

On Mordecai Seter’s Creative, Personal and Pedagogical Heritage¹

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Abstract: The article, written by a former student of Mordecai Seter, discusses some philosophical aspects of Seter’s work and shows how they may have been expressed in his concept of *mode* and in his teaching.

Keywords: Mordecai Seter; The-Thing-in-Itself; *modes*; Sieve Theory; harmony teaching.

Seter’s oeuvre has acted as a constant reference and guiding force in my own search for authenticity, pursue of creative expression, and strive for that intangible entity that Seter referred to as “the thing in itself.”² After listening to a performance of one of his string quartets I told Mordecai Seter that I had heard the “actually present” in the composition mainly because of the “absent” that had surrounded it; maybe that which we expect to be present, but is not concretely audible, defines the mysterious essence of the existent. To that Seter replied: “This is the thing in itself..”

In Seter’s late compositions appears the idea of a *mode*, a collection of pitches that function as a kind of acoustic-physical DNA of a musical work. The *mode* spreads itself melodically and harmonically by a process that may be seen as an organic necessity, controlling any other strategy of discursive musical rhetoric. “The thing in itself” is expressed through its unique property which the composer releases and then listens to attentively, allowing “it” to reciprocate by “creating the creator” in the process...

From my perspective, Seter’s compositions between the Symphony “Jerusalem” for choir and orchestra (1966) and his last work, composed in 1987, represent the main *corpus* of his output, and that in spite of the fact that I find the same spirit diversely manifested in his precedent works, too. All of them, in one way or another, carry the same “fire”; the same commitment to the “thing in itself.”

Seter became known—at a relatively young age—as a kind of “National Composer” while, maybe paradoxically, he withdrew from any professional unions and societies. In various interviews, whether printed or broadcast during the last decades of his life, he stated his disappointment by the social and political reality in his environment,³

¹ While I am aware that this issue is dedicated to the memory of Prof. Judith Cohen, who was a loyal supporter of Israeli Music, I would also like to dedicate this particular essay to the memory of the pianist Ora Rotem, who passed away last May, and who introduced me to the wonders of Mordecai Seter’s late piano compositions.

² “זהו הדבר עצמו”, possibly referring to the Kantian concept of *Das Ding an sich*.

³ For a full list of references to his writings—and writings about him— see the section about Mordecai Seter in Ronit Seter “[Israeli Art Music.](#)” *Oxford Bibliographies*, (last modified 2019-8-29), accessed July 26, 2022.

views that he repeated in personal communication, too. He retired from the Israel Composers’ League and his involvement in Israel’s institutionalized musical life became more and more limited as years passed. Until his retirement in 1984 from his position as a Music Professor at Tel Aviv University’s Music Academy he had never taught “composition” as a curricular subject. Further, Seter was completely detached and—most probably intentionally—unfamiliar with international contemporary music on the international scene. When asked in the 1980s, by a student and friend of mine, about Ligeti’s music he said: “I don’t understand it.”

There may be several (very probable) reasons for Seter’s reticence to be “up-to-date.” One of these reasons may stem from his experience as a young student in Paris, between the years 1932 to 1937: he did not like Nadia Boulanger’s academism, under whose tutelage he studied for a while;⁴ he did not like Stravinsky’s turn to neo-classicism, which Boulanger adored; he was not interested in the music of *les Six* and even rejected Ravel’s light and hedonistic attitude to music.⁵ Further, mainly during his early stages as a composer, he kept at a clear distance the trends being developed in Vienna or in Germany (post-Romantic Expressionism, Dodecaphony, and Hindemith’s “New Objectivity”). He was aware of Messiaen’s presence in the musical scene of the 1930s in Paris, but did not like his music nor his attitude. (“He is like a child” he told me once. “How could he name, with such arrogance, *The Technique of My Musical Language* a book written when he was so young?”). In later years he felt alienated from the 1950s (and later) emerging establishment of new music, its festivals, its ways of publicity and its marketing methods.

Personally, I have learnt two important “lessons” from the detachment he felt from both his Israeli cultural environment and the international “new music” scene. The first is the understanding that the price for an artist’s “success” can be expressed by his being constrained and even manipulated by society’s needs and trends. This might lead to a dangerous deterioration of professional integrity by artists, tempted by the flattery that surrounds them. In fact, I am not absolutely certain if some of our own “popular” composers are fully uninhibited by it (regardless of the minimal importance given to new art music in the cultural context of Israel’s last decades). My second “lesson” from Seter’s experience is more complex and ambivalent: his refusal to become more informed concerning the international contemporary composition field could be justified as a refusal to accept the dictum of the supposed cultural center, while living in the “periphery” in order to maintain an artistic independence and freedom of mind. But the combination of his withdrawal from an allegedly “deaf” society, with the refusal to listen to any musical innovation beyond its physical boundaries, might bring the artist into a precarious blind

⁴ Uri Adelman, “Sihot ‘im Mordecai Seter,” *Gitit* 14, May 1987, Tel-Aviv: Hotza’at Ha-No’ar Ha-Musikali Be-Israel. אורי אדלמן, “שיחות עם מרדכי סתר,” גיטית 14, מאי 1987, בהוצאת הנוער המוסיקלי בישראל.

⁵ On the other hand Seter told me once with nostalgia and a bit of pride that when attending the funeral of his teacher Paul Dukas, he and his classmates could see Ravel standing at the distance in the cemetery.

alley: from 1987 to his death in 1994, Seter did not create any composition. Sadly, he retired, completely.

Feeling a kinship to a professional environment, even if in a small scale, and even if not within geographic proximity, seems to me an essential need. I believe that we should avert of avoiding communication with our professional environment, and always strive for a dialogue with vital sources for our creativity, even if they are just imaginary or virtual.

On the other hand, however, some questions do arise. Could it be that the direction of the whole process in which Seter’s music developed led to a standstill? Perhaps the full control that a concrete realization of “the thing in itself,” the concept of the *mode* took upon his music; the attentive listening to it and to its surrounding silence; all these symbolize the vanishing of Seter’s “creative ego” into a “sonorous nature”? Perhaps this discovery “swallowed” the discoverer himself?

Despite all those speculations concerning the reasons and possible background of Seter’s artistic seclusion, and the creative silence that followed, I would like now to point at a surprising resemblance, both conceptual as concrete, between the way Seter’s late music developed and the concepts and realizations made contemporarily, in the mainstream of new music, by a surprising Other: Iannis Xenakis. Such a similarity is quite astonishing considering the aforementioned detachment of Seter from any trend of the avant-garde’s musical esthetics of those days.

During the 1970s, the same years in which Seter developed his concept of *mode*, Xenakis developed his own interpretation of the mathematical Sieve Theory, in order to create “Outside-time Musical Structures”.⁶ This conception of “inside-time” and “outside-time” musical structures was a very deep esthetic and philosophic-musical idea that Xenakis developed in various writings.⁷ Xenakis defined as “outside-time” the musical structures that are perceptible independently of chronological musical events (for example, the perceived presence of a mode, a scale, a chord, or the periodicity of a rhythmic pattern); “inside-time” are musical structures that depend, for their perception, on a specific order of musical events (for example: melodies or dodecaphonic series).

Xenakis lamented the dissociation of contemporary music from “outside time” structures,⁸ although these are present, and sometimes very rigidly so, in all musical cultures. Even in his early analytical works in Paris, around 1953, he searched for ways to express in music mathematical “stochastic laws,” partially expressed by natural

⁶ Dimitris Exarchos and Yannis Stamos, “[Iannis Xenakis’s Writing and Outside-Time Musical Structures](#),” Proceedings of the fourth Conference on Interdisciplinary Musicology (CIM08) Thessaloniki, Greece, 3-6 July 2008.

⁷ See his articles on the subject in Iannis Xenakis, *Formalized Music: Thought and Mathematics in Composition*. Edited by Sharon Kanach. Stuyvesant, New York: Pendragon Press 1992).

⁸ Xenakis developed his theory in the height-days of Serialism and pan-Serialism, which is meant by his use of the word “contemporary.”

phenomena.⁹ From this perspective, he perceived the concept of music serialism as a big mistake. Serialists, he said, confused “inside time” structures—series of pitches and/or of durations—with “outside” ones while trying to create an “outside time” order to their music. The result, according to Xenakis, was that they created “a somewhat confused magma of temporal and inside-time structures,”¹⁰ quite the opposite of a clear “outside time” musical structure. Xenakis saw in the idea of Sieves¹¹ a technique that enables the composer to choose sound elements and create sets out of any discrete continuum (such as the chromatic or any other equal division of the pitch field) that may provide “outside time” “row,” where the order of appearance of pitches is binding; the traditional idea of a “mode,” that implies a hierarchy among the pitches that constitute it (cadences, harmonization, directionality); and his idea of “sieve,” where the inventory of sounds provides the basic structure of a particular composition. The result of a sieve or of the superimposition of several sieves creates the “total sound” of a musical work.¹²

Around the same time that Xenakis developed his Musical Sieve Theory (c.1965–1971), Mordecai Seter developed his own original and unique series of diatonic modes of twelve or more pitches spread over various octaves (c. 1966–1976).¹³ While he did call these collections of pitches *modes*, he regarded them in a similar way that Xenakis regarded his “sieves,” thus creating an exclusive pitch material of each composition. Example 1, taken from an analysis of Seter’s *Quartetto Sinfonico* (String Quartet no. 2, op. 70),¹⁴ shows the inventory achieved by its specific *mode* and its inversion:¹⁵

⁹ Iannis Xenakis, “Free Stochastic Music,” in *Formalized Music: thought and Mathematics in Composition*, revised edition, Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1992, pp. 1–42. [This chapter was first published in *Musique Formelles*, Paris: Editions Richard-Masse (1963)].

¹⁰ Iannis Xenakis, “Towards a Metamusic,” in *Formalized Music...* pp. 180–200. [This chapter was first published in *La Nef* no. 29 (1967) in French; the first English translation appeared in *Tempo* no. 93 (1970)].

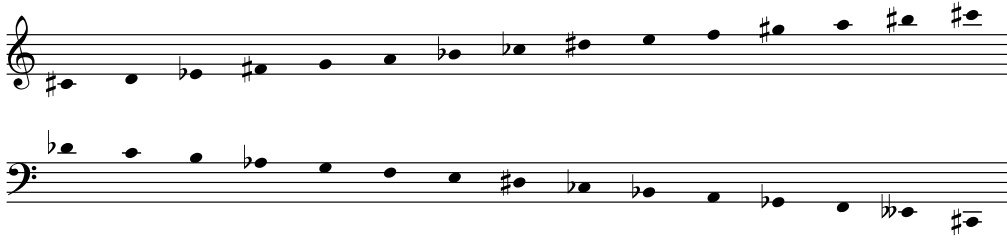
¹¹ Sieve Theory relates to a series of mathematical techniques [going back to Eratosthenes (3rd century BCE), who proposed a method to identify prime numbers] that serve to isolate various sets of numbers.

¹² See Iannis Xenakis, “Sieves” in *Formalized Music...* pp. 268–276. [While this chapter was written for this edition (1992), it is not the first time that the idea of Sieves appeared in Xenakis’s writings. His earlier articles on this subject had appeared in *Preuves*, Nov. 1965, Paris; *La Nef* no. 29, 1967, Paris; *Revue d’Esthétique* vol. xxi, 1968, Paris; and *Tempo* no 93, 1970.

¹³ The definition appears in an interview with Seter. See Uri Adelman, “Sihot ‘im Mordecai Seter,” p. 22.

¹⁴ Published by the Israel Music Institute. Catalog number IMI6796, ISBN 9781491171714.

¹⁵ From an analytical study of String Quartet no. 2 by Ronit Seter, personal communication. The mode, as an example, appears also in Ronit Seter, “[Seter, Mordecai](#)” *Grove Music Online*, 2001; Accessed 31 July, 2022.



Example 1: Mordecai Seter, String Quartet no II, Mode and Inversion

These modes, having sometimes the absolute pitch property (meaning that an octave transposition of an existing pitch functions in the mode as another—separate and independent—sound) offer a specific array of intervallic and harmonic material and also—occasionally—a register/pitch identity. That happens in the same way in the sieves as applied to the realm of pitch in Xenakis’ works (see, for example, *Jonchaies*, 1977 for orchestra.) A clear instance of this kind of a musical “outside time” identifier in the music of Mordecai Seter is apparent at the beginning of *Piano Cycle* (1982).¹⁶ Example 2 shows the *mode*—in fact, the general inventory of sounds, that is, if we choose to use Xenakis’s terms, the “outside-time sound structure” of this composition. Here it is clear that C#1 does not mean the same as C#3, nor G2 means or functions as G3.



Example 2: Mordecai Seter, the mode of Piano Cycle.

The motto at the top of the score says: “...the silence, which at every point surrounds the naked discourse...”.¹⁷ Daintily tangential to the conceptual sphere of “the thing in itself,” deliberated with the composer concerning the performance of his string quartet, it cuts into the core of one of the main esthetic challenges of our time.

The same mode that appears in Seter’s *Piano Cycle* opens his *Sonata for Piano* (1982).¹⁸ (Starting with Left Hand and bringing the Right Hand’s notes later for the sake of ascending order: B#-C#-E-F#-G#-A [in the low bass in *Piano Cycle*]-Bb-Cb-D-F#-G#)

¹⁶ Published by the Israel Music Institute, Catalog number IMI 6796, ISBN 9781491171721. All music examples from Seter’s works are reproduced with the kind permission of Mr. Ohad Gabay, the director of the institute.

¹⁷ The quotation for this motto is taken from George Steiner, “The Retreat from The Word” (1961), reprinted in his *Language & Silence*, New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 12–35. The quote appears on p. 21.

¹⁸ Published by the Israel Music Institute, Catalog number IMI 6797, ISBN 9781491171721.

The uniqueness of this approach allows the composer’s *mode* implementation. To continue the (unacknowledged) connection with Xenakis, Seter’s *modes* free him from the “inside-time” rules of serialism, on one hand, and from “inside-time” melodic motifs and cadential formulas of traditional modes on the other hand. The composer can express his insights of the “outside-time” inventory of sounds he chose in whichever direction he wishes. In *Piano Preludes to...* (1983),¹⁹ Seter took a far broader approach to his *mode*.

The **first prelude** is a quasi-Xenakis scanning of all the piano register. Its pitch modality presents a totality of chromatically ascending chromaticism in vertical whole tones in the right hand, while a zig-zagging Left Hand that “catches” some of the notes of Right Hand, as the *mode* of the piece, in a manner that reminds “random walks” as used by Xenakis, but in skips.²⁰ Then Seter ends the Prelude in a conclusive and assertive register utterance: the middle and high/low borders of the piano register are presented powerfully (but in *ppp!*) alone to end the piece.

After the **second prelude**, of rhythmic obsessive character (the aforementioned “fire,” always present in Seter’s music since his earliest compositions) manifests its presence, another way of scanning the whole concrete material offered by the instrument in the **third prelude**. It presents a four-part homo-rhythmic double canon that covers in ascending waves, the whole keyboard, from the low B#2 to G#5.

Certain aesthetic characteristics and methods in Seter’s compositions bear certain resemblance not only to the works of Iannis Xenakis, but also to Giacinto Scelsi’s, Luigi Nono’s, and even Morton Feldman’s (whose music Seter openly did not like).²¹ Notwithstanding the considerable differences in artistic essence, expression and temperament, it is clear that in spite of Seter’s introverted character and even isolation—and perhaps even *because* of that—his compositions developed through an original method and were, in a way, in par with his contemporary peers, although their compositions were either unknown to him or did not arouse his interest. In my understanding he was, in his own personal manner, very close to the diverse esthetic climate represented in the music of the twentieth century’s last decades, a style that may be tentatively described as “less talkative,” striving toward a more “listening” attitude.

Given that, I feel a bit uncomfortable when Seter’s importance in Israel’s art music history is exclusively related to his earlier “Jewish National” works as *Shabbat Cantata* or *Tikkun Hatzot*. His seclusion from social and political life led to another kind of music. I believe that the artistic value of his later compositions outweighs that of his earlier period, and that it is regrettable that his oeuvre from 1970 onwards—his chamber music and solo piano works—remains still relatively unknown.

¹⁹ *Piano Preludes to...* Published by the Israel Music Institute, IMI 6800, ISBN 9781491171752.

²⁰ See, for example, Xenakis’s *à r* (1987), Paris: Salabert, 1989 (available also at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnmAMc8v14s>, recording with score).

²¹ I have personally witnessed his negative reaction to Morton Feldman’s *Violin and String Quartet* (1985) in 1990 in Köln, as we listened together to its first performance.

Mordecai Seter as Teacher

Mordecai Seter was one of my professors at the Music Academy in Tel-Aviv University.²² My memories of him are an accumulation of vignettes that combine with each other to create his person, as I knew him.

I used to meet him between classes at the Academy, while he was standing and staring through the big windows at the garden, where stood a large tree covered with white flowers. Seter explained to me how nature repeats the same phenomena, but always in a different way: no leaf or flower is identical to another, and that in spite of having the same genetic “program.”

Our conversations dealt with many musical subjects. Sometimes Seter would inform me of the call number of an LP at the library with a Schumann’s song performance that I “must listen to”; another time he gave me a small paper note with the titles of some of Liszt’s late solo piano pieces that I “must get to know.” He used to comment about his travels and museum visits in Europe; he told me about the Goya collection of “Black Paintings” at the Prado Museum, or a Picasso exhibition through which he could see the gradual and continuous transformation from various artistic methods and approaches to others. Listening to him, I could guess that Goya’s last paintings’ pessimistic and somber character, as well as the slow transformational process from artwork to artwork in Picasso’s oeuvre might have reflected for him his personal feelings and thoughts about his own creative world.

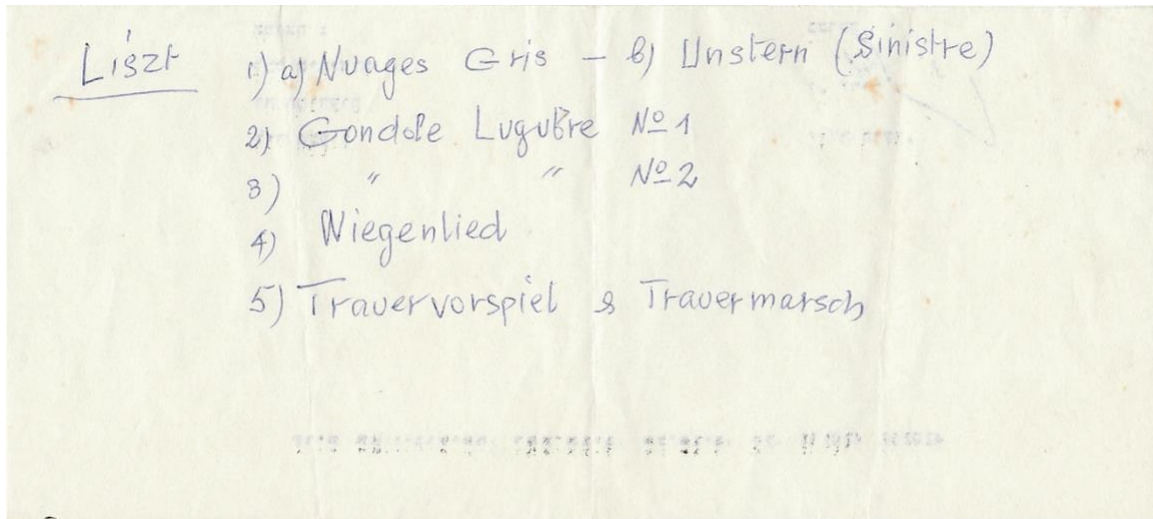


Figure 1: Seter’s handwritten note specifying Liszt’s late piano pieces that I “must get to know.”

²² Today the Buchman-Mehta School of Music, the David and Yolanda Katz Faculty of the Arts, Tel-Aviv University. Seter retired in 1984.

Seter told me about his piano piece *Sine Nomine* (1981) and its primary inspiration: the slow and paced marching of people at a funeral. When the pianist Arie Vardi performed it for the first time, Seter was very complimentary to Vardi’s musicianship but told me: “He asks me why my compositions are not more widely circulated and known among pianists such as teachers and students at the Academy, and I replied: that is not my job. My job ends at the moment I finish composing the work...”

Soon after my first acquaintance with him, and still as an undergraduate, I ventured to tell him about a radio broadcast of my recently premiered String Quartet, one of my first compositions. We met some days later and he told me: “I listened: the idea is simple and good, and the performance...” at that point, quite embarrassed, I interrupted him and said: “Oh yes, the players’ performance was not so good...” (now I know it was remarkably well performed). But he continued: “No...I mean *your* realization of the idea”—for him, the composer’s working of his idea was termed “performance”—“was very good!” These words substantially contributed to my self-assurance as a composer. Shortly thereafter he asked for my permission to recommend that the work be published by the Israel Music Institute (IMI).

Mordecai Seter was renown as an introvert who distanced himself from people in general, and institutionalized musicians in particular. In spite of that, my personal recollection of his are of a very warm man who was attentive and willingly communicated with me, although I was just one of his many students at the Academy. I remember that on my return to class after a time in reserve military service, he too me aside and said: “Now you seem to be feeling much better...”

Our relationship continued throughout my studies at the Academy even after his retirement in 1984. Occasionally we would meet in concerts, or when I organized performances of his chamber works in educational institutes where I taught and coached ensembles. I remember the performance of one of his trios.²³ He was skeptical concerning the ability of teenager players to grasp his music and bring it to an acceptable performance. “This is not music for children,” he said. After witnessing several rehearsals, however, he became rather satisfied.

I did not know that he stopped composing after 1987, and when we met, I told him: “Now, being retired from teaching, you surely have a lot of time to compose...”, but he answered: “Now there are other problems...”

When I learned about his final illness, I spoke about it with his friend, the composer Abel Ehrlich, who said: “Yes, he *ate himself* from within...” It is not a coincidence that Ehrlich understood Seter: highly respectful, he recognized that both of them were quite misunderstood by their social and cultural environment, and both going through a personal journey that was “a quest for a question.” Today, after many of the preconceptions that

²³ It was his Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano op. 63 (1973), one of his “Chamber Music ‘70” series of compositions, written during the 1970s.

ruled at that time have vanished, their two creative *corpora* shine with their unique quality, waiting to be discovered, performed and studied and researched.

Seter’s methods of teaching

Since my first days as student of composition I was— and still am—striving to penetrate the “skin,” the surface of sound of music compositions into their perennial—and always inspiring—essence. In concert with my ambition for fresh and innovative expression, I carried a deep belief that my guidance for free creation can be clarified and inspired by the old masters. I was always looking for the merging of the “now” with the “ever,” wishing to find in the works of the past elements and ideas that are forever actual.

Seter was a unique teacher, although, as I heard, not suitable for every student. For me, however, he embodied the ideal guide for my quest. In him I found the practical model of learning from the past about the future. Whether in a Harmony lesson, a Musical Analysis tutorial or even a Score Reading exercise, he always highlighted the uniqueness of the composition that was discussed, on the elements that eluded schematic norms and conventions, and particularly, avoided “style,” a word that I believe he detested no less than myself.

His Harmony course, which I took during my third undergraduate year in Theory and Composition at the Music Academy, was labelled “Romantic Harmony.” We strived to analyze the harmonic essence of notable compositions from the nineteenth century (even large ones, such as Liszt’s Piano Sonata); we learned about transformations in the tonal language, such as what he called “the growing importance of the Subdominant,” and we “solved” harmonic exercises. I noticed that Seter had always copied the “exercises” (a soprano line, a bass line or a combination of both) from simple small music notebooks. These were never regular “exercises,” but rather sort of musical challenges, full with artistic intention.

Years after Seter’s death I searched for those notebooks, the existence of which was implied in the catalogue of all his works at IMI, and found the pages labelled “Romantic Harmony”: it was a small handwritten textbook and twenty outwritten “exercises” by Mordecai Seter, photocopied from the National Library, where his whole estate is kept.²⁴ Since then, I have used Seter’s exercises for teaching in some of my own Harmony courses.

His basic conception about teaching was that music should not be taught as a systematic discipline. There are no laws, norms or any other obligatory rules: everything written during the course was a journey of research and a quest through the material. Once, as an undergraduate, I told my friend, the composer Chaya Czernowin who was then a graduate Master’s student, about the course. My report aroused her interest and she visited the class, actively participating. I felt that Seter was flattered by the interest that an

²⁴ My thanks to Dr Gila Flam, Director of the Music Department of the Jewish National and University Library, for her assistance and for these photocopies.

advanced student showed in his course. Toward the end of the meeting, he needed to leave urgently and did not have enough time to assign the “homework” exercise. He then gave his small notebook to Chaya and asked her to write it on the blackboard for the students to copy. Later she told me that he said to her: “They will not understand, and will ask you questions. It does not matter... you just tell them to copy it.”

In those “exercises” the student was asked to find the basic harmonic “idea” and the implicit syntactic/thematic progression of the composition. In the example I have copied here the information was given just as a bass line—a kind of riddle—that should dictate and lead to a musical realization. As an undergraduate, I struggled with this kind of exercises, always feeling as if I were climbing a high wall, desperately but stubbornly clinging to every possible nook and cranny. Will I succeed to get over it, or fall into the abyss?

Example 3 is Seter’s “solution” to “Sotto Voce”, an exercise in Romantic Harmony turned into composition. It is a photocopy from his “little notebook,” written in his own handwriting. Only the Bass line was given to the students, for them to suggest solutions of their own. I have added the markings in red, to indicate the parts and various elements of the composition:

1. “Theme”: a characteristically Romantic harmonic progression, alternating Tonic (E_b) and Subdominant (German 5/6) with appoggiaturas in the Bass. It ends on the V (Dominant) of the relative minor.
2. “Development”: implementation and projection of the harmonic idea of the Theme and evolution of its modulatory progression. It starts on E as a consequence of the tertian chromatic relation that exists between the beginning and the end of the Theme (E_b to G). The “Development” has three parts. In the first we have two-and-a-half measures from E to c[#] through the harmonic thematic motif, and a sequence of two deceptive cadences (D[#]₇–E and F[#]₇–g[#]).
3. The second part of the Development opens on A_b—the same tertian tonal relation as in the turn from the Theme to the Development: B to A_b, similar to G to E. A syncopated rhythmic variant appears in the Bass, while the motivic harmonic development continues, ending on a “Harmonic Organ Point,” where the Bass travels melodically but the chord C above it remains as fixed harmony.
4. “Recapitulation”: with rhythmic variation of the Bass, but keeping the same chord succession of the Theme, loyal to the idea of returning to the Theme, yet not in a mechanically identical way. The Theme in the Recapitulation ends, this time, on the Tonic, E_b, and not as in the Exposition on the Dominant of the relative minor (c). This, of course, follows the classical expected relation between Exposition and Recapitulation.
5. At the end of the “exercise” appears a “Coda” on a harmonic Organ Point in the Bass presented as an arpeggiated Tonic chord.

While all the former harmonic progressions can be explained based on reasoned “correct moves,” Seter’s version unexpectedly brings forth a transcendent moment, perhaps a “thing in itself.” The two “apparent” chords, f^b and D in the upper voices, which feel like what could be termed as “appoggiatura chords,” echoing, in a way, the thematic melodic appoggiaturas of the theme—reach an almost mystical sound at the end of this exercise-turned-into-composition. Seter’s “solution” to his riddle is, of course, “correct”; but more than that: it is also *spiritually inspiring*. Such was the magic of Mordecai Seter’s teaching. By transcending the supposed educational goal of technical skill, the course was transformed into a composition experience, enhancing creativity and an inquisitive approach to meaningful musical expression.

PIANO CYCLE

FOR PIANO

(1982)

מחזוריות

לפסנתר

...the silence, which at every point
surrounds the naked discourse...
G.Steiner

I

מורדכי סתר
MORDECAI SETER

Fluido $\text{♩} = 126$

ppp eguale

ppp eguale

pppp

ppp

ppp senza accenti

ppp

mf sub.

ppp

f.h.

dolcissimo

ppp

*) u - unaccented beat

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Con moto

$\text{♩} = 104$

musical score for the first system, measures 1-3. The piece is in 6/8 time. The first measure (measure 1) features a piano (*p*) and expressive (*espr.*) dynamic. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above it. The second measure (measure 2) is marked *ten.* and *molto espr.*. The third measure (measure 3) is marked *mp sost.*. The score includes a treble clef and a bass clef. A fermata is placed over the final note of the first system. Below the bass clef, there are markings: ♩ and \ast with *con* below it.

musical score for the second system, measures 4-6. The piece is in 6/8 time. The first measure (measure 4) is marked *ten.*. The second measure (measure 5) is marked *ten.*. The third measure (measure 6) is marked *p cant.*. The score includes a treble clef and a bass clef. A fermata is placed over the final note of the second system. Below the bass clef, there are markings: ♩ and \ast .

musical score for the third system, measures 7-9. The piece is in 6/8 time. The first measure (measure 7) is marked *ten.* and *espr.*. The second measure (measure 8) is marked *p*. The third measure (measure 9) is marked *mp molto espr.*. The score includes a treble clef and a bass clef. A fermata is placed over the final note of the third system. Below the bass clef, there are markings: ♩ , *L.H.*, *R.H.*, and ♩ .

niente, legatissimo sempre eguale e intensivo

sempre con sord.

quasi niente, espressivo senza accenti

espressivo

ten.

misterioso, senza colore e legatissimo

* - the accidentals are valid through one beam

luna
8va-----

8va-----

niente (.)

attacca subito

8vb-----

The image shows a musical score for piano with a vocal line. The piano part is written on two staves (treble and bass clef) and features a long, sweeping melodic line that spans across both staves. The vocal line is written on a single staff with a soprano clef. The lyrics are written below the vocal line. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The score ends with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note.

II

Dramatico ♩ = 152

sotto voce, secco *staccatissimo* *con sord.* *mf* *f secco* *senza sord.*

f *sarcastico* *subito sotto voce, secco* *mf* *molto* *ten.* *con sord.* *senza sord.*

f *ruvido* *ten.* *f* *stridente* *sfz* *ten.* *1* *sfz* *8vb*

Tempo II $\text{♩} = 120$

The score consists of several systems of staves. The first system includes a bass staff with a *sotto voce* instruction and a treble staff with *ten.* and *f acuto* markings. The second system features a treble staff with *ten.* and *sfz* markings. The third system includes a treble staff with *ten.*, *sopra*, and *pesante* markings. The fourth system shows a treble staff with *ten.* and *ten.* markings. The fifth system includes a treble staff with *8va*, *ten.*, and *ten.* markings, and a bass staff with *martellato*, *subito sotto voce*, *molto staccato*, and *niente senza rit.!* markings. The piece concludes with *con sord. al Fine*.

L'istesso tempo (♩ = 120)

ten. ten. ten. ten. ten. * segue

quasi niente, senza *ped.*, mano destra un poco trascinando

L.H. $\frac{2}{4}$
dolciss. misterioso, un poco marcato

niente i leggero (h)

ten.

1 *dolcissimo ma ben sonoro*

attacca subito

* - the chord in R.H. - G#-Bb-C# remains unchanged until the end of page.

III

Lento ♩ = 60

sotto voce, concentrato e legatissimo

sord. al Fine

sotto voce, concentrato e legatissimo

ten. senza rit.

lunga

Fine

Moderato $\text{♩} = 52$

6 - Sotto voce

15

1

Handwritten musical score for the first system, enclosed in a red border. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The time signature is 2/2. The tempo is marked 'Moderato' with a quarter note equal to 52. The first measure is marked '2 P tenero'. The word 'Theme' is written below the first staff with a red underline. The second staff has a 'Poco rit.' marking above it. The music features a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef, with various chords and accidentals.

2

Handwritten musical score for the second system, enclosed in a red border. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo is marked 'a Tempo'. The word 'lontano' is written below the first staff. The music continues with a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. Two specific measures in the treble clef are highlighted with red boxes.

Poco Rit.

Handwritten musical score for the first system, featuring treble and bass staves with chords and a melodic line. The music is in a key with two flats and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Poco Rit.'.

3

a Tempo

Handwritten musical score for the second system, including a 'Theme' label and an arrow pointing to the right. The music continues with chords and a melodic line.

Harmonic Organ Point

Poco. più.

Handwritten musical score for the third system, including an 'enh.' label and a 'Poco. più.' label with an arrow. The music concludes with chords and a melodic line.

Largo

Handwritten musical score for the first system, marked "Largo". It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The right hand contains chords and a melodic line, while the left hand has a bass line. A large slur covers the entire system. A red box highlights the right-hand part of the system. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4. The word "ten." is written above the final measure of the right hand.

Poco Rit.

4 a Tempo I°

Handwritten musical score for the second system, marked "Poco Rit." and "4 a Tempo I°". It features a grand staff. The right hand has chords and a melodic line, and the left hand has a bass line. A red box highlights the right-hand part of the system. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4. The word "dolce" is written above the first measure of the right hand. An arrow labeled "Reprise" points from the end of this system to the start of the third system.

Reprise

Handwritten musical score for the third system, which is a continuation of the previous system. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The right hand contains chords and a melodic line, and the left hand has a bass line. A red box highlights the entire system. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4.

5

Handwritten musical score for the first system. The treble clef staff contains chords and melodic lines with dynamic markings such as *p* and *sost. e espr.*. The bass clef staff contains a bass line with notes and rests. A red box highlights the right side of the system, and a red arrow points from the circled number '5' to the start of this section.

Arpeggiated Organ Point

Handwritten musical score for the second system. The treble clef staff features chords and dynamic markings including *dolce* and *ten.*. The bass clef staff continues the bass line. A red arrow points from the first system to the start of this system.

Handwritten musical score for the third system. The treble clef staff includes dynamic markings like *espr.* and a 'C' time signature. The bass clef staff continues the bass line. A red box highlights the right side of the system.