unique to the spectral school are techniques based on exploitation of specific acoustic properties of sound a composer discovers through recourse to computer technology. A spectralist composer can digitally analyze the harmonic spectrum of a given sound. The partials in the spectrum can then be transferred to conventional music notation and used as base harmonic material for a piece of music. The change of partials that occurs over the course of the attack, sustain, and decay of a sound can also be used to construct musical form. Gérard Grisey’s composition *Partiels* is an early example of this. Written in 1975, *Partiels* uses a chord constructed from the partials found in a computer analysis of a low E1 trombone note. Example 2.3 shows the first harmonic structure in *Partiels*. A process is put into motion in which pitches outside the harmonic spectrum of the low trombone note are introduced over eleven repetitions. This creates increasing tension and a clear harmonic direction. Although atonal, this music is functional, utilizing dynamic oppositions in a fresh, new way. Concerned with ways of constructing an audible musical dialectic, musical processes similar to that in *Partiels* are attractive to Saariaho and have become an important component of her work. Additionally, Saariaho used harmonic spectrum as base material in the majority of her compositions since 1984.

Murail, who were directly influenced by Sibelius’s music. See Anderson: 196-203.

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A partial is a specific component of a complex waveform. Each partial has a particular wavelength or rate of oscillation. The amalgamation of multiple wavelengths combines to form a complex waveform. This determines the timbre of a sound. Looking at this from the opposite direction, a timbre can be analyzed as a complex waveform. This waveform can be broken down into multiple smaller waveforms, or partials. A description of this waveform in terms of individual partials is a spectrum.
Example 2.3 First harmonic structure of Partiels (1975) based on a sonogram of an E1 trombone pitch

TECHNIQUES OF SAARIAHO’S MATURE STYLE

“For Kaija Saariaho, building a form is, above all else, the development of a sense of directed motion, from which one can neither separate the different contributing factors nor fragment the various steps.” Directed musical transformations occurring simultaneously in multiple parameters are an essential feature of Saariaho’s style. Saariaho uses pitch, texture, rhythm, and motivic growth and development in tandem to create dynamic musical forms. In “Timbre and Harmony” Saariaho, influenced by the visual arts, states that she is fascinated by transitional spaces:

The tensions created by transitional spaces fascinated me most of all as parameters with which it was possible to create musical forms. From these reflections some works resulted in which I tried to fashion musical dynamics by using abrupt transitions between different materials and thus to compensate for the absence of large-scale tensions within the

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27 This example is recreated from an analysis of this work found in Rose, François. “Introduction to the Pitch Organization of French Spectral Music.” Perspectives of New Music 34.2 (1996): 9.

28 Pousset: 99.
Finding new ways to create dynamic forms that substitute for functional tonal harmony is fundamental to Saariaho’s mature style. In the following section, her mature style is broken down into several topics: harmonic fields, a technique Saariaho frequently uses to organize harmony; hierarchical juxtaposition of musical elements, an overview of the ‘sound-noise axis’; repetition and stasis, a review of time certain aspects of time in Saariaho’s music; musical process, gradual musical transformations that organically develop over often a lengthy period of time; and electronics.

Harmonic Fields

“In these works I used widely differing textures and modes of musical performance - the only common factor between the different materials is harmony, which, paradoxically, becomes the most stable element of all.”

An important characteristic of Saariaho’s harmonic language is the use of harmonic or pitch fields. Organizing pitch according to harmonic or pitch fields is common practice in twentieth-century composition, although there is little literature devoted to it. Composers as diverse as Anton von Webern, Henri Pousseur, Luciano Berio, Elliott Carter, and Witold Lutosławski have made use

29 In this passage Saariaho also mentions Goethe’s Theory of Colors and his belief that color originates in the transitional space between light and shade. Saariaho: 97.

30 In this quote (Saariaho: 97) Saariaho is speaking about early compositions prior to her involvement with spectralist techniques (Sah den Vögeln, 1981; Im Traume, 1980) but even in her mature style the harmony is often the most static element. For example, in ...à la fumée (1990) for orchestra, alto flute, cello, and electronics, the harmony, derived from a sonogram of a low E♭-cello note is static against a texture in which the differentiation between clear sound(pure flute tone) and noise (fortissimo string sul ponticello) combine with the rhythm to create powerful forward momentum.
of this technique. In the following section, I present a basic definition of the pitch field and show how it is used in the music of Webern and Lutosławski. I then illustrate how it is used in the music of Kaija Saariaho.

A pitch field contains an unordered collection of pitches that loses its distinctive identity when viewed as a set of pitch classes.\(^{31}\) Each pitch is restricted to a particular register, and other pitches are excluded. Although a pitch class may be represented in different octaves, octave equivalence does not hold. In fact, a pitch that changes register can be a harbinger of a change to a different pitch field. A pitch field often functions as a harmonic unit, as the emphasis on careful register placement allows the composer a great amount of control over the audible harmonic profile. The pitches are also frequently used horizontally as part of melody or polyphony. A pitch field can function both vertically and horizontally, as simultaneity and a scale.

Pitch fields occur in a wide variety of twentieth- and twenty-first-century compositional styles. An early example occurs in Anton von Webern’s Symphony, op. 21. In mm. 1-26 of the first movement pitches are restricted to particular registers. This is a result of the canonic structure of the movement.\(^{32}\) While the sparse nature of this piece prevents the listener from hearing the field as a harmonic unit, there is an aural predictability unusual in serial structures. This pitch field, depicted in Example 2.4, has several interesting features. First, due to the canonical structure of the piece the field is symmetrical around A3. Pitches near A3 are close together while the intervals


\(^{32}\) For a detailed discussion of pitch fields in Webern’s Symphony op. 21 see Nauert: 181-184.
grow in size as the field moves outward in both directions. At the bottom and top register there is a striking succession of two perfect fourths. This gives this excerpt a strong aural profile.

Example 2.4 Pitch field in Webern’s Symphony, op. 21 measures 1-26. The A and E♭ axis pitches are represented by whole notes. All other pitches are inversionally symmetrical around these focal pitches.

Pitch fields arranged from the complete chromatic aggregate frequently occur in the music of Witold Lutosławski. His pitch fields highlight particular intervals and have strong harmonic profiles. Example 2.5 shows a pitch field from Lutosławski’s 1976 work for orchestra, *Mi-Parti*. Found at rehearsal number 40, this pitch field is constructed with successive repeating interval classes 1 and 6, after one instance of interval class 5 in the lower registers. This twelve-tone sonority was described as ‘icy’ by Lutosławski, and is characteristic of Lutosławski’s harmonic practice.33

Example 2.5 Pitch field found at rehearsal number 40 in *Mi-Parti* (1976) by Witold Lutosławski. Spacing between intervals is restricted to interval classes 1, 5, and 6.

Like many of her contemporaries, Saariaho makes frequent use of harmonic formations in which harmonic identity depends on registral placement of pitches. An early example of this technique can be found in the 1982 composition for solo flute with optional electronics *Laconisme de l’aile*. Example 2.6 presents the pitch field found at the beginning of this composition. Example 2.7 contains the first two pages of this piece. It contains twelve pitches, the entire chromatic aggregate, unsurprising considering Saariaho’s serial training at the Sibelius Academy. This pitch field is entirely comprised of interval class 1, 2, and 3, although interval class 1 and 3 prevail. This results in a field that can be used melodically much like a scale. The combination of interval class 1 and 3 gives the flute line an ‘exotic’ sound, superficially resembling Arabic and other non-Western modes. After presenting the entire field in stanza 5, Saariaho highlights particular pitch areas, exploiting the intervals contained in the field. For example, Saariaho employs an [0, 2, 3, 6] set in the last part of stanza 5. Contrast occurs in the second half of stanza 7: pitches E, G, and A are repeated, emphasizing [0, 2, 5] and its strikingly different harmonic profile. Different pitch combinations
taken from the harmonic field are emphasized, providing harmonic contrast within a static set.

Example 2.6 Pitch field from *Laconisme de l’aile* (1982) by Kaija Saariaho

Example 2.7 *Laconisme de l’aile* page 1
Harmonic fields have several useful properties a composer can exploit. They appeal to many composers trained in serialism because they can, in the context of full harmonic saturation, provide significant harmonic contrast and color while emphasizing particular intervals. Lutosławski frequently uses this property, as seen in Example 2.5. A composer also has great control over the aural effect of a pitch field. Chord spacing and register have a greater effect on sonority than pitch class, particularly when a collection is larger than four pitches. Constructing pitch formations without axiomatic octave equivalence helps a composer focus on this oft neglected aural property.

Hierarchical Juxtaposition of Musical Elements

Essential to Saariaho’s mature style is a multilateral hierarchical juxtaposition of musical elements. Saariaho outlines this aspect of her music in detail in the 1987 article “Timbre and harmony: interpolations of timbral structures,”34 and discusses the importance of hierarchy in her work, stating that opposition is essential to musical construction.

Personally, I believe that a certain part of our approach to the world is effectively innate. Amongst fundamental factors is, notably, the principle of approaching and analyzing things and forms by way of differences. To apprehend reality we cannot abandon the principle of opposition.35

Saariaho believes that for music to be comprehensible and effective the principle of opposition music must be in place.

This principle frequently applies simultaneously to several musical elements in Saariaho’s music. Example 2.8 is an illustration from Timbre and

34 Saariaho: 93-133.
35 Saariaho: 132.
Harmony that shows the preplanned hierarchical curves of orchestration, polyphony, rate of harmonic progression, pitch range, dynamics, homophony, and electronic tape in the *Verblendungen* (1982-1984) for orchestra and tape. Each has a different, independent progression of intensity. The combined effect is a powerful progression of events where, in a static harmonic language, the listener recognizes minute changes in various musical elements.

Example 2.8 Preplanned hierarchical curves in *Verblendungen* (1982-1984)

According to Saariaho, the resolution of consonance and dissonance is the most effective method of providing forward momentum in music. Concerning tonal harmony she writes, “I would say that I know no other
equally effective means of creating dynamic forms.\footnote{Saariaho: 132.} Timbre can also be used in the place of harmony to create forward momentum. A sound/noise axis is used in the place of the more traditional consonance/dissonance axis. Clear textures, or ‘sound,’ correspond to consonance and noisy textures and ‘noise’ corresponds to dissonance. Textures such as a classically trained human voice or a bell are examples of ‘sound’, while textures such as a stringed instrument playing sul ponticello or a flute playing in a low register where the flautist’s breath is heard over the note are examples of ‘noise.’\footnote{Saariaho: 94.}

The first movement of the *Neiges* (1998) for eight cellos is constructed according to this principle. The piece opens with each instrument successively entering with a sul tasto low E♭. Beginning at m. 7, each instrument successively switches to sul ponticello. The passage starts with a clear, pure sound. At m. 18, a similar transformation begins, with each instrument producing a very noisy, scratchy tone created by over-bowing. The climax of this piece commences at m. 23 and is very noisy and loud, an example of pure ‘noise.’

**Repetition and Stasis**

Another hallmarks of Saariaho’s style is repetitive musical structures that change slowly which are often combined with a process of harmonic or rhythmic interpolation, a process explained in the following section. In *Du Cristal* (1990) for orchestra Saariaho makes use of gradual transformation of harmony and texture against a rhythmically repetitive backdrop. Measures 1-
19 are characterized by a simple repeated sextuplet motive in the triangle and glockenspiel while the rest of the orchestra slowly transforms texture and harmony with held pitches that enter and leave imperceptibly. This builds a great deal of tension as the listener’s ear is conditioned to anticipate unhurried texture and harmonic change. Saariaho also makes use of repetition and stasis in *Verblendungen*, where she repeats a chord subject to almost imperceptible transformations many times with the same orchestration. Powerful forward momentum and a sense of inevitability derive from the slowly changing harmony and static texture.

**Process**

Musical process, in particular the process of *interpolation*, is essential to Saariaho’s mature style. Slow, careful musical transformations occur in a wide variety of musical styles from throughout the 20th century. Such styles include minimalism, which applies gradual transformation to multiple elements but in particular rhythm, and spectralism, which employs a variety of different algorithmic processes to various musical parameters. Also notable, at least in its similarity to the music of Kaija Saariaho, is the music of György Ligeti, which uses carefully constructed processes often grouped under the heading micropolyphony that are applied to texture, harmony, and voice leading. Polyphonic voices that do not sound distinctly are transformed one by one, leading to large-scale transformation of musical events. Micropolyphony, often allied with minimalist and spectral derived process, is integral to Saariaho’s work. Indeed, her music and its slow transformations are frequently compared to the music of Ligeti; interestingly enough, however, she states that she
admires his work but has never studied his scores.  

Musical processes derived from spectralism have a far more direct influence on her work. *Interpolation*, a crucial technique for spectral composers such as Murail and Grisey, is one of the hallmarks of her mature style. A useful working definition of interpolation is given in an interview with Saariaho conducted by Anders Beyer in 2000:

“It’s [interpolation] musical metamorphosis; a certain kind of development based on ideas from many different sources, including minimalism, in the sense that there is no dynamic development, but rather a gradual change from one state to another.”

Beginning and end points of a passage are chosen. The composer uses intermediate points containing elements of both to create a smooth transition from one to the other. The primary musical interest is in the transformation rather than the beginning and end points. While Saariaho says in this quote that dynamic development is not present, in practice in her music interpolation creates a highly dynamic sense of directed motion. Interpolation is additionally valuable to a composer in that it creates the illusion of musical determinism: the ear concludes that the progress of musical events is inevitable. Any break in the process creates a dramatic departure from the expectations of the listener. *Vers la blanc* (1982) for solo tape contains an extreme example of interpolation paradigmatic of Saariaho’s harmonic technique. Example 2.9 shows the simple harmonic progression in this work, which transitions from the first chord to the second during a 15-minute span of time. The transition, accomplished via electronic glissando, lies outside conscious perception.

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39 Beyer: 304.
Example 2.9 Harmonic progression from *Vers le Blanc* (1982)\(^\text{40}\)

A more complicated use of process directs musical events in *Verblendungen*. A repeating fundamental chord, shown in Example 2.10, containing all the interval classes, occurs at the beginning of the piece. At each repetition a ‘fold-over’ process takes place in which one or more notes change and intervals successively displace other intervals. The process continues until the chord contains only one interval. Example 2.11 is Saariaho’s reproduction of the harmonic progression at the beginning of this piece. A homogenous texture with very clear harmonic direction results from this process.\(^\text{41}\)

Example 2.10 Basic pitch field from *Verblendungen* (1982-84)

\(^{40}\) This is a reproduction of from an illustration published by Saariaho: 104.

\(^{41}\) Saariaho discusses this procedure in *Verblendungen* in detail. See Saariaho: 107-123.
Example 2.11 Harmonic progression from the beginning of *Verblendungen*\(^{42}\)

**Electronics**

Electronics have played an integral role for Saariaho’s technique and sound world since her work at IRCAM in the early 1980s. In “Timbre and harmony” she states that “computers offer the composer a starting point which is clearly more revolutionary than present day instrumental music.” She further says that “the richest creative possibilities are at present to be found in the combination of computer resources and acoustic instruments: one thus comes fully to exploit their respective advantages and to compensate for their deficiencies.”\(^{43}\) In two primary ways Saariaho uses electronics in her music.

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\(^{43}\) Saariaho: 130.
The first is computer assisted composition. As outlined in “Timbre and harmony”, Saariaho uses electronic means to organize musical material. In addition to the spectralist technique of using computers to analyze sound in order to obtain harmonic material, Saariaho uses computers to organize other musical parameters and control interpolation. Discussing Verblendungen, Saariaho states that “I was increasingly interested in the combined possibilities of these two parameters [timbre and harmony], as well as being fascinated by the overall possibilities offered by the computer as regards the organization of musical structures.” She has since used computer-assisted composition less. In a 2006 interview, Saariaho discussed her use of computer-assisted composition: “I've used many different things over the years. I stopped using nearly everything.” She later says, “Sometimes, when I feel like it, I analyze some sounds [. . .] to give me fresh harmonic structures [. . .] but many things I used to do, like to generate rhythmic interpolations, I don't do much at all.”

Saariaho also uses computers to synthesize sound and transform the sound of acoustic instruments. While she has written works for tape, generally acoustic instruments are combined with electronic sound production in her work. Lichtbogen (1985-1986) for large chamber ensemble and electronics is characteristic. Subtle electronic sounds combine with the instruments creating textures impossible without electronic means. At times it is difficult to distinguish which sounds are produced by the acoustic instruments and which are produced by electronic means. In “Acoustic/ Electroacoustic: The

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Relationship with Instruments," Simon Emmerson has broken down Saariaho's use of electronics in this work into four functions: foregrounding, estrangement, homogenisation, and re-balancing. The electronics expand, blend, and combine with the acoustic aural component rather than provide contrast. Foregrounding uses electronics to project an instrument's sound farther forward in the texture than would ordinarily be possible. Estrangement uses electronics to transform an instrument's timbre and causes the ear to be uncertain of whether or not the sound is coming from the acoustic instrument. Homogenisation uses electronics to blend a texture. Re-balancing occurs when the composer uses electronics to re-balance the ensemble, bringing the volume of particular instruments up so they can be heard in textures where they would ordinarily be inaudible. Saariaho also uses electronic sounds more conventionally, bringing sounds such as recordings of human speech or sounds recorded from nature to her orchestration palate.

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CHAPTER THREE: SAARIAHO’S VOCAL WORKS PRIOR TO

L’AMOUR DE LOIN

While Saariaho’s earliest published composition is Bruden, a song cycle for soprano and chamber ensemble, her reputation in the 1980s rested primarily on instrumental and electronic music, as discussed in Chapter One. The role of melody figured less prominently in her work than other musical elements. In the 1980s Saariaho did publish a few vocal works including Grammaire des Rêves (1988-89) for soprano, alto, and chamber ensemble and the eccentric and similarly titled From the Grammar of Dreams (1988). The vocal writing in both of these works uses frequent sprechstimme and other extended vocal techniques and differs greatly from that found in the works of the 1990s. Even in an early vocal work that contains conventional vocal timbres such as Sah den Vögeln (1982), the voice is treated much like the other instruments.

In the 1990s Saariaho’s output began to feature numerous vocal works with relatively traditional melodic writing, a stylistic break with her work from


the 1980s. *Nuits, adieux* serves as a bridge between her earlier vocal writing and later style. It incorporates *sprechstimme* and other elements of her previous vocal syntax in a transitional style that anticipates the later works of the 1990’s. This chapter will provide an overview of select vocal works from Saariaho’s oeuvre that precede her first opera. Certain traits are common to all of these works, but others change significantly. First, I will discuss *Sah den Vögeln* as representative of vocal writing early in Saariaho’s career. Following this will be an analysis and overview of the vocal writing in the transitional *Nuits, adieux*. Finally, I will discuss three works of the 1990s: *Ariel’s Hail* (2000) from *The Tempest Songbook*, *La Liane* from *Château de l’âme*, and *Oltra Mar*. This will serve as preparation for later analysis and discussion of *L’Amour de loin*.

**Sah den Vögeln**

*Sah den Vögeln*, written under the tutelage of Brian Ferneyhough, is scored for soprano, flute, oboe, cello, prepared piano, and live electronics.\(^{48}\) For the text, Saariaho uses a German translation of a collage of anonymous American underground poets. It is the first work in which Saariaho attempts to create a form based on the idea of tension and release multivalently applied to multiple simultaneous musical parameters. She outlines this in “Timbre and harmony” and provides a sketch, reproduced here in Example 3.1, of how she conceptualized mm. 1-40. Example 3.2 reproduces the corresponding pages from the score.

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Example 3.1 Saariaho’s preliminary sketch of mm. 1-40 of *Sah den Vögeln*\(^{49}\)

Example 3.2 *Sah den Vögeln* mm. 1-39

\(^{49}\) This reproduction is taken from Saariaho: 96.
Example 3.2 (Continued)

Four separate gestures are mapped out in detail. Mm. 1-9 employ only the flute and oboe. Dynamics, texture, and range are ‘stable’ and are not significantly altered. Pitch, however, is subject to a musical process in which pitches are added as the gesture progresses. The music increases in intensity as the tessitura grows in density. Pitch and tessitura are subject to a mirror process in which each instrument has its own expanding collection of pitches. The pitch sets of the two instruments are inversionally related around the focal pitches A5 and C5. In m. 10 only the piano sounds and the piece abruptly begins a new gesture. In this measure, rhythm, texture, and dynamics remain stable while the pitch and range expand. The tessitura begins as a single pitch
and expands to a major seventh. The pitches expand outward along a G axis, creating an [0, 1, 4, 7, 8] pentachord.

Mm. 11-39 are more complex. Saariaho subjects the flute and oboe to a process similar to mm. 1-9. The vocal part has a related but different set of stable and unstable elements. Dynamics remain constant as rhythm, pitch, and range first expand, then contract. The tessitura of the flute and oboe are identical. Rather than the descending melodic contour that is the norm in tonal styles, the melody, following Saariaho’s chart, expands outward in both directions until bar 32 where it is also roughly identical (it goes down a whole step lower) to that of the flute and oboe. Although the soprano clearly forms the principle voice, this creates a surprising homogeneity in a contrapuntal texture.

The vocal writing in this work introduces elements that are further elaborated in the later music of the 1990s and early 2000s. The writing is idiomatic and, although the pitch language is atonal, the vocal line contains primarily stepwise motion and small leaps. A ‘sigh’ motive, in which a pitch dies out as it descends a half step, is characteristic of her later music and begins in the vocal line at m. 14. It is developed, reaching a melodic high point E♭ in m. 26. The rhythmic structure of the vocal line also resembles that found in later works. The line unfolds freely, without rhythmic repetition, which creates an illusion of unmeasured rhythm, with an effect much like plainchant. A *sempre legatissimo* marking in m. 16 combined with added resonance provided by the electronics further evokes chant. Unlike chant, however, and dissimilar to her later works, the line speeds up and grows in complexity while preserving metrical freedom.
**Nuits, adieux**

In the quote that opens Chapter One, Saariaho states that although she is still not able to write for the human voice in a manner that satisfies her, *Nuits, adieux* comes close. The score to bars 1-24 is in Example 3.3. Written in 1991, this work is written for four voices (soprano, mezzo soprano, tenor, bass) and live electronics. The text is from a poem by Jacques Roubaud from the 1990 collection *Echanges de la lumière*:

Dans l'air
s'arrache
de la terre
au noir la lumière
et la crache
dans l'air
la nuit rêche jusqu'aux bords
des arbres
dans la terre

Nuit
tu
es venue
les
lumières
ont poussé
sur

les herbes, les pentes
vidées
de

lumières, les lumières
sont
devenues
sombres

dans l'herbe
s'attachent
de la terre
au noir les grains les vagues
de la lumière
et les crachent
dans l'herbe la nuit réelle jus-
qu'au bord
des arbres
sous la terre

Nuit, c'est cela
chevelure
de noir révérend la lumière n'est
que pour le définir
ainsi
la nuit première précéda le jour.\textsuperscript{50}

This poem features themes characteristic of Saariaho's work such as
darkness, light, night. Also characteristic is the serious nature of the text:
Saariaho’s music and poem settings never make use of irony or humor. This is
in fact one of the most striking aspects of her aesthetic: if possible Saariaho
avoids texts with implicit humor and avoids any potential opportunities for it in
her music.

Example 3.3 *Nuits, adieux* (1991) mm. 1-25
Example 3.3 (Continued)

*Nuits, adieux* contains many elements common to Saariaho’s music of
the 1990s. First, as in many of her other works the primary effect of the
electronics is increased reverberation and amplification (homogenization and
re-balancing) as the electronics alter the acoustic sounds rather than add
something new. Also a signature of her music is the extensive use of pedal
points. The mezzo-soprano sings a pedal D above middle C without
interruption throughout this excerpt. The soprano sings a melody that begins
on consonance an A above the D pedal and while containing wide leaps stays
consonant until the C# in m. 6. In many ways the melody functions like tonal
music. Certain pitches are subordinate to other pitches, with clear
appoggiaturas, and spelled to indicate this. In mm. 2-3, a high G♭ eventually
resolves down to an F, a minor third above the D pedal. In m. 4, a B♭ resolves
down to an A, forming a perfect fifth above the pedal. This hierarchical style of
melodic pitch organization is structurally quite different from that in *Sah den
Vögeln*, where a traditional pitch hierarchy is not present. Although never
explicitly stated, the intervals of a tonic triad are here made structurally
prominent. Consequently, while the melody is not strictly modal it sounds like it is. The element of process is also not important in this excerpt (although it
becomes essential later in the piece). Later works make frequent uses of
similar melodic structures as well as the literal use of minor modes, often to
indicate antiquity and to set medieval texts.

The rhythm of the soprano line in mm. 1-24 also anticipates of future
works involving medieval topics. Downbeats are rarely given emphasis and
the rhythms are intricate, involving complex tuplets creating the effect of
metrical freedom similar to that heard in contemporary performances of
plainchant. The tenor and bass, polyrhythmic against each other, further add
to a chant-like effect whispering specified rhythms without clear pitch. This
extended technique is a favorite of Saariaho’s. She uses it often in both vocal
and instrumental works. In several pieces, notably *Noa Noa* for flute and
electronics she instructs the instrumentalist to whisper into an instrument or
microphone. The complexity of the rhythm has an effect similar to
unmeasured chant, and while carefully notated, sounds metrically free.

*The Tempest Songbook*

Two years after *Nuits, adieux* Saariaho published a short setting of lines
from Act III Scene II of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* titled *Caliban’s Dream* for
baritone voice, clarinet, mandolin, guitar, harp, and double bass. Several other short settings of texts from this play for soprano or baritone and similar chamber ensembles followed. Published collectively as *The Tempest Songbook*, they are often performed as a set. The vocal writing of *Nuits, adieux* is further expanded in these works. *Ariel’s Hail*, scored for soprano, harp, and flute is representative. Unlike *Nuits, adieux*, it only uses conventional vocal techniques. The harmony, the basics of which are shown in Example 3.4, is organized into pitch fields. Throughout, the fields are uncovered at the start of each gesture by an upward arpeggiation in the harp that is later continued in the flute line. The vocal line, incorporated nicely into the pitch field, shares traits with *Nuits, adieux*. For example, there is a clear hierarchy of pitches where pitches that outline triads are structural. Other subordinate pitches resolve to the structural ones. Measures 1-7 contain the first harmonic field. This pitch field, based on A♯, is analogous to a tonic triad in tonal music. The vocal line clearly articulates a structural D, F♯, and A. The lowest note in the harp is A♯, also a structural pitch. An ambiguous D major/A♯ augmented triad is implied.
Example 3.4 Pitch structure in *Ariel’s Hail* (2000)

Several motives are repeated and elaborated, much as in conventional tonal vocal writing. Two short phrases that begin measures 4 and 8 state and elaborate a motive made of two sixteenth notes that rise a half step and lead to a prolonged pitch. Pitch field 2 begins in measure 8, heightening the contrast between the two phrases. There is a clear hierarchy between these two fields where the second is subordinate to the first with an effect comparable to the binary structure of many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century melodic phrases. This is a new development in Saariaho’s work and points to relatively traditional harmonic progression techniques used in *L’Amour de loin.*
Development of these motives combined with a hierarchical pitch language recurs throughout this piece, resulting in a very traditional, almost tonal melody and song structure.

**Château de l'âme**

*Château de l'âme*, the 1995 setting of five songs on the subject of love for soprano soloist, female chorus, and orchestra, anticipates *L’Amour de loin* both in the subject matter of the text and musical material. The texts, taken from ancient Hindu and Egyptian sources, address different types of love including romantic love, parental love, and the love of nature and the Earth. The first song, representative of the vocal writing in this work, is titled *La Liane*. The text, from the Hindu scripture *Artharva Veda*, concerns the love between a man and a woman.

Different transformations of a highly resonant chord based on a low bass B₉ shape this song. Figure 3.5 contains the two versions of this chord that sounds in m. 39-52. This chord has several interesting features. Dissonant and complex at m. 39, the pitches that continue after bar 40 make up a widely spaced B₉ triad with an added fourth above the bass. The orchestration here is striking: the lowest pitch sounds in the double basses while the violins and violas play the highest pitches in artificial harmonics. The chorus sings D above middle C, occasionally doubled by the flutes. The aural result is very consonant, but the spacing gives this chord a much more unusual and haunting effect than generally obtained with a comparable pitch set. Figure 3.6 shows the soprano line in mm. 39-51. While portions of the chromatic aggregate are filled in, the effect is modal. Figure 3.7 presents the
pitches used by the soprano line in Schenkerian notation, indicating structural pitches. Embellishing gestures including passing tones, neighbor tones, appoggiaturas, suspensions, and escape tones designate which notes are structural and which are not. The central structural pitch in the melody is D, which when complemented by the chorus’s D sounding louder than the bass sounds like the central pitch or tonic. Other structural pitches include G, A, and C. At the structural level, mm. 39-46 prolong a D – A perfect fifth. A prominent F, although not structural, further implies a D minor triad. Embellishing pitches consistently resolve to these focal points much like in a modal or Renaissance vocal line. The shape of the melody also alludes to past styles. Tension is created as the melodic line rises and release occurs when the line falls. The final structural pitch is a held D#, which appears to contradict the modal nature of this line. This D#, however, anticipates a chord change that occurs in m. 52, and clearly sounds like a change of mode or key. Other musical features of this melody also points to L’Amour de loin. The slow tempo and pace of the melody still allude to chant. Here, unlike her work from the 1980’s, clear rhythmic motives are repeated, also characteristic of Saariaho’s opera.

Example 3.5 Harmonic fields in mm. 39-51 of Château de l’âme, La Liane (1995)
Example 3.6 Soprano line in mm. 39-51 of *Château de l’âme, La Liane*

Example 3.7 Reduction of soprano line in mm. 39-51 of *Château de l’âme, La Liane*

**Oltra Mar**

The last pre-*L’Amour de loin* piece this chapter will address is *Oltra Mar*. *Oltra Mar* consists of seven movements, or ‘preludes’ as stated in the score. Preludes I – IV all include music found later in *L’Amour de loin*. Prelude I contains the music that introduces Act IV of *L’Amour de loin*. Distinguished by a highly resonant chord slowly arpeggiated upward and lushly orchestrated using the full forces of the orchestra and chorus, it is one of the most striking
moments from either work. The music from Prelude II recurs in Act III. The music in this prelude, an ascending pentuplet in the harp accompanied by both the high and low extremes of string register, is later used in _L’Amour de loin_ to signify Clémence. Passages from the _Deuxième tableau_ of Act III in _L’Amour de loin_ originate from Prelude III. Prelude IV contains music that resurfaces in the _Troisième tableau_ of _L’Amour de loin_ Act IV.

The title _Oltra Mar_ also alludes to the future opera. In Old Provençal, the language of Jaufré Rudel, ‘Oltra Mar’ means ‘across the sea.’ The text of _Oltra Mar_ also has links to the opera. While all preludes use the chorus, only II, IV, and VI have text. They are titled respectively ‘amour,’ ‘temps,’ and ‘mort,’ or ‘love,’ ‘time,’ and ‘death.’ The text in Prelude IV is from Amin Maalouf’s historical novel _Samarcande_, a fictional depiction of the life of famed Persian poet Omar Khayyam. This is the first of many works by Saariaho that use text written by Amin Maalouf. In English it translates as follows:

> Time has two faces,
> It has two dimensions,
> Its length in the rhythm of the sun,
> Its depth in the rhythm of passions.\(^{51}\)

The first prelude introduces a motive used frequently throughout the later opera. This can be seen in Example 3.8, a reproduction of the string and chorus in mm. 16-23. A pitch field is arpeggiated upward, each successive pitch given to a different instrument and held after it sounds so a thick chord builds up. Example 3.9 is the pitch field in this excerpt. Characteristic of Saariaho’s choral writing, the chorus is treated as another instrument in the

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orchestra. It is not given a text; rather, held vowels and whispered tones are sung and spoken. The lack of a text allows the chorus to blend with the orchestra, creating another orchestral color rather than a conventional vocal part. The pitch field, a harmonic construction similar to many found in the opera, is made up of an \([0, 2, 4, 7, 9]\) pentachord. It is arranged highlighting a perfect fifth followed by a minor third and a further perfect fifth. The aural effect, resonant and relatively consonant, is that of a dominant function despite the fact that there is no A\# to serve as a third above the F\#, and implies a future resolution.

Example 3.8 *Oltra Mar* Prelude I strings and chorus bars 16-23

Example 3.9 Pitch field from *Oltra Mar* Prelude I bars 16-23
This chapter contains background information necessary for a study of *L’Amour de loin*. Several topics will be covered. A brief analysis and discussion of *Lohn*, Saariaho’s first setting of poetry by Jaufré Rudel, opens this chapter. *Lohn* continues the new methods of melodic construction begun in the early 1990’s, further pointing towards her future opera. Following this I present basic information about Jaufré and his *vida*. This chapter will conclude with basic information about the libretto, including background information on Amin Maalouf.

**Lohn**

A setting of Jaufré’s poem *Lanquan li jorn son lonc en mai* (When the days are long in May), *Lohn* uses the Occitan word for “distant” as its title. This poem, presented here in English translation is Jaufré’s work most evocative of the “love from afar” legend:

> When the days are long in May  
> The sweet song of birds from afar  
> Seems lovely to me  
> And when I have left there  
> I remember a distant love  
> I walk bent and bowed with desire  
> So much so that neither song nor Hawthorn flower  
> Please me more than icy winter.

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Never will I enjoy love
If I do not enjoy this distant love
For a nobler or better one I do not know
Anywhere, neither near nor far
So high is its true, real price
That there, in the kingdom of the Saracens
I wish to be proclaimed her captive.

Sad and joyous, I will separate from her
When I see that distant love
But I know not when I will see her
For our lands are too far away
There are so many passages and paths
And in this I am no seer
But let everything be according to
God’s will.

I will feel joy for sure when I ask her
For the love of God the distant love
And if it pleases her I will live
Near her even if I am from far away
Then will come our faithful meeting
When I, the faraway lover,
Will be so near
That I will console myself
With her beautiful words.

I really trust in the Lord
Through whom I will see
The distant love
But for something that fails me
I have two sorrows for she is
So far away
Ah, if only I were a pilgrim there
So that my stick and bundle
Could be seen by her lovely eyes.

God who made everything
That comes and goes
And formed this distant love
Grant me the power of my heart
Soon to see the distant love
Truly in a propitious place
And that the room and garden
Always appear as palaces to me.

He speaks true who says that I am avid
And no longing for the distant love
For no joy gives me pleasure
Like the pleasure of the distant love
But what I want is forbidden to me
So my godfather endowed me
That though loving
I will not have been loved
But what I want is forbidden to me
So may my godfather be cursed
Who made me not to be loved

This poem contains many of the themes Saariaho concentrates on in her later opera. Foremost is the theme of ‘distant love,’ believed noble in and of itself and noble due to the perfection of the object of desire. Jaufré Rudel was one of the most famous poets writing in the Courtly Love idiom of the late Medieval and early Renaissance eras, where female perfection and male desire to possess it, ‘distant love’ to Jaufré, it is hymned in grandiose fashion. This theme is built into the very structure of the poem: the Old Provençal word for distant, loing, ends the second and fourth lines of each stanza. Religious and moral imagery is also important. Frequent references are made to God, and the poet in fact wishes to be a pilgrim in order to see the ‘distant love,’ The religious imagery includes lines about crusading and pilgrimage, travel to distant lands and distance. Finally, the ‘distant love’ is impossible to attain in its perfection. This causes both ecstasy and pain.

Saariaho’s setting is static. A backdrop of electronic sounds envelops the singer with recorded sounds from nature, a heavily processed recording of Jacques Roubaud’s voice reciting his French translation of the poem, heavy reverb, and resonant pedal points. The harmonies in the pedal points often
have a high degree of dissonance softened by resonant voicing while the rhythms, often articulated with recorded percussion, are softly repetitive in the background. A term often used concerning this music is ‘new age,’ although the emotional intensity of *Lohn* separates it from most music in that genre. The soprano line, sung in a highly expressive modal style, is superficially similar to music in troubadour manuscripts. It uses both French and English translations of the Old Provençal poem. The prerecorded spoken parts are usually in English while the sung sections are in French.

The vocal line in Saariaho’s setting and the vocal line in the Jaufré Rudel manuscripts are directly related to each other. In her interview with Anders Beyer, Saariaho says that after reading Jaufré’s *vida* she went to the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France* in Paris to see manuscripts of his works and particularly liked the text and manuscript of *Lanquan li jorn son lonc en mai*. Although she later found accurate transcriptions, she was uninterested in using them. The manuscript was only a starting point for her compositional process. She says that she “interpreted in my own way” the written music, not knowing how to read the four line staff. There are three surviving versions of Jaufré’s poem that include music. Example 4.1 is recreation of the first line of music of these manuscripts in modern notation, from the *Bibliotheque nationale*. All are in AAB form. Comparing her setting to the manuscripts it is

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53 Beyer: 310.


abundantly clear which version she looked at: the first five syllables in the version from manuscript X (see Example 4.1) are almost identical to the setting of the same text in Lohn. In both, the vocal line moves up from a D on the first syllable to the F a minor third above on the words ‘quant li jor sont.’ The fifth syllable, ‘sont,’ is embellished in both versions. The similarity between the two composers’ settings is less clear as the line continues. The music in the next line of text is virtually identical in all three Jaufré versions. It begins similarly in the Saariaho, although on the word ‘auzels’ Saariaho moves up to an A, outlining a triad. All three of Jaufré’s manuscripts outline a D on this word. In the third and fourth line of text, Saariaho abandons the melody from manuscript X.

Example 4.1 Synoptic chart of line 1 of Lanquan li jor son lonc en maï

There are also obvious similarities between the settings of lines 5-7 in

56 Wolf: 153.
57 Reproduced from Wolf: 190.
the Jaufré and Saariaho settings. The tessitura moves to a higher register. It stays between A and D in the Saariaho in the fifth and sixth lines, descending back down to F and then D in the seventh line. In the Jaufre Rudel versions, the tessitura is in the A-C range (going as high as D in manuscript X), descending in the sixth line to the D that began the melody. The shape of the seventh line is the same as the first two lines. In the Jaufré, a verse uses the same musical material as the preceding verse. The Saariaho uses new material for the succeeding verses.

**Jaufré Rudel and his Vida**

The libretto of *L’Amour de loin* follows the biography of Jaufré Rudel, a troubadour in the Blaye, an area in southern France, who wrote in Old Provençal in the mid-twelfth century. Most of the information about his life comes from a *vida*, a thirteenth-century biography partly inferred from his poetry; little factual information is known for certain, however. The focus of the *vida* is Jaufré’s legendary love for the Countess of Tripoli and the idea of unrequited ‘distant love’:

Jaufré Rudel, Prince of Blaye, was a very noble man. And he fell in love with the Countess of Tripoli, without having seen her, because of the great goodness and courtliness which he heard tell of her from the pilgrims who came from Antioch. And he wrote many good songs about her, with good melodies and poor words. And because of his desire, he took the cross and set sail to go see her. But in the ship he fell very ill, to the point where those who were with him thought he was dead. However, they got him - a dead man, as they thought - to Tripoli, to an inn. And it was made know to the Countess, and she came to his bedside, and took him in her arms. And he knew she was the Countess, and recovered sight and smell, and praised God because He had kept him alive until he had seen her. And so he died in the arms of the lady. And she had him buried with honor in the Temple at Tripoli. Then, the same day, she became a nun because of the grief which she...
felt for him and for his death.58

How much of this story is true is unknown. There was a prince named Jaufré Rudel of Blaye, a castle located in southwest France near Bordeaux. Blaye was a popular stop for pilgrims traveling to the shrine of St. James at Compostela in northern Spain. Jaufré likely went on the Second Crusade, as suggested by his *vida*. There is no evidence, however, that he ever went to Tripoli, met the Countess, or died and was buried there. We do have some biographical information about the Countess of Tripoli, Hodierna of Jerusalem. Her husband was Count Raymond II of Tripoli, who was by reputation jealous and kept her in a state of seclusion. This may have led to stories of the Countess’s virtue that inspired Jaufré.59

**Amin Maalouf**

Amin Maalouf was the second writer Saariaho considered for the libretto to *L’Amour de loin*. Jacques Roubaud, a French writer and mathematician who writes poetry about medieval themes, was first commissioned. He has published several works about troubadour poetry and translations of troubadour poetry, and he is considered one of the foremost French experts on Provençal literature.60 The opera was placed on hiatus, however, when Roubaud withdrew from the project early in the planning stages. Peter Sellers then suggested Amin Maalouf, a French-Lebanese

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58 Translation taken from Wolf: 95.


author who has written extensively on the theme of cultural encounters between the Islamic word and Europe,\(^{61}\) including historical fiction that takes place in a medieval setting.\(^{62}\) Maalouf agreed to the project, and work on the opera proceeded. Since *L’Amour de loin*, Maalouf and Saariaho have collaborated on song cycles and a second opera.

Maalouf’s ethnic background and biography give him a unique perspective on the subject matter of *L’Amour de loin*. He was born in Beirut in 1949 to an Arabic speaking but staunchly Catholic family. His father was a journalist and poet. The cultural fault lines in Maalouf’s background, those of a Christian Arab living in a predominantly Islamic culture, determined his future literary themes, usually centering on individuals caught between clashing cultures. At twenty-two, Maalouf became employed as a writer for *An-Nahar*, the leading Arabic newspaper in Lebanon, traveling extensively as a correspondent and visiting over 60 countries. He permanently relocated to Paris in 1975 due to the outbreak of civil war in Lebanon.\(^{63}\)

**The Libretto**

Maalouf finished the libretto to *L’Amour de loin* in 1999. While it uses the *vida* as the basic story, it changes details and adds new and significant events and themes. The most important addition is *Le Pèlerin* (the pilgrim), a

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character who, in his constant travels, facilitates communication between Jaufré and his distant love. The theme of artistic transmission is vital to the story; *Le Pèlerin* literally transmits Jaufré’s poetry, allowing Maalouf to extrapolate on this theme. There are three characters and two choruses. Jaufré Rudel is sung by a baritone and the Countess of Tripoli, now sung by a soprano and named Clémence, is sung by a soprano, while *Le Pèlerin*, a male character, is sung by a mezzo-soprano. There is a chorus of male voices that play the role of companions to Jaufré, and a corresponding chorus of female voices, Tripolese women who are companions of Clémence. Both comment on the action and implications of the action, much like a Greek chorus. The story divides into five acts. Acts I and parts of Act III take place at Jaufré Rudel’s castle. Acts II, parts of III and all of V take place in a garden at the Countess of Tripoli’s castle. Act IV occurs in the Indigo Sea.

**Saariaho and *L’Amour de loin***

I knew I wanted to write an opera about love and death, because they are the great mysteries remaining to us. We are living in the year 2000 and we have achieved so many things, but advanced so little with these two subjects which concern all of us in that they are the basics of our life.\(^{64}\)

In the above quote taken from the Beyer interview, Saariaho states that she has been fascinated with the Jaufré Rudel legend for years. She long wanted to write an opera on love and death and is interested in Jaufré’s *vida* in part because of the way it deals with these themes. She spent years wondering why this story has had such a strong hold on her before arriving at the

\(^{64}\)Beyer: 310.
conclusion that she identifies with both characters, “the troubadour who wants to express his love through writing music, and the lady who was sent to a foreign continent.” She further states that “I realized that they are like the two parts of myself.” Although this topic has been frequently addressed in interviews, Saariaho elaborates little beyond the above statements about a lady sent abroad and a troubadour expressing love through music. In an article in Opera News, Saariaho discusses this in a little more depth. She sees “the troubadour as the metaphor of the artist seeking something unreachable.” The troubadour in this case is seeking both an inaccessible ideal lover and an impossible artistic ideal, a concept understandably important to an active composer.

The theme of distance and displacement is also important. Separated by choice from her native Finland since her late 20’s, Saariaho has spent her adult life as a cultural outsider. In the opera, the Countess speaks longingly of her homeland, a longing Saariaho identifies with. She also identifies with Jaufré as he seeks a feminine ideal, conflated with an artistic ideal in the opera. He must leave his native land and cross the sea in order to reach what he desires. Saariaho left Finland for much the same reason, seeking out musical opportunities and an artistic climate not available in Finland. Consequently, cultural displacement is a complex issue for Saariaho: both the desire to leave home for an ideal and the longing to return to one’s native land are themes she readily identifies with.

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65 Beyer: 310.

66 Baker: 25.
CHAPTER FIVE: L’AMOUR DE LOIN: MUSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

This chapter presents basic musical characteristics and procedures found in L’Amour de loin, providing a background for a more in-depth analysis in the following chapter. The first part describes the techniques of harmony and orchestration used in this opera. The second suggests how specific characters and themes are musically portrayed in the opera, including an overview of vocal writing in L’Amour de loin.

The sound world of the opera is characterized by static, resonant harmonies distinguished by long pedal points and a very slow pace. Harmonies change infrequently and gradually, and a new chord frequently is a variation of the previous chord with multiple common pitches. Particularly elegant is the beautiful and idiomatic vocal writing in the opera. Solo vocal lines, with few exceptions either in a recitative-like style that heightens the static nature of the harmony or a modal, song-like style, referencing troubadour songs draw from a notably small repertoire of material. Melodic tones, both in the voices and in accompanying instruments come from a limited number of pitch collections. With few exceptions, they are modal or taken directly from the sounding harmonic fields.

Pitch and Harmony in L’Amour de loin

The pitch language in L’Amour de loin is surprisingly limited for a two-hour opera. A small variety of chords recur, often signifying particular themes and characters. While Saariaho uses long pedals and repetition in most of her compositions, the static language in this opera is extreme, with extended bass
pedals on B♭, C♯, and F♯ grounding the harmony. Chords built on other bass notes are endued with considerable harmonic tension and quickly return to one of the preceding pedals.

The opera begins and ends with a highly resonant harmonic field built on a low register B♭. Versions of this field are heard throughout the opera, and have a function similar to a tonic in functional tonal music. Example 5.1 presents four contrasting versions of this harmonic field. The first, found at the beginning of the opera contains an augmented fifth followed by a perfect fifth stacked above the bass, an F♯ and a C♯ above the B♭. This pitch formation is important, a characteristic sound of the opera. It also can easily be transformed into the signature sonority based on F♯ by removing the B♭, leaving a rich open fifth in the bottom two pitches (see Example 5.6 and the accompanying discussion later in this chapter).

The second field is heard in Act II, where Le Pèlerin sings a song by Jaufré to Clémence. It is a transformation of the prior mentioned B♭ chord, now with the sounding F♯ in a high register but still audibly related to the F♯ in the previous chord. The intervening voices support the Aeolian, troubadour-like melody. The effect gives an impression of lightness but is still very resonant. The third field is at the climax of the introduction to Act IV. Its spacing is closer to the overtone series than the prior examples. Also highly resonant, it contains many common tones with chord I and is a clear variant of it. The final field is found at the end of the opera. Airy, it eventually fades to silence.
Example 5.1 Harmonic fields based on a $B_b$ pedal in *L’Amour de loin*. Field I is from the beginning of Act I. Field II is found at rehearsal letter R2 in Act II. Field III is unfolded in mm. 234-246 of Act IV. Field IV closes the opera and is found at rehearsal letter Z5 of Act V.

While long pedals are an important feature of this opera, Saariaho employs considerable harmonic tension at key moments to propel a phrase forward. As in the music of Sibelius and French spectralism, changes in harmony and texture occur gradually and organically, creating a sense of distended time. A characteristic example of this can be seen in Examples 5.2 and 5.3, a harmonic progression found in mm. 1-23 of Act II in which certain chords embellish structural chords in a clear harmonic progression creating a dynamic, albeit slowly moving form. The structural chords function in a manner similar to the tonic in functional tonal harmony; other chords create tension by

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67 For a discussion Sibelius’s unusual sense of time and its influence on contemporary music styles including spectralism and other styles related to Saariaho’s mature style, see Anderson: 196-216.
contrasting with them, and eventually resolve. Although the polarity of consonance and dissonance is not present, the effect is similar. The progression begins with a structural chord based on B♭ held for several bars, creating an effect of stretched time. A colorful but static texture with no melodic content other than the bass line adds to this effect. This progression then takes the listener from the whispered pianissimo B♭ chord in mm. 1-5 to another rich and highly resonant B♭ chord. The chord found in m. 6 intercedes, with an E♭ in the bass that contains common tones with both outlying chords. The second B♭ sounds for six bars beginning at m. 7. The harmony then moves away to a new chord with a D in the bass in mm. 13-15 and then moves to the previous E♭ sonority in measures 16-17. The music returns to the resonant B♭ in measure 18. Measures 6 and 13-17 both serve as contrasting harmonic tension to the controlling B♭ harmony, exhibiting considerable gravitational pull to the B♭ with an effect much like a plagal cadence. While tension increases due to the short duration of the transitional chords in comparison to the B♭ chords, there is still the impression that they are stretched, held slightly longer than the ear expects. This example is characteristic of phrase structure in this opera: phrases straightforward in construction are driven by the gravity of slow-moving harmonic progressions that build organically and give an impression of inevitability.
Saariaho’s use of the orchestra is masterful. With orchestration, she is able to create considerable dynamic tension with simple gestures, as in Example 5.3 and 5.4 taken from the introduction to Act IV. Example 5.3 contains bars 1-5, an orchestration of a rising line created by successive notes from the harmony introduced in ascending order. Example 5.4 is the same gesture at bar 42, further developed. In 5.3, the gesture is presented in the strings and elegantly doubled in the low brass and woodwinds. The initial F# is accented with the piano, harps, and percussion. Example 5.4, although audibly the same gesture, is much complicated. A rising bass line has now been added, enhancing the ascending line. The chord has been expanded to include flutes, clarinets, and oboes in a higher register, forming an ascending line played by successive instruments that unfolds at a quicker pace than previous pitches in the lower register. At the high point of the gesture the chorus switches to whispering sounds, highlighting the increased tension.

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68 As discussed in Chapter 3, this passage was originally used in the beginning of the first prelude of *Oltra Mar.*
Example 5.3 Act IV mm. 1-8
Example 5.4 Act IV mm. 42-56
Example 5.4 (Continued)
Musical characterization of characters and themes is a carefully controlled aspect of *L’Amour de loin*, and each of the three main roles are associated with specific chords, melodic features and orchestral textures. Important themes such as ‘love from afar’ are also symbolized musically. The following section presents a basic overview of the specific musical material used to represent different characters and themes in this opera.

**Jaufré Rudel**

Although all the characters in this opera occasionally sing modal melodies, Jaufré Rudel’s lines are consistently modal, a clear reference to the modal nature of the work of the historical troubadour poet and composer. Harmonies that contain stacks of perfect fifths, often contained in a chord based on F♯ in the bass, also signify this character. Example 5.5 is the version of this chord that introduces Jaufré in Act I. This harmony consists of a stack of perfect fifths, and is audibly related to the initial B♭ chord, with which it shares a low register F♯ and C♯, with its prominent open fifths, has a distinctly medieval flavor. Carefully incorporated into the larger pitch language of the opera, it avoids sounding generic or formulaic.

![Example 5.5 Chord associated with Jaufré, Act I mm. 89-99](image)
Example 5.6, a reproduction of Jaufré Rudel’s line in measures 90-97 of Act I, is an example of the type of modal vocal lines he typically sings. As Jaufré is a poet and musician, this melody songlike, fittingly constructed in a manner in which one might imagine a troubadour singing. The phrase is in two smaller phrase groupings, mm. 90-92 and mm. 93-97. Each has a clear melodic arc rising from C# to F# and falling back down to C#. Each pitch fits clearly into a C# Dorian or Aeolian mode, consistent with medieval melodic conventions. The rhythmic content of this line is complex and contains several different rhythmic motives. The clear contour of the two phrase groups, however, causes the rhythmic complexity to be interpreted by the ear as simply ornate, much like contemporary interpretations of troubadour music. Jaufré’s vocal lines are consistently modal throughout the opera, and rarely venture far in character from the excerpt in Example 5.6.

There are many examples of contemporary interpretations of troubadour and medieval music. Some are based on scholarship while many are not. A particularly elegant example is that performed by Paul Hillier and Andrew Lawrence-King found on the recording Distant Love - Songs of Jaufré Rudel & Martin Codax. Harmonia Mundi: 2000.
Le Pèlerin

*Le Pèlerin* sings in either a recitative style or, when singing songs written by Jaufré, a songlike, modal style. Example 5.7, found in mm. 374-382 of Act I, is a line characteristic of the recitative style. Slow and declamatory, the rhythm contains no discernable motivic repetition. Complex, the contour does not form a clear melodic arc. The pitches A, D, and F are structurally significant, outlining a minor triad. The pitches B♭, C♯, and F♯ are embellishing pitches that resolve by half step to the structural pitches. This hierarchical pitch structure is similar to that found in functional tonal music and in modal styles like plainchant and troubadour songs. The F♯, which does not fit clearly into any conventional mode, gives the melody an exotic quality, possibly intended to be evocative of *Le Pèlerin's* travels to the Orient.

Example 5.7 Act I mm. 374-382 strings and vocals
Mm. 436-463 present an example of *Le Pèlerin* singing the music of Jaufré. (Example 6.16 presents a reproduction of this line.) It is in the Aeolian mode and similar in content to the lines sung by the troubadour. Despite the $B_b$ pedal in the double bass, $A$ is clearly heard as a tonic pitch. Motivic content is similar to that of Jaufré’s line at Example 5.6. Gestures such as the descending line in m. 439 derive directly from Jaufré’s gestural repertory. In four clear sub-phrases, it also is structurally similar to Jaufré’s music. Each sub-phrase has a clear descending contour, structurally like conventional tonal and modal melodies. The first of these, mm. 436-439, establishes a tonic on the pitch $A$. In mm. 441-446 the line rises to scale degree 5, $E$. The third sub-phrase continues the structural pitch $E$. The fourth, mm. 453-463, descends to a $B$, creating a significant amount of tension as the ear expects to hear the phrase end on $A$. In Schenkerian analytical terms taken from tonal music, this
is a clear interrupted *Urlinie* (structural stepwise descent to a tonic pitch) descending from scale degree 5.

Example 5.8 shows an unusual chord associated with *Le Pèlerin* that is strikingly different from the other harmonies in the opera. This example occurs in mm. 320-348, where it heralds the first appearance of *Le Pèlerin* at the beginning of the *Deuxième tableau* of Act I. Highly dissonant, this chord is usually built on a C♯ in the bass, although other appearances are built on F♯. It is comprised of a stack of intervals one quarter tone less than an octave apart, and like most other important chords arpeggiated with each pitch sounding successively in the strings in ascending order, accompanied by descending woodwind gestures. The lower voices fade out in a manner mirroring their ascent early in the gesture.

Example 5.8 *Le Pèlerin*’s chord
Clémence

Tailored to Dawn Upshaw’s voice, Clémence’s singing, while more virtuosic, features a recitative style similar to that of Le Pèlerin. Example 5.9 shows her line in mm. 91-94 of Act II, where Clémence is asking Le Pèlerin what his homeland has done to him that makes him travel away from it. Her pitches in this line are structured around pitches A and F# and don’t correspond to a church mode. The diminished fourth between F# and B♭ in this excerpt, often supported by the bass, is common in Clémence’s lines. Her lines contain wide, dissonant leaps; typical is the leap from F# up to F♮ resolving down to E at the end of the line. Leaps of this size are rare in the lines of Le Pèlerin and wholly absent from Jaufré’s lines.

Example 5.9 Act II measures 91-94 vocal line and strings
Example 5.9 (Continued)

A personification of the concept ‘l’amour de loin,’ Clémence is commonly associated with the $B_b$ pitch field variants. She is introduced in Act II by the chord progression shown in Example 5.2, a progression that creates strong gravitational pull to the $B_b$. A gesture in the harp that frequently accompanies her singing is also introduced here. First heard in mm. 1-5 of Act II, it consists of an upward moving quintuplet with a prominent augmented second between $B_b$ and $C\#$, an intervallic pattern similar to patterns sung by Le Pèlerin. Examples can be found in mm. 92-99 of Act II, mm. 447-455 of Act III, and mm. 60-65 of Act V.

The Chorus

L’Amour de loin makes extensive use of the chorus, frequently broken into male and female voices. The chorus has two functions. First, it is used as the voices of the companions of Jaufré and Clémence, commenting on what they are doing and thinking, and frequently criticizing their thoughts and
behavior. The choral writing is more declamatory and rhythmic than the solo vocal parts and is usually modal. Example 5.10, found in Act I mm. 140-147, is representative. Here the male voices of the chorus play the role of Jaufré’s companions. On the one hand, in contrast to the chant-like lines of Jaufré that precede this passage, the rhythms are declamatory and often emphasize the beat. On the other hand, the pitches are strictly modal, emphasizing perfect fifths, and giving them an aural profile similar to that of Jaufré and his distinctive harmonies. The text translates as “No, Jaufré, we will not let you. Listen to us. We shall say only what we have come to say, then we will leave, we promise! You will see us no more.” 70 They attempt to distract Jaufré as he writes a verse describing his melancholic emotions.

Example 5.10 Chorus in Act I mm. 140-147

The chorus is also treated as part of the orchestra, providing another instrumental color in the buildup of thick, resonant chords. This can be observed in Examples 5.2, mm. 7-14 of Act II. The altos hum C#, F#, G, and

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70 In Chapters Five and Six, translations of the libretto from the original French into English are from Maalouf, Amin. L’Amour de Loin. George Hall, trans. The Santa Fe Opera, reproduced by permission of Chester Music Ltd., 2002.
\( \text{A}^\# \) in a softly undulating pattern over the previously discussed \( \text{B}_\text{b} \) chord. Doubled by the vibraphone and supported by very light orchestration, the chorus adds greatly to the resonance of the chord and gives it a veiled, mysterious quality. It also gives this excerpt slow but very regular rhythmic motion. Half of the altos move up to an \( \text{F}_\text{b} \) and then glissando down to \( \text{E} \) as the harmony begins to change, heightening the harmonic tension as the harmony changes.
Chapter Six presents a musical analysis of Acts I and II of L’Amour de loin. The analysis of each act begins with a broad harmonic overview. Using this as background material, a full analysis follows, placing particular emphasis on how Saariaho combines her previous syntax with often modal melodic writing with clear similarities to tonality to depict the text.

**ACT I**

Act I, roughly 18 minutes in length, consists of two scenes. The harmonic material remains discrete and limited for an 18-minute stretch of music. Containing little action and proceeding at a very slow pace, the act begins with a resonant B♭-based harmony, as mentioned previously in Chapter Five. It concludes with a variant of Le Pèlerin’s chord based on C♯ combined with the original B♭ harmony. A skeletal overview of the harmony is mapped out in Example 6.1. Beams and solid note heads signify harmonic progressions. Multiple pitch formations presented in solid note heads grouped in boxes sound simultaneously but are acoustically distinct due to careful orchestration. Solid note heads show important harmonies held for extended amounts of time that, while they may contain significant tension, are not directional; the ear does not expect them to resolve. Three quarters of the act, in fact, contain one of these extended chords, either based on B♭, the harsh C♯ chord associated with Le Pèlerin, or the chord based on F♯ derived from the B♭ pitch field that often accompanies Jaufré.
Example 6.1 Harmonic overview of Act I

*Traversée*

The four-minute introduction to Act I is titled *Traversée*, or ‘crossing.’ As discussed in Chapter Four, travel, and more specifically crossing the sea is one of the major themes of the opera. The slow, upward undulating lines in the introduction foreshadow this theme, with careful motion and gradual transformation of musical materials that creates an unmistakable impression of inevitability. Here, possibly depicting waves and tides in music, a sense of endless upward motion is created by overlapping arpeggios presented at
different speeds in different orchestral groups. The lower pitches hold, and the effect is primarily one of expansion. The harmony and orchestration are lush, resonant and dissonant at the same time, and indicative of what will occur in the rest of the opera. The introduction contains pitches from a $B\flat$ overtone series overlaid onto another overtone series an augmented fifth higher, $F\sharp$. The introduction is formally very simple, consisting of an unfolding of the signature $B\flat$ pitch field. Although there is a strong sense of ebb and flow with clear musical goals, it is in one extended phrase. After building for several minutes, it closes with a similarly unfolded $C\sharp$ field in mm. 81-89.

Saariaho creates motion and tension by intertwining rising lines made by the above-mentioned arpeggiations in different instrumental groups, sometimes in conjunction with each other, sometimes separate. Example 6.2 shows the upward arpeggiation as presented in the strings, vibraphone, brass, and woodwinds. Example 6.3 is the corresponding pages from the score. The gesture begins in the strings in m. 1. In m. 3, the woodwinds and percussion (vibraphone) double the pitches in the strings. The percussion continues, but repeats the pitches it had previously played in quarter notes, repeating the line through the rest of the excerpt. In m. 7 the brass begins a repetition of the version of the arpeggio that began in the strings in measure 1. In mm. 11-12 the rhythm speeds up to quarter-note triplets in the percussion and woodwinds. The rhythms become progressively more complex and polyrhythmic as the introduction progresses. Much like Sibelius’s rotations, this drives the music forward and has the effect of organic expansion, as the texture grows increasingly complex.
Example 6.2 Act I Introduction, measures 1-12 arpeggiation of B♭ pitch field
Example 6.3 Act I pp. 1-2
Example 6.3 (Continued)
The introduction also displays all three of the distinct chords and chord types in Act I. The first and most important of these is the lush B\(\flat\) chord that begins the introduction and continues until the last bars of the introduction. Second is the harmonic progressions built on perfect fifths that are heard when Jaufré converses with the chorus, found in the introduction roving above the B\(\flat\) pedal harmonic field in mm. 48-62. The third is the dissonant C\# pitch field associated with Le Pèlerin. It begins sounding in m. 81 of the introduction and continues until Jaufré’s entrance. The limited harmonic material of this act is presented in the introduction.

*Premier tableau: Jaufré Rudel*

*Traversée* ends smoothly, transitioning into Jaufré’s signature pitch field. The *Premier tableau* begins at Jaufré’s castle in southwest France. He is writing a song in which he mourns his loneliness and lack of love. The text alludes to the fifth song by the real Jaufré Rudel, “Quan lo rossinhols el follos.” Jaufré’s line “I saw a nightingale on the bough, his words calling to his mate,” is clearly related to the original line “When the nightingale in the leaves gives, seeks, and takes love, and happily begins his song, and gazes often at his mate.”

The melodies in this section of the opera and in the troubadour song are vaguely related, both modal. The two harps are strumming pitches from the F\# harmony in a sparse rhythm. This is a clear allusion to the *vielle*, or Arabic lute, the libretto calls for Jaufré to be holding. He is violently interrupted in the midst of his labors by his companions who are *forte*, rhythmic and harsh.

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71 Translation from Wolf: 142.
72 The beginning of the melody from the fifth song can be found in Wolf: 200.
The harmonic progression sung by the chorus, shown in Example 6.1, is comprised of quintal harmonies built on stacks of perfect fifths that remind the ear of early polyphony and organum, further medievalisms. While often quite dissonant and chromatic, these harmonies are grounded by a modal bass line, a further medievalism.

After initial protestations by the companions, Jaufré begins joking with them. They tell him, “Jaufré, you are a changed man; you have lost your sense of fun. Your lips no longer seek the mouths of bottles, nor the lips of women.” He retorts sarcastically, “Jaufré Rudel, come to your senses, women once looked at you with terror and men with envy . . . or was it the other way around? Men once looked on you with terror and women with envy.” Although there is significant irony and humor implicit in the text, Saariaho avoids expressing irony or humor in her music, as mentioned earlier. The music is melancholy and defiant rather than amusing. This music that supports this text, found in mm. 173-213, forms a short duet between the baritone and chorus in 6/8. The vocal and string parts of the first page of this section are shown in Example 6.4. As shown in Example 6.1, the harmony follows out of that of the previous music, based on stacks of perfect fifths that support a modal, often Phrygian melody. The phrase structure is not unlike traditional opera. For example, the line in mm. 181-188, divided between the tenors and Jaufré, moves up to a high G♯ in the tenor line before being picked up by Jaufré on the F♯ a whole step below. The F♯ descends stepwise to a C♯ in m. 185, which continues as the defining structural pitch until a descent down to F♯ in m. 192. Measures 214-251 build off of the harmonies in this section, and feature similar melodic content, but are markedly different in tone. Jaufré sings
alone for most of this section. His line is less carefully shaped and more recitative-like. The harmonies, seen in Example 6.1, are still based on stacks of fifths, but are much more dissonant, with dissonant pitches in low registers. As Jaufré sings the line “That Jaufré who was heard bawling in the taverns, He shall be heard no more. That Jaufré who each night weighed his body on the scales of a woman’s body, He shall be seen no more . . . ,” the C# chord associated with Le Pèlerin sounds loudly. Le Pèlerin is the agent of change and the purveyor of information in the opera. Jaufré desires change, and at this point in the opera will soon encounter an agent of change.

Example 6.4 Act I mm. 173-180, vocal and string parts

The Premiere tableau closes with Jaufré describing his ideal woman: she is “so far away that my arms shall never enclose her.” His companions
mock him, asking who she is and what she is like. Jaufré replies with a list of attributes: “She is graceful and humble and virtuous and gentle, courageous and shy, full of fortitude and delicate, a princess with the heart of a peasant girl, a peasant girl with the heart of a princess, in a passionate voice she will sing my songs . . .” His line is modal but recitative-like, accompanied by a re-orchestration of the B♭ chord heard in the introduction, a clear allusion to the ‘distant love’ idea personified by Clémence. This section, with the indication *molto meno mosso, espressivo*, has gently oscillating quarter-note triplets in the violins set against eighth note septuplets in the vibraphone (Example 6.5). They move upward, a clear variant of the upward lines found in the introduction.

Example 6.5 Rhythmic layering in Act I mm. 253-258

In m. 298, *Le Pèlerin* arrives unnoticed while Jaufré fantasizes further about his feminine ideal: “Beautiful, without the arrogance of beauty, noble without the arrogance of nobility, pious without the arrogance of piety.” Here, the harmony and orchestration change. The rhythmic patterns heard earlier that derive from the introduction are now absent. A sparse, *pianissimo* version of *Le Pèlerin’s* chord sounds against dissonant, declamatory interjections in the bassoons. Closing the scene forebodingly, the chorus answers Jaufré in
unison, angrily declaring that “Such a woman does not exist: tell him, Pilgrim, you who have traveled the world, tell him! Such a woman does not exist!”

**Deuxième tableau: Le Pèlerin**

The *Deuxième tableau* opens as a Le Pèlerin interrupts Jaufré and his companions. The music associated with this character intensifies, introduced in the whole string section in an upward-moving arpeggio divided between the strings similar to the first pitch field in *Traversée*. Accompanying this is a long descending line in the woodwinds (Example 6.6), divided between the flutes and clarinets. This descending line frequently occurs throughout the opera against the C♯ pitch field to signify the presence of Le Pèlerin. It usually begins right after the upward arpeggio of the primary harmony has finished, one beat afterwards in this case. The effect is of a very strong pull downwards after an ascent, a clear written *rubato*. The combination of the very regular placement of this line and its *rubato*, almost unpredictable rhythm creates a strong impression of solemnity and inevitability, befitting the character of Le Pèlerin.

Example 6.6 Reduction of woodwind line, mm. 323-327

*Le Pèlerin*, in the recitative style discussed in Chapter Five, disagrees
with Jaufré’s companions: “Maybe she does not exist, but maybe she does.” He then tells Jaufré about Clémence, whom he observed on her way to church: “She herself walked without looking at anyone; her eyes focused on the ground before her as her dress stretched out behind. Beautiful without the arrogance of beauty, noble without the arrogance of nobility, pious without the arrogance of piety . . .” This passage is extended, stretching from m. 320 to m. 401. Despite its length, it contains only musical materials derived from those described above.

Jaufré implores Le Pèlerin to continue, and questions him for further details about Clémence, first about her eyes. Le Pèlerin says that he did not see them. Jaufré states that her eyes are “the color of the sea when the sun has only just risen, and as one watches the darkness vanishing in the west,” imagery notable in that the sea and specifically sea travel is not only one of the main topics of the opera but one of the main topics traversing Saariaho’s oeuvre. Jaufré further speculates on other physical attributes. His companions respond with harmonies based on perfect fifths similar to those found in the Première tableau, complaining to Jaufré in bars 430-460 about his new infatuation. They are not, however, able to distract him.

Le Pèlerin leaves and Jaufré reflects in silence on his new-found obsession. In m. 475, as Jaufré reflects, a striking fortissimo chord sounds through the entire orchestra. The B♭ L’Amour de loin chord is presented in the woodwinds, brass, percussion, and chorus. The strikingly dissimilar C♯ pitch field associated with Le Pèlerin is heard in the strings, preceding the B♭ chord

73 For example, her first cello concerto is titled Amers, the French word for navigation beacons used by sailors.
by half a beat. Both harmonies die out gradually. The C♯ harmony has a simple *diminuendo* and voices drop out one by one, higher pitched voices first. The B♭ harmony has a much more complex collapse. A conventional *diminuendo* is incorporated with the woodwind descending line shown in Example 6.6. Harmonic pitches disappear one by one as the instrument playing them takes the downward line. The line is now expanded and incorporated into a polyphonic web of voices. The descent reaches the bassoons in m. 480 and ends with them in m. 484. A reduction of the basic descending line can be seen in Example 6.7. The pitches are unrelated the prevailing harmonies. Chromatic and dissonant, they are constructed primarily with half steps followed by wider intervals. At the end of this gesture, Jaufré exclaims: “What have you done to me, Pilgrim?”

[Example 6.7 Reduction of descending woodwind line, mm. 475-484]

This gesture is repeated in mm. 486-495, now significantly more complex. Pitches from the B♭ field in the brass and woodwinds sound successively, low to high, in a fashion like that in the introduction. Contrasting with the previous version of the gesture, the pitches sound quickly, each pitch one beat after the previous pitch. Also sounding is a vigorous figuration in the harps of the B♭
pitch field. The chords end with a simple diminuendo here rather than with descending lines. Jaufré sings, “You have allowed me to glimpse the spring from which I shall never drink.” He is devastated and obsessed.

Following this the $B_b$ pitch field associated with Clémence is heard again. Pianissimo and ethereal, the strings play in *sul ponticello*, *sul tasto*, and natural harmonics. The harp plays an ascending line (Example 6.8) that occurs later in Act II in association with Clémence. After Jaufré’s angry, desperate exclamations, the mood is subdued and reverent.

![Example 6.8 Harp ostinato, mm. 496-499](image)

Example 6.8 Harp ostinato, mm. 496-499

In mm. 500-508, Jaufré sings a line that summarizes the basic conflict that drives him: “Never shall this distant lady be mine, but I am hers, forever, and shall never acknowledge any other.” The harmony remains the same as in mm. 496-499 but is now re-orchestrated. The ostinato in the harp is gone. The $B_b$ bass is no longer held in the double basses, but now sounds in the timpani, played *pianissimo* with a gentle rhythm consisting of an eighth note followed by a dotted quarter note. The chorus gently sings the word *loin* in a perfect fifth and minor second. The act closes with Jaufré bemoaning his fate, loving someone far away whom he will never see, followed by a return to the gesture in measures 496-499 that slowly fades, adding calm arpeggiations in the
strings and the chorus softly calling Jaufré’s name.

ACT II

Act II takes place in a garden at the Citadel in Tripoli, where Clémence is standing on a promontory. As discussed in Chapter Five, the harmonies in the brief introduction are not based on pedal points, rather they make up a more traditional progression, beginning at and returning to a strong $B_{b}$ field, analogous to a tonic. In mm. 28-60 the phrases stop giving the listener the resolution to $B_{b}$, ending on an $F_{#}$ pitch field instead. The $F_{#}$ pitch field contains the lower fifths of Jaufré’s chord, but also has the dissonant microtones found in *Le Pèlerin*’s chord. The resolution to $B_{b}$ is delayed until m. 61, Clémence and *Le Pèlerin*’s vocal entrance. This harmonic progression can be seen in Example 6.9, a harmonic overview of the entire act.
Example 6.9 Harmonic overview of Act II

The introduction is in five phrases. In each new phrase, the gesture of the previous phrase repeats and grows in complexity while the length stays the same. The harmonic progression and orchestration create a powerful pull to the ends of phrases. The phrase structure of the introduction is outlined in Example 6.10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>1-6</th>
<th>7-17</th>
<th>18-27</th>
<th>28-40</th>
<th>41-49</th>
<th>50-60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expanding clarinet lines</td>
<td>6-9</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>27-40</td>
<td>41-49</td>
<td>51-60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example 6.10 Phrase structure of introduction to Act II

Of particular interest are the outwardly expanding clarinet lines. In the first two phrases, a simple version traverses the beginning and ends of phrases. In the last three phrases, increasingly expanded versions link up with the phrases. Two clarinets play similar lines, one expanding up and the other expanding downward. As the register expands the rhythm speeds up and there is a crescendo. Towards the climax of a phrase, there is a rapid ascent and descent. In the lines in phrase 6, flute 1, the oboes, and bassoon 1 join in the gesture, further intensifying the tension in the phrase. The effect is one of organic growth, and like motivic change in the introduction to Act I, another example of row rotation as found in the music of Sibelius.
Premiere tableau

The action of Act II begins in m. 61 when Clémence calls a greeting to the just arriving Le Pèlerin. The harmony in mm. 61-64 is a pianissimo B♭ pitch field, the resolution of the harmonic progression in the introduction. Le Pèlerin responds, and they discuss his travels. He tells her that Tripoli is a stop on his journey away from Blaye, his hometown, and that he has come to wish her brother the Count good health and a long life. The orchestra plays a sparse version of Le Pèlerin's chord, arpeggiated upwards in the strings. The string gesture follows Le Pèlerin's vocal lines closely. Each new sub-phrase he sings has another iteration of his chord. Descending woodwind lines signify the end of each smaller phrase group.

Under an A pedal in the violins and the harp quintuplets often associated with her, Clémence asks Le Pèlerin what his homeland had done to cause him to leave. "Had it starved you? Had it humiliated you? Had it driven you away?" This is followed by a long duet in mm. 106-265, one of the more lyrical passages of the opera. It takes place in mm. 106-265. The libretto reads as follows:

LE PÈLERIN
Nothing of the kind, Countess.
I left behind those most dear to me.
But I had to cross the sea
To gaze with my own eyes
On the strangest things the Orient holds,
Constantinople, Babylon, Antioch, the oceans of sand, the rivers of ash,
The trees that weep tears of incense,
The lions in the mountains of Anatolia,
And the dwelling places of the Titans.
And above all, above all,
I had to see the Holy Land.

CLÉMENCE:
So many people dream of coming to the East,
   And I dream of leaving it.
At the age of five I left Toulouse,
   And since then nothing has consoled me.
Each ship that arrives reminds me of my own exile.
Each ship that leaves makes me feel I have been abandoned.

**LE PÈLERIN:**
Tripoli is yours, nevertheless; it belongs to your noble family. And this country is now yours.
Here your ancestors are buried.

**CLÉMENCE:**
This country is mine? Perhaps. But I do not belong here.
My feet walk on its grass, but my thoughts stray in fields far away.
We both dream of crossing the sea, but your destination is here, Pilgrim, and mine is over there.
My destination is near Toulouse, which bears the image of my mother's voice and my childish smiles.
I still remember how I ran barefoot along a stony track chasing a cat.
The cat was young, and is perhaps still alive, and remembers me.
No, he must be dead, or has certainly forgotten me, as the stones in the road have forgotten me.
I remember my childhood still, but nothing in the worlds of my childhood remembers me.
The land where I was born still breathes in me, but for it I am dead.
How happy I would be if a single wall, a single tree, remembered me.

Example 6.11 Clémence's descending vocal line, measures 121-122
This passage contains a repeating chord progression that begins on an F♯ harmony audibly related to Jaufré’s chord that descends down to a sparse, widely spaced B♭ field. It is sometimes presented in full, but often leaves out chords between the outlying F♯ and B♭. The duet begins as *Le Pèlerin* his lines describing why he left his homeland and what he desires to see on his travels. Clémence repeatedly interjects the line “Tant de gens qui rêvent devenir en Orient,” or “So many people dream of coming to the East,” stating it five times at first singing only part of the line and adding more to it as time progresses. *Le Pèlerin* continues singing, listing the places that he has travelled to see. This beautiful descending line outlines a D major triad. Example 6.11 is the variant of the line heard in mm. 121-122. It is supported by the last two harmonies of the progression, creating powerful gravity towards the B♭ resolution.

Another musical element that drives the phrase forward is the rhythm in the strings. Shown in Example 6.12, most eighth notes are accentuated. When the succeeding B♭ harmony sounds this motion stops, creating an effect of stillness after powerful descending movement.

Example 6.12 Rhythmic reduction of Act II, mm. 116-120

In mm. 153-185 there is a break in the music as *Le Pèlerin*’s pitch field returns and he reminds Clémence that her family has strong ties to Tripoli, that
it is her land. The duet begins again in m. 186, where the music grows more motoric. Clémence sings about Toulouse, calling it her true home. Eighth-note and sixteenth-note ostinatos sound in the violins. Clémence’s line is now one of perpetual descent. This section closes with Clémence stating that she would be happy if anyone or anything in Tripoli remembered her. As at the beginning of this duet, now she is accompanied by a pianissimo, whispy A in the second violins and electronic recordings of whispering and high bells. The harp ostinatos are no longer present.

*Le Pèlerin* answers Clémence in m. 269, telling her that a man in her homeland thinks about her. Clémence demands to know about him. As a sparse version of Jaufré’s pitch field sounds *Le Pèlerin* tells Clémence further about him, that he thinks about her even though he knows her only by reputation. The pitch field is then transformed into a piano version of *Le Pèlerin*’s chord, this time with an F♯ rather than C♯ in the bass. Here, *Le Pèlerin* tells Clémence that Jaufré finds her “beautiful without the arrogance of beauty, noble without the arrogance of nobility, pious without the arrogance of piety.” *Le Pèlerin* finishes with the line “he thinks of you constantly, it seems.” This statement articulating Jaufré’s overwhelming love for Clémence is marked by a return to the B♭ ‘l’amour de loin’ chord articulated in an ascending arpeggio through the string section. She is offended by his interest in her, exclaiming, “but by what right, dear God, by what right?” The *Premiere tableau* ends with a dramatic transformation of the B♭ chord. It crescendos to a fortissimo tutti with aggressive sixteenth notes in the strings and loud harmonies sustained in the wind section.
Deuxième tableau: L’Amour de loin

The Deuxième tableau contains what is probably the most beautiful extended set piece in L’Amour de loin, centered on a performance of Jaufré’s love song to Clémence. Le Pèlerin attempts to sing it, but his transmission is imperfect. Clémence, however, the object sung about and a parallel ideal to Jaufré’s artistic ideal, is able to sing it correctly.

The Deuxième tableau begins with Le Pèlerin’s pitch field, pitches entering in successively high to low. Le Pèlerin answers the question Clémence posed at the end of Premiere tableau, telling her that while she does not have to love the troubadour back she also cannot prevent him from loving her, and that Jaufré loves her without any hope of reciprocation. Clémence asks him to tell her more of what Jaufré says about her.

The performance of Jaufré’s song by Le Pèlerin and Clémence follows. Stanzas 5 through 8 of the sixth surviving song by Jaufré, Lanqan li jorn son lonc en mai, are used as a text. An English translation can be found in Chapter Four. The following is the French version used in the opera:

Jamais d’amour je ne jouirai  
Si je ne jouis de cet amour de loin  
Car plus noble et meilleure je ne connais  
En aucun lieu ni près ni loin  
Sa valeur est si grande et si vraie  
Que là-bas, au royaume des Sarrasins  
Pour elle, je voudrais être captif.

Je tiens Notre Seigneur pour vrai  
Par qui je verrai l’amour de loin  
Mais pour un bien qui m’en échoit  
J’ai deux maux, car elle est si loin  
Ah que je voudrais être là-bas en pelerine  
Afin que mon baton et mon esclave  
Soient contemplés par ses yeux si beaux.
Il dit vrai celui qui me dit avide
Et désirant l’amour de loin
Car aucune joie ne me plairait autant
Que de jouir de cet amour de loin
Mais ce que je veux m’est dénié
Ainsi m’a doté mon parrain
Que j’aime et ne suis pas aimé . . .

Jaufré’s song, as sung by Le Pèlerin, divides into three phrases. Each uses one of the three stanzas of text, separated by Clémence’s interjections that contain contrasting harmony and melodic material. While the melodic pitches are modal in each, the orchestration and the harmony grow increasingly complex in each successive stanza.

Example 6.13 reproduces of Le Pèlerin’s line in mm. 374-416. It divides into seven sub-phrases, one for each line of text. Example 6.14 is a reduction of the first line that demonstrates how the pitch language works. The melody, as in Lohn, is modal, clearly in the Aeolian mode. The melody works much like a tonal melody, with clear structural pitches, subordinate pitches, and a descending melodic contour with an unmistakable Urtinie. There are few accidentals and structural pitches at the beginning and ends of phrases generally are members of an A minor triad. The pitches D and B natural are also structurally important, resolving eventually to the pitches of the A minor triad. In the first line, there is an ascent to the third scale degree of the Aeolian mode. The melody moves up further to a tense D, scale degree 4 that descends by step to an A at the end of the phrase. The harmony is modal as well and supports the structural pitches in the melody. Simple in construction, it consists of a perfect fifth above scale degree one that alternates with a perfect fifth above scale degree 7. The altos in the chorus hold an A pedal as the sopranos occasionally sing the fifth above, E. The open perfect intervals
supporting a modal melody are strongly evocative of medieval music.

The resonant electronic part adds to the medieval color. Consisting of recordings of whispers, wind, ocean sounds, and other sounds from nature, it is a major part of the sonic landscape in the *Deuxième tableau* of this act. Considerable reverb and resonant filters also sound, resulting in an almost cathedral like sound. Another layer of harmony supports the first three lines in mm. 374-388. Two variants of *Le Pèlerin*'s chord are presented *pianissimo* descending from high to low registers. They serve to connect this unique section smoothly with the preceding musical material; they are gradually replaced by open fourths and fifths beginning in m. 389.

![Example 6.13 String and vocal parts Act II measures 374-416](image-url)
Example 6.13 (Continued)

Example 6.14 Pitch reduction of Act II mm. 374-379
The first page of the second stanza is shown in Example 6.15. Clémence asks, singing a relatively chromatic line that contrasts with Le Pèlerin’s modal line, if she inspired this song. Example 6.16 shows a pitch reduction of the first out of seven lines of text in the second stanza of this song. The melody, although not identical with the analogous measures from the preceding stanza, functions in an identical manner. The beginning is similar: an ascent to D, the fourth scale degree, followed by a descent to an A at the end of the line. The chorus now has a more complex role, echoing Le Pèlerin. In the beginning of this stanza the chorus simply alternates between the pitches A and B, then expanding as the stanza progresses, eventually encompassing the entire mode between outer pitches E on the bottom and F on the top. The resonant electronic part continues with recordings of whispers and wind.

The B♭ pedal played in the double basses and the timpani and a high F♯ harmonic sounding quietly in the first violins contrast strongly with the vocal parts. This contrasting ‘love from afar’ harmonic material, far outside the A Aeolian mode begins with the preceding interlude sung by Clémence. In the text itself, the primary difference between this stanza and the other stanzas is the religious imagery and a stated belief that the poet will see the ‘distant love’: “I hold faith with our Lord that by his grace I shall see my distant love.” While all three stanzas are melancholic in tone and mention the ‘distant love,’ the others do not contain hope that the poet will ever encounter the object of his affections. This hope contained in the text explains the presence of the B♭ pedal, usually linked to Clémence or to ‘love from afar.’
The first page of the third stanza is shown in Example 6.17. It is preceded by Clémence asking, again in a contrasting chromatic line, if *Le Pèlerin* remembers more of Jaufré’s song. A pitch reduction of the first line of text is shown in Example 6.18. This line begins differently than the previous two with an audibly clear contrasting C that descends. The melody again functions...
identically, however, with an ascent to a structural D that moves down to an A. The B♭ is no longer heard as a pedal. In its place is a D, with a high E harmonic sounding in the first violins. The second violins play primarily open fourths and fifths, but now occasionally play a minor sixth, E to C, which fits in the A minor triad implied by the melody. This line moves from down in register to the violas and further to the cellos. Each bar this dyad is reiterated, creating a slow and soft but steady rhythm. The chorus part has also become rhythmic, echoing the solo line in declamatory quarter notes as the electronic part continues with whispers and sea sounds. This haunting modal song setting, strongly evocative of the medieval subject matter, finishes with *Le Pèlerin* professing to remember little else, now singing in the more chromatic recititative-like style.

Example 6.17 String and vocal parts Act II mm. 470-511
Example 6.18 Pitch reduction of Act II mm. 472-476

As becomes apparent in Act III, when he has an argument about Jaufré, *Le Pèlerin* has incorrectly transmitted his song. Act II concludes with Clémence repeating the first verse sung by *Le Pèlerin*, who leaves directly before she sings. As he leaves the combination of the ‘love from afar’ B₆ chord and his C♯ chord sounds in the whole orchestra *pianissimo*, fading out before Clémence begins. The string and vocal part of her version is given in Example 6.19. She sings it correctly, as Jaufré would desire. Listeners have two clues that reveal this. First, *Le Pèlerin* sings in French, the incorrect language. Clémence sings in Old Provençal, the language the real Jaufré wrote in. Second, in Act IV Jaufré has a vision of Clémence singing the song correctly. In Act IV she sings it in a manner musically very similar to that found in Act II. The verse in Old Provençal is as follows:

Ja mais d’amor no•m gauzirai
Si no•m gau d’est’ amor de loing,
Que gensor ni meillo non sai
Vas nuilla part, ni pres ni loing . . .

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The orchestration in Clémence’s version is at once sparse but far more resonant. The string parts are simpler, consisting of high pedals played with indistinct harmonics. The choir sings single pitches held for multiple bars. The electronic part is much louder this time, providing far greater resonance. The melody is transposed up a half step, now a B Aeolian mode. The first line is almost identical to the analogous line sung by *Le Pèlerin*. The expressive sigh motive, a pitch that glissandos downward to its conclusion is expanded, more dramatic: for example, in m. 539 it descends a perfect fourth rather than the half step heard in the prior version. The texture, while very sparse, is similarly expressive throughout in comparison to *Le Pèlerin’s* interpretation. This in fact is the biggest difference between *Le Pèlerin’s* version and the accurate version of Jaufré’s song. As sung by Clémence it is very spacious and airy. This moment is also quite haunting, a subtle transformation of a beautiful melody.

Example 6.19 String and vocal parts Act II mm. 536-573.
The act closes with Clémence wondering if she deserves the praise lavished on her by Jaufré’s song, accompanied by the B♭ ‘love from afar’ harmony. This chord diminuendos to silence as the act ends. A slow, sporadic version of Clémence’s upward harp quintuplet sounds as the act ends.
CHAPTER SEVEN: EPILOGUE

*L’Amour de loin* and the Aesthetics of Contemporary Music

In many ways Saariaho’s signature piece, *L’Amour de loin* marks the end of a decade of intensive work. As outlined here, the methods of musical construction she developed in the 1980s combined in the 1990s with a vocal writing style that is hierarchical, highlights triads, and frequently uses simple church modes. Due to the great versatility of her compositional technique, this pre-twentieth century vocal style combines effortlessly with the dissonant, modernist idiom into which her previous works are cast. In some respects, this development is not surprising. Although the soundscape of Saariaho’s compositions are far removed from functional tonality, she acknowledges that tonality and its dialectic process in which harmonies contrast with and return to a tonic is the most effective way to organize music. The technical procedures she has developed in order to control her musical material are inspired by this and find new methods to create dynamic oppositions. This is by no means the norm in contemporary music; setting an example for musicians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, composers dating back to Claude Debussy and Igor Stravinsky, as well as the early serialists Arnold Schoenberg, Alban Berg, and Anton Webern developed ways of organizing music that do not make recourse to dialectics. Serial grammar in particular avoids recourse to hierarchy. In this respect Saariaho’s technique has much in common with pre-modern musical styles. The use of hierarchical pitch schemes in her vocal lines is, if not a natural product of her dissonant idiom, an unsurprising development, as it utilizes the same conceptual framework as the other musical elements in her
work.

Attempting to categorize Saariaho’s music and relate it to contemporary music in general, articles and reviews including those by Iitti and Iliescu, while acknowledging her modernist background with its harsher sonorities, have called L’Amour de loin ‘postmodernist.’ They mention the storyline and dramatic style foreign to modern opera and the frequently modal pitch language as evidence. This, however, contrasts strongly with the aesthetic mindset of postmodernist composers. According to the late musicologist Jonathan Kramer, notable for his writings on postmodernism in contemporary composition, postmodernism is as much an attitude as a set of stylistic elements. He proposes several definitive attitudes of postmodernism that are contrary to Saariaho’s aesthetic. Chief among these are pervading irony, a distrust of binary oppositions, an embrace of contradictions, and lack of barrier between ‘high’ and ‘low’ styles.\textsuperscript{74} An illustrative example mentioned in the article is John Zorn’s composition for turntable and string quartet, Forbidden Fruit. In this work quotations ranging from Bizet’s Carmen to heavy metal music to Beethoven’s op. 133 Große Fuge succeed each other in rapid-fire fashion against a backdrop of chaotic noise and expressionistic atonal writing. The effect is at times hilarious, at times sublime, but always ironic as the contradictions between the differing styles are brushed aside by the quick pace of musical events. Saariaho’s music could not be any farther from this aesthetic: none of the traits listed by Kramer and demonstrated by Zorn’s work are present in her music; in fact, each listed trait is contrary to her technique.

and aesthetic. *L’Amour de loin* does make use of past styles, but does so at face value without any ironic distance. In fact, this listener cannot think of a single instance in her catalogue where irony or even humor is present. The most elemental trait of postmodernism is missing in her aesthetic.

In Kramer’s terms, one might be tempted to put Saariaho’s work under the heading ‘antimodernist’. The modal melodies of *L’Amour de loin* can be heard as a rejection of the twentieth-century modernist idiom. Saariaho has never disavowed her modernist background, however, and works written after her first opera return to a more modernist aesthetic. If one does not look for any break with the modernist tradition that shaped her education and early work, the place her work has in the variety of contemporary music traditions becomes clearer. Saariaho, in older and more recent compositions, demonstrates a high level of comfort using serial and other modernist techniques, her recent music representing a very comfortable blend of modernist and pre-modernist musical techniques in the service of personal expression rather than commentary on the aesthetics and techniques of other works and genres. She is thus representative of many composers of her generation. One example is Magnus Lindberg, her classmate from the Sibelius Academy. His recent violin concerto makes use of gestures one would expect in works from the great romantic violin concerto tradition. Lindberg, like Saariaho, had a thorough education in modernist techniques, aesthetics, and principles. He uses serial techniques to create a work that sits comfortably alongside pieces like the Sibelius violin concerto. Looking to nations other than Finland, composers as diverse as America’s John Adams, Great Britain’s George Benjamin, and France’s Marc-André Dalbavie similarly combine
intervallic thinking that originates in serialism with sonic events that recall traditional forms and sonorities.

This may be the most significant aspect of Saariaho’s aesthetic.

Modernism has evolved into something more closely resembling, at least on the surface, past musical styles. A composer like Saariaho, led by a formidable technique based in serialism and a preference for lush, resonant sonorities, develops a style based in modernist techniques that is entirely consistent with past techniques like modal melodic writing. It is also a logical cultural result of a nation such as Finland that does not share the tragic twentieth-century history of Continental Europe. There is not the sense that the art of the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries is the product of a violent, oppressive civilization that must be purged; the association between the cultural forces that produced the tonal tradition and the two world wars is not as obvious to Lindberg and Saariaho as it was to serialists from Continental Europe writing in the 1940s and 1950s, such as Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen. A musical object such as a modal melody with a clear tonal shape can be looked at in a new manner, as a past style that is consistent with contemporary musical techniques and culture. In addition, hierarchical constructions are not viewed with suspicion as further reminders of a corrupt Western culture. Saariaho’s unselfconscious use of past styles and modernist techniques in this context is unsurprising. In the end, modernism has become consistent with past styles.
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