

Narrative and Syntax through Neoplatonic Hierarchy in Franklin Cox's *viz.* for Ensemble

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Neoplatonism has influenced music theorists and composers since the ninth century CE, and has been referred to as the main philosophical influence on Western aesthetics, even beyond the realm of music.¹ That influence is continued in Franklin Cox's *viz.* (1988-91) for ensemble, wherein the Neoplatonic hierarchy of being is applied to various elements of the piece to govern instrumentation, motivic development, form and even physical spatialization of the ensemble. Above all, the hierarchy and its application to various elements of the music is used to drive the underlying narrative of *viz.*, that being a question in constant search of an answer. Cox creates five levels of development in *viz.* that apply to instrumentation, large-scale form (macrostructure), the cycle formula, the limb formula, and the manipulation of physical space. However, the key to understanding *viz.* is not in the "how" but in the "why" and how the use of carefully controlled syntax (or form) is used to inform and drive the narrative.

While the use of the Neoplatonic hierarchy of being is central to the structure of *viz.*, the application of the hierarchy to transmit the narrative is of central importance, and will be the primary focus of the analytical work presented here. That narrative is at its core search for an answer through unfolding of the microstructure of the piece, or the cycle formula. Motivic material is assigned to groups of instruments, which Cox refers to as "concertinos." Each concertino is assigned a different level (and at times a smearing of levels) of the Neoplatonic hierarchy, and over the course of *viz.* the concertinos interact with one another. As the narrative unfolds, some voices show more willingness to be changed and develop over time, while others are less and more determined to remain unchanged. However, all concertinos, and individual voices for that matter, can be traced to a single source – an ensemble of offstage brass players. The relationship of syntax and narrative will be deconstructed into three primary sections of analysis: (1) Instrumentation (2) Form and syntax, and (3) Syntax and narrative.

Part 1 – Instrumentation

The instrumentation of *viz.* is central to underlying narrative of the piece. On the surface it is

¹ Glenn Wegge. "The Relationship Between Neoplatonism Aesthetics and Early Medieval Music Theory: The Ascent to the One (Part 1)" *Electronic Journal of Music Theory and Analysis* 1 (2000): 1.

similar to a small chamber orchestra, but the division of the instruments into smaller concertino groups along with the location of each concertino on the stage reflects the hierarchical structure that is central to *viz*. The instrumentation is shown in Figure 1, presented in two lists. The left-hand list is the instrumentation listed it would appear in typical orchestral score order. The right-hand list shows the division of instruments by concertino. Concertino group numbering is identical to how Cox labels the groups in the prefatory notes of *viz*. Cox applies the same separation of instrument into concertinos to the score order of *viz*. as well, in which the first bracketed instrument group is concertino 1, containing the solo flute, supporting flute and supporting clarinet. The second bracketed group is the oboe soloist and supporting bassoon, and so on through each concertino.

The unconventional score order of *viz*. represents the Neoplatonic hierarchy, and in turn the degree of freedom and motivic development found throughout the piece. Figure 2 shows the level of the hierarchy to which each concertino is assigned. Figure 2 also contains a graph of concentric circles to represent the celestial hierarchy. The circles demonstrate that everything comes from the center, or One, which represents incorruptible good. As one moves further from the center, each new element has less connection to the One, but is still perceived as being derived from the One. This is the idea that permeates throughout the narrative of *viz*.²

Although the Neoplatonic hierarchy would often be discussed starting from the One and moving to the outermost circle, it is more beneficial for narrative purposes to discuss the relation of the concentric circle graph to *viz*. by starting with the outermost circle, Matter, and move inward to the One. Matter is represented by concertinos one and two, made up of woodwinds and two soloists. These instruments contain the most freely moving and highly disjointed melodic figures throughout *viz*. Both instrument groups can be traced to the flute soloist and oboe soloist, deriving melodic figures from them and following them as they develop in each new section. Because concertinos one and two represent formless and corruptible matter, they are the most removed the One, however in further sections of the analysis it

² Richard Hooker "Renaissance Neo-Platonism," accessed December 1, 2012. <http://hermetic.com/texts/neoplatonism.html>.

will become more obvious how they, too, can be traced back to the center circle. While there are more obvious reasons for assigning woodwinds to the formless and free Matter circle – specifically because of the agility that generally accompanies woodwinds writing – the main reason for doing so is most likely because of the association of flutes and reed instruments with more human characteristics and primitive music. As the instrument groups move closer to the center, the association with humanlike qualities lessens. Cox refers to this relationship in passing in the prefatory notes of *viz.*, stating that the instruments move from “humanly inflective instruments to iconic.”³

The Body, represented by the string quartet, has a closer connection to the One while maintaining some semblance of freedom and development. The gestural, melodic and harmonic content is varied from section to section, but develops very little within the confines of individual sectional development. The relationship of concertino three (Body) to concertino six (the One) is more obvious than the relationship of concertinos one and two to six, as the relationship in the circle graph should lead one to assume. The relationship of Body to the One can be heard through direct statement and restatement of material from concertino six; material can be derived from melodic content, harmonic structures and spatialization of gestures. The strings also serve as a “connective tissue”⁴ between concertinos one and two and the role of the percussionists as timbral and textural voices.

The two percussionists represent the Soul, and their role in *viz.* is to act as timbral embellishment and “support” for the rest of the ensemble. They move freely between interacting with the woodwind, strings, and keyboards throughout the piece. This is because according to Neoplatonic thought, souls have a freedom of will and move about as they please.⁵ The two players are divided into one group of pitched instruments and a group of unpitched instruments, one player per group. The pitched instruments are used to support melodic, harmonic and timbral material found in other concertinos, and the unpitched instruments are utilized primarily for rhythmic and timbral extension of other voices. Although the two

³ Franklin Cox. Prefatory notes of *viz.* score (1988-91): 5.

⁴ Cox. *viz.* 5

⁵ Michael Baumer. “Brief General Notes on Neoplatonism,” accessed August 1, 2012.

<http://academic.csuohio.edu/mbaumer/classes.s10/PHL262/Brief%20General%20Notes%20on%20Neoplatonism.pdf>

players are divided primarily by their use of pitched or unpitched instruments, there is some crossover of instruments, specifically tamtam, various cymbals, snare drum, metal wind chimes, marimba and vibraphone.

The piano and Yamaha DX-7 are assigned to the fourth circle, closest to the One. These instruments remain relatively hidden in the texture of the rest of the ensemble for the majority of the piece, and are heard as the primary voice only when leading to, or away from, the offstage brass. One might assume that because these are the most closely related to the One that their gestures and motives are most closely linked to the offstage brass. In a sense this is true, but the two keyboards exist as their own instrument family, separate from the brass and still slightly removed from the One. Superficially, some of the material presented in the keyboard instruments could be attributed to concertinos one and two. However, further analysis and deconstruction of the keyboard material shows a closer link to the brass, both in melodic content and timbre. Also, similar to the strings, the pitched keyboard instruments are used as another “connective tissue” to relate the onstage instruments to the hidden offstage brass.

Concertino six, the offstage brass, represents the One in the innermost circle. The brass are defined as the least corruptible and the center of all things. Each gesture found in *viz.* can be traced back to the brass through deconstruction of contour, pitch material and/or the character of gesture (streams of repeated pitches, arpeggios, etc). Cox refers to the brass as having a “special role”⁶ in *viz.*, but does not define that role through the lens of Neoplatonism or the Neoplatonic hierarchy. He refers to them only as the furthest spatial depth of the ensemble; the “furthest depths beyond the wall.” The following analysis will explain in greater detail how the offstage brass act as a character in the overarching narrative of *viz.*, in addition to acting as the driving force of formal development and growth.

Part 2 - Form and Structure

The form of *viz.* is comprised of a macrostructure, microstructure and an underlying “formula” of motivic development. The macrostructure is made up of four sections, ABCD, and unfold through an underlying microstructure of six subsections, or cycles. Cox refers to these subsection as “cycles” and so

from this point the four sections of the macrostructure will be referred to only as A, B, C and D, and the cycles will be referred to as cycle 1, cycle 2, and so on through cycle 6. The “formula” is made up of six “limbs”⁷ of melodic material. Each limb assigns a distinct type of melodic, gestural and/or timbral material to each concertino, and is developed throughout the cycles of the piece. This division of motives into limbs assists in creating an individual identity for each instrument group from one cycle to the next. Additionally, it provides a means of developing material to globally across the entire ensemble, as well as developing each concertino on an individual basis. It is important that a clear distinction be made between cycles and limbs. A cycle is a localized and defined portion of the formal microstructure. Limbs, however, do not necessarily refer to a specific cycle, but the motivic material found within a cycle. Some cycles of *viz.*, as will be show in further analysis, contain multiple limbs of the formula.

Refer to Figure 3 for two graphic examples of the form of *viz.* The first is a table with information regarding the labeling of the macrostructure (ABCD), each cycle of the microstructure, the limbs contained in each cycle, relative instrumentation for each limb and the corresponding measure numbers of the score. The second graph is spatial graph, representing the length of each section proportionally to the total length of the piece. These graphs will be referred to in the following description of the macrostructure of *viz.* The following analysis is a broad, and to some extent superficial, treatment of form, but is necessary for examining overarching trends of development in *viz.* The microstructure will be examined more thoroughly in Part 3, as it is directly connected to the narrative arc of the piece, and would be difficult, if not impossible, to separate the two.

The four primary sections of *viz.* are defined by two criteria: (1) the cycles contained in each section, and (2) the unfolding of instrumentation in the section (both of these criteria are contained in the table of Figure 3). Each primary section contains, in some part, a portion/limb of the formula, if not multiple limbs. The instrumentation of each primary section can be defined as a gradual additive or subtractive process of instrumentation, and, similar to the division of limbs, in some cases a section may

⁶ Cox. *viz.* 5.

contain both additive and subtractive processes.

Section A (mm. 1-107) is a gradual additive process on all levels, including the movement through cycles, addition of instruments in each cycle, and the gradual movement from the front of the ensemble to the back of the ensemble. In Cox's own words, it is a "progressive elaboration and expansion of material in each succeeding cycle." The piece begins with cycle 1, an 11-bar introduction that presents the six limbs of the formula, demonstrating their melodic and timbral characteristics. Cycle 1 has an instrumentation of the solo flute, solo oboe, strings and percussionists. The final bar of cycle 1 is a rapid flurry of notes in the flute, upon which cycle 2 begins. This flurry in the flute is used to signal the end of one cycle and the beginning of a new one. When cycle 2 begins at m. 12, the character of the piece becomes more focused and more voices are introduced, specifically the supporting flute in concertino 1 and the supporting bassoon in concertino 2. At the end of cycle 2 the flurry returns with the addition of the supporting flute voice, creating a flurry of two voices. This shows that the segue gesture is also undergoing an additive process, gaining a new voice each time it is heard. Cycle 3 adds the supporting clarinet and completes concertino 1, and similarly, adds the supporting clarinet to the flurry gesture to segue into cycle 4. At this point in the piece the instrumental forces are broken down to solo flute and the additive process from cycles 1-3 is repeated two times. Cycle 4 is divided into two sub-cycles, each sub-cycle made up of a rapid additive process of instruments. Cycle 4 begins at m. 60 with the strings sustaining an F#4 as a residue from the woodwinds, and moves immediately to the solo flute cycling through material, and gradually adds instrumental voices until all but the violin are heard in m. 77. The second sub-cycle begins at m. 77, with a similar motion from strings to solo flute, however in this second recreation of the process, Cox adds the solo oboe to the texture. The second additive process continues until m. 99, at which point all voices from concertinos 1-4 are heard.

Cycle 4 acts as the first large-scale culmination of material in *viz.* and contains the first point in the piece in which all instrument voices are heard for an extended period of time. It also acts as a kind of summary cycle of themes presented previously in the piece. These are not musical themes, but extra-

⁷ Cox. *viz.* 5.

musical characteristics of the music, such as instrumentation, the particular character of the concertinos, and the motion from near to far. The beginning of cycle 4 and the beginning of the second sub-cycle are shown in Figure 5. The string parts have been highlighted in both score excerpts to highlight the motion from the bass to violin. The subtraction of voices gradually from lowest to highest is a localized example of motion from near to far. However, in this instance, the motion is from far to near, but is used as a motivic device to lead back to the high woodwinds, similar to the use of woodwind flurry to begin a new cycle. These are the first instances of Cox using motion from low to high in the strings to proceed back to the high woodwinds, and although they are a short-lived germ of an idea at this point, they will resurface again later in *viz.* as a formal framing device.

Section B (mm. 108-206) interrupts the flow of cycles, and, in doing so, interrupts the limb formula. However, the additive process of instrumentation continues, albeit altered and more localized, as does the motion further to the back of the ensemble. Section B is divided into two sections, one identified as the “Interruption” and the other being the end of cycle 4. The Interruption is divided further into two subsections; the first subsection lasting from mm.108-177 and the second from mm. 178-197. The interruption contains the final culmination of the additive processes started in section A, introducing the piano and offstage brass for the first time. The term interruption may apply to various types of interrupting material as well. The section itself interrupts the cycle and limb formula, as previously stated, but it is also made up of a dialogue of statement-and-interruption between concertinos.

The interruption begins with a duet between the flute soloist and the supporting flute. Their activity is cut off after two measures, at which point the strings enter with a quasi-ostinato stream of 16th notes centered around oscillating between G4 and F#4. The violin, viola and cello are the string voices that participate in the ostinato stream, along with support from the Yamaha DX-7 set to a string (or flute) patch to blend with the actual string voices. The contrabass plays punctuated and sustained harmonic pitches that correspond to notes in the ostinato. The string voices are all playing the same pitches at equivalent octaves, creating a blurred line between distinct voices, thereby creating a meta-instrument of the string players to create a single stream of notes. The statement from the strings extends from mm.

110-116 (shown in Figure 5). At m. 116, the flutes re-enter, this time with support from the solo oboe; all voices present similar material from the previous flute duet. Their activity is once again cut short by the strings playing the same quasi-ostinato figure heard previously. The restatement of the ostinato lasts from m. 118 until m. 124 (both statements last a total of six measures), at which point the woodwinds enter again with the addition of the supporting bassoon. It is clear by this point that Cox has localized the additive process solely to woodwind concertinos in Section B, whereas the strings provide the interruption of the process to continue smoothly. This dialogue continues until m. 144, upon which the piano enters for the first time as a solo voice, accompanied by a gong and large tom roll.

The procedure of presenting a dialogue, interrupting the flow and subsequently developing a new dialogue continues throughout the remainder of the first subsection of the interruption. The start of the second subsection (m. 178) is the first strong introduction of the offstage brass – the offstage horn is heard briefly in m. 103 sustaining A4 (A440), just before the start of the interruption. When the brass enter, they simply sustain and slowly pulse A4 (as foreshadowed by the horn in m. 103) under softly sustained harmonics in the strings and metallic percussion. As the section unfolds, the brass begin playing layered rhythmic patterns comprised of A4 played repeatedly with a harsh staccato articulation. As the energy builds in the brass, more woodwinds enter the texture, creating a reverse additive process from what has previously been presented. The subsection is short-lived and culminates by returning the “Allegro” material from cycle 4, thus completing the interruption. The return to cycle 4 lasts only eight measures, from mm. 198-206. It does not serve as a developmental section, but more as a means of returning to the cycle formula.

Section C begins at mm. 207 and contains the final two cycles and the culmination of the limb formula. Cycle 5, also referred to by Cox as the “Formula” section, is the final step in the limb formula. Throughout cycles 1-4, various elements of the limb formula are introduced and developed mostly on a cycle-by-cycle basis, for example, cycle 1 introduces the limb formula, cycle 2 focuses on the first two portions of the limb formula, cycle 3 on the second two and cycle 4 on the final two. There is some overlap of limbs across cycles, but cycle 5 is the first time that all material is heard simultaneously across

the ensemble. Cycle 5 also acts as the first example of a subtractive process of instrumentation. The full ensemble is present for the majority of cycle 5, including a brief statement by the offstage brass at m. 217, until m. 220. From mm. 220-232, instrument voices are gradually removed until only the solo flute and oboe are left at m. 232. The two soloists present material independently of one another and culminate in a rapid flurry of fast notes containing all voices in the woodwinds concertinos to segue into cycle 6. This marks the fifth instance of the flurry material, and the most voices present, five.

Cycle 6 lasts from mm. 240-262 and represents the denouement of the piece. It is not limited to a particular limb, nor does it seek to develop new material, but instead recycles through previously heard motives. The final cycle of the *viz.* could also be viewed as an amalgamation of all the textures, interactions and spatial movements from previous sections. These include gradual inclusion and removal of instruments in rapid succession to create small-scale additive processes, transference of pitches across the string section and dialogue with interruption. The cycle ends with only woodwinds cycling through material from cycle 1 while the strings sustain harmonics at very soft dynamics, each voice essentially returning to the material with which it began the piece. In short, cycle 6 is a gradual deconstruction of the ensemble and variation of material to a familiar, but changed sound world.

Section D, the coda of the piece, condenses all material and concepts previously heard in the piece into 51 concise measures. The coda opens with the solo flute and rapidly adds one instrument at a time in score from the solo flute to the offstage trombone. When all voices have entered the texture chaos ensues and all voices fight to be heard over one another. As the coda progresses, melodic content becomes less obvious and the voices become more timbrally driven and eventually the only section left are the strings playing a chord of softly sustained harmonics, a transitionally device that has been seen in previous sections of the piece, specifically in cycles 1 and 2, and as well in transitional points of the interruption. The string chord is quickly interrupted by the woodwinds, mimicking the harmonic progression presented by the woodwinds in the interruption, but this time distorted with microtonal inflections and played at piercing dynamics with a much harsher tone quality (shown in figure 6). The woodwind chord is abruptly interrupted by the vibraphone, glockenspiel, piano and DX-7 (set to crotales)

playing a frenzy of melodic material, leaving behind a residue of various metallic timbres. As the residue evaporates there is a period of rest for the entire ensemble leading to the final sonority of the piece. The final sound of *viz.* is a single brief gesture comprised of extended techniques and “breathy” timbres from each instrument, moving back through ensemble from the solo flute to the offstage brass.

Part 3 - Syntax and Narrative

The syntax of the cycle formula and limb formula creates the underlying narrative arc of *viz.* The succession of cycles provides more detailed information concerning the development of individual concertinos and their characteristics, development of motivic material from each limb, and the extra musical narrative related to the Neoplatonic hierarchy. There have been several references to the limb formula that permeates the cycle formula of *viz.*, and before moving forward with the cycle formula and its relation to narrative, it is essential that the limb formula be clearly defined. The limb formula is a division of unique motivic, timbral and gestural material assigned to each concertino. There are six total limbs to the formula and they are assigned the following titles:

1. Melody - melodic flourishes accompanied by simultaneous ascending and descending intervals
2. Appassionato - grace notes, slight timbral variations (Flz.), dynamic swells
3. Misterioso - more extreme timbral variations, strong focus on extended techniques and sustained tones
4. Dynamic - ascending melodic material rapidly increasing in speed
5. Lament - descending minor 2nd interval (referred to as the “lament” motive)
6. Tailing Off - gradual descending melodic lines, or rapidly descending grace note

figures

Each limb contains general melodic and timbral characteristics. The relative order of limbs and their characteristics are outlined in the opening measures of *viz.* by the solo flute. The excerpted flute solo is shown in Figure 6, along with labeled characteristics of each limb. This method of using a brief introduction as a means of presenting material is not unknown to Cox’s output. He used a similar framing device in his 1989 work *Clairvoyance* for solo violin, in which all material is related to five basic gesture

types introduced in the first 15 bars of the piece.⁸ It is unclear if *viz.* is the first instance of this formal technique in Cox's music, as *Clairvoyance* was completed in 1989, one year after he began work on *viz.* The chronology of the method, however, is secondhand to the application of the technique as a framing device for both the syntax and narrative. For the syntax, it introduces the basic elements of the piece in the relative order in which they appear, and for the narrative, the flute solo acts as a means of introducing the primary soloist, and in some ways the protagonist of the piece.

As stated before, each concertino has a limited and unique amount of material for each limb. Figure 8 contains a table that outline the material assigned to each concertino for each limb. Refer to this table throughout the following analysis of the cycle formula, as material will typically be referred to by its corresponding limb number (as opposed to specific gestures and motives) as a means of creating clear and concise explanations of events. Section A lays the initial groundwork for the narrative. Cycle 1 is made up entirely of the opening flute solo and flurry to signal cycle 2. As mentioned previously, the flute solo acts as a means of introducing the character of the solo flute voice, the freely moving and easily corruptible outer circle of the hierarchy, Matter. While the strings and percussion sit entirely in the background of cycle 1, their roles are somewhat definable, even within 11 measures. The texture of softly played string harmonics represents the first inward circle of the hierarchy, Body. The unstable harmonic structure and frail timbre of the harmonics demonstrate that the strings are also not representative of a rigid structural integrity, but their steadfast use of sustained drones does imply they may be more stable than the woodwind voices.

Cycle 2 provides little development of the narrative, but instead provides reinforcement of the roles of the concertinos. The six limb formula is cycled through a second in time cycle, similar to cycle 1, but with added voices and more elaborate presentation of the motives between the solo oboe and supporting flute. What was at first a single free moving voice now becomes three through the additive process of section A. This reinforces the woodwind concertinos (both 1 and 2) as the freest flowing and most corruptible voices. It also defines them, in turn, as the most human voices. The string material does

⁸ Franklin Cox. Prefatory notes of *Clairvoyance* (violin version) score (1989): 3.

not develop in cycle 2, but instead continues to cycle through sustained harmonic notes in each string voice, cycling through a gradually evolving pitch structure.

Cycle 3, *Mysterioso*, contains a number of significant strides in propelling the narrative. It is the first cycle to focus on the development of a single limb (*mysterioso*), contains the first instance of the strings acting as a solo voice, and foreshadows future events and developments of the piece. Cycle 3 is divided into two sections, wherein each section focuses on a different element of the *mysterioso* limb. *Mysterioso* is characterized by timbral variation of sustained pitches and/or sounds, as well as periodic percussive sounds. The first section of cycle 3 is an exploration of timbral variation and the second section is devoted to the percussive elements and to developments in texture and ensemble color. In first section, mm. 27-39, the strings sustain harmonics that create thick densely packed chords, similar to the previous two cycles, while the woodwinds create a blanket of sound consisting of sustained trills and layered oscillations distorted with irregular rhythms and flutter tonguing. In m. 37 the violin emerges from the woodwind texture to state the “lament” motive (two descending minor seconds), but it is cut short by an abrupt switch to the second section of cycle 3. This is the first instance of an interruption, and foreshadows what is to come in section B. Figure 9 shows mm. 39-42, and outlines the transition between sections of cycle 3.

The second portion of cycle 3, mm. 40-59, actually roughly begins at m. 43, with a three-bar transitional period. This section creates no distinct solo voices, but instead centers around creating a murky texture of all voices. At this point, cycle 3 becomes a section of exploration for all voices. Cox refers to the “search for an answer” in the program notes, which is represented for the first time in cycle 3. The woodwinds lose their identity as distinct solo voices and share common ground timbrally and texturally with the strings. The strings also begin searching for new ground, represented by the pointed, albeit brief, statement of the “lament” motive from the violin.

Similar to cycle 3, cycle 4 can also be divided into two distinct subsections, each containing a different focus of the limb formula. The first section of cycle 4 focuses on development of the dynamic limb. *Concertino 1* demonstrates dynamic limb through rising melodic lines, each ascension faster than

the one before it; not dissimilar to the “dynamic” measures of the introductory flute solo in cycle 1. Material for concertino 2 is primarily made up of large ascending and descending intervallic leaps presented as a sustained *espressivo* note followed by a short and aggressive *staccato* note. The syntax of section 1 is similar to previous cycles, in which instruments gradually enter the texture and present variations of the material contained in limb 5. Additionally, cycle 4 represents a return to the previously defined concertino roles as assigned by the celestial hierarchy, whereas the end of cycle 3 represented new developments in the extra-musical characters of concertinos 1 and 2.

The character of cycle 4 changes at the start of section 2, at which point all instrument groups begin to lose focus. No concertino presents development of a single limb, but instead begins combining material from multiple limbs. The woodwinds of concertino 1 focus primarily on motives from limb 3 and 4 while the oboe and bassoon continue developing material from limb 4. The strings start to move away from the sustained notes and drone material that largely makes up their material in cycles 1-3, and begin to develop independent melodic lines. Fragments of the quasi-ostinato of the interruption begin to appear from the texture as a result. The individual voices also begin to sound as four distinct voices, and less like a single timbral blanket of sustained chords. Neither the limb formula nor the cycle formula are completed at this point, but the frenzied nature of the voices causes further development to be temporarily stifled. This leads to the start of section B and the interruption, and conversely, signals the end of section A.

The general narrative of A surrounds the introduction of the concertino characters, which, in turn creates a sonic representation of layers 3-5 of the Neoplatonic hierarchy. The second narrative construct is the exploration to unknown worlds, both musically and figuratively. Exploration is displayed musically through the limb formula and the constant exploration of localized motivic material for the concertinos. Figurative exploration is found through the addition of new voices to the ensemble, and, in turn, new spatial depths to lesser known instruments (specifically the piano and offstage brass). The point of interruption in section B represents a key element of the syntax of *viz.*, denoting a point of departure from the established cycle formula. It is equally important to the narrative arc by solidifying the character roles

of the concertinos.

The dialogues between the woodwinds and strings (refer to Figure 5) are a device used to repeatedly establish the freedom of the woodwinds, who never consolidate as a section, against the more rigid structure of the strings, who show almost complete unwillingness to waver from their activity. The previous cycles and the first half of the interruption are dominated by these kinds of interactions between the woodwinds and strings with very little reconciliation or unity gained between the two. The piano entrance at m. 144 acts as a breaking point in the never ending search for consolidation between the woodwinds and strings. The piano solo however, is quickly interrupted by the distorted statement of the lament motive by the full ensemble. This is the first climax of the piece, and it is no coincidence that the lament motive appears at this point. The lament motive is used throughout *viz.* as an aural symbol of despair, and is heard in this context for the first time at m. 152 (Figure 10). The brief solo section in the piano is a representation of the woodwinds and strings reaching further back for stability and guidance, but nothing is offered from the piano, leading to the disheartened statement of the lament motive. The eruption into chaos from mm. 167-172 can be interpreted as a reactionary response from the woodwinds and strings.

The offstage brass enter as a clearly identifiable voice at m. 172 (although they are not visible to the audience). From the confusion comes stability. The unison A4 statements from the brass denote the most stable harmonic and, to an extent, timbral material heard. It appears, at this point, that the constant exploration and unanswered musical questions from the woodwinds, and in part from the strings, have finally been answered by the offstage brass – the incorruptible One. The stability does not last long, though. The rhythmic stability of long tones begins to turn into disjointed layering of odd-numbered tuplet rhythmic groupings. New pitches are also added to the harmonic structure, which in turn creates another level of instability. Other instruments of the ensemble attempt to mimic the brass, but without beneficial results. After 25 measures the rest of the ensemble returns to cycle 4. Upon their first entrance, the brass provided a kind of stasis, or at the very least, a glimpse into what the outer lying woodwinds voices should strive to be. However, like the piano, the solution they provide offers little insight, resulting

in a return to previously established behaviors. Because cycle 4 is so brief (eight measures, mm. 198-206) it does not provide a great deal of narrative development, but instead launches the listener back to a sound world of confusion and a conglomeration of motivic material.

Section C, the final two cycles of the cycle formula, represents another attempt at consolidation of the concertinos and demonstrates the change of instrument voices as a result of the interruption from section B and the completion of the limb formula. As previously stated, cycle 5 (which will be referred to as the “formula” section from this point), presents all limbs simultaneously, as well as the addition of the repeated note motive introduced by the brass in the interruption. This leads to a complete breakdown of the ensemble and total chaos ensues, albeit for a brief period of time; cycle 5 is the shortest section of the piece since cycle 3 in section A. All order is lost and no clear distinct voice can be derived from the texture, as if each instrument voice is now lost and searching for an identity. The solution to completing the limb formula is to deconstruct the ensemble back to the solo flute and solo oboe, the subtractive process discussed in the syntax analysis. This subtractive process represents a return to the natural world, and the start of a new search for consolidation of the ensemble.

Cycle 6 is the beginning of the denouement of the piece. Its focus is primarily on the lament motive variations, or more accurately, distortions of it. Unity among each concertino is another theme of the cycle, but little unity across concertinos is achieved. Cycle 6 is divided into three subsections of narrative development, those being newly found unity within the concertinos, new material from the offstage brass, and finally the collapse of the ensemble after a number of unsuccessful attempts to achieve unity through spatial and exploration to unknown worlds.

The first narrative section consists of mm. 240-248, wherein each concertino shows strong unity within the concertino group, but does not relate to other voices. Rhythmic structures within a concertino are nearly in unison. The woodwinds cycle through fragmented material from various limbs of the formula without any complete restatements; primarily, the woodwind material in cycle 6 is sustained pitches in the upper tessituras of the instruments. The strings take on a more active and prominent role and assert dominance over the woodwind voices in an effort to force their more rigid and structured

material onto the freer concertinos.

The second narrative section begins at m. 249 (shown in Figure 11) and lasts until m. 254. It begins with the rising gesture in the strings, wherein a single melodic line passes from the bass to the violin, all instruments playing the same pitches at the same octave. This is the final stage of development in the additive process that was shown in Figure 5. The string gesture leads to another spinning out of material localized to each concertino, as was displayed in mm. 240-248. The second section ends with another rapid flurry of notes from the strings, minus the bass. Cox creates a call and answer in the second section, the strings calling to the woodwinds. The roles of the concertinos have reversed from their origin of the woodwinds calling back to the strings. In section C, the more rigid and immobile string section pushes forward to the front of the ensemble to the woodwinds, all of whom are again wandering independently and show little sign of unity, even among concertinos.

The third narrative section takes up the remaining measures of cycle 6, mm. 255-262. This section begins with a long vibraphone crescendo from the two percussionists. This leads to a climatic arrival from the piano and offstage brass sustaining a (0167) set with pitches C-C#-F#-G (shown in Figure 12). This is a key element of the narrative, as the brass, representing the infallible and incorruptible One, is now heard as unstable and corrupted. The structural focal point of the hierarchy collapses at the entrance of the brass and piano. Following the brass and piano is a second vibraphone crescendo, followed by another rising gesture from the strings and finally to a series of distorted statements of the lament motive from the solo flute and distorted fragments of various other limbs in the other woodwind voices. The last seven bars of cycle 6 present, in ascending order, the entire Neoplatonic hierarchy of being individually, level by level. In the program notes, Cox mentions that the ensemble is “constantly seeking further spatial depths” and that the “answer [from the offstage brass] is never the right one.” The use of the lament motive in the solo flute represents the discontent felt by the outermost circle, Matter, with the answer provided from the brass and sent through the rest of the ensemble.

Section D, the coda, presents a final push from the woodwinds to the brass, representing one last search for an answer, or at the very least, an attempt for each concertino to, again, assert its dominance

and will over one another. The result is a barrage of material, and a cacophony of sound that is relentless. The brass begin repeatedly passing motives to the front of the ensemble in the fast succession, but in the end, each concertino maintains its identity. The microtonal interruption that follows the strings reinforces the independent and corruptible nature of the woodwinds. The strings maintain their role throughout the coda as being more rigid than the woodwinds, but open to development and change. The roles of the percussion and piano as timbral support are maintained through their extensions of woodwind and brass material. The brass, although more complex than they were originally presented, still represent the most stable and least corrupted instrumental unit of the ensemble, and so, maintain their role as the One.

The final gesture of the piece could be heard as a sigh. Whether or not it is a sigh of relief or of disdain remains unclear. One could speculate that it is a sigh of disdain, given the result of tireless searching yielded more confusion than it did results. However, although the concertinos developed and changed over time, they still, to some extent, maintain their identity and placement on the Neoplatonic hierarchy. For better or worse, the journey caused little change to the corruptible Matter who maintain their freedom of exploration throughout the piece. However, other concertinos whose roles were to maintain a stricter sense of unity of solidarity begin to lose focus and distort over time. This interpretation begs the question of who is influencing whom in *viz.* Are the woodwinds searching for an answer, or are they acting as the developmental force, asserting *their* dominance on the concertinos from the strings through the brass? The end of the piece could also be interpreted as a statement about Neoplatonic thought in general, or on a broader sense, the futility in seeking the unknown and celestial for answers that may or may not exist.

The true meaning of the end is ambiguous, and is ultimately subjective. However, the process Cox uses to reach the murky ending is what makes *viz.* a magnificent piece of art. The underlying narrative structure of the piece is obviously important, as displayed by the lengthy program note. Moreover, there is equal attention given to explaining general characteristics of the syntax, providing clues that the connection between narrative and syntax are of paramount importance. One could argue that form and syntax are one and the same, and additionally that all art has form. However, the specific

manner in which Cox handles the syntax through the cycle formula and limb formula, and uses it to inform and drive the narrative is what is unique. Along with the symbiotic relationship of narrative and syntax is the unconventional division of instrumentation and score order reflected by the unique ensemble layout, all of which is governed by the Neoplatonic hierarchy, and is central to the narrative. Every element of *viz.* is essential in creating the clear narrative that unfolds. While cohesion between the concertinos is lacking in the narrative sense, the structural sophistication of *viz.* is in great abundance, making it a cornerstone of Cox's output as a composer, and an important piece of contemporary music literature.

Appendix A - Examples, Diagrams and Graphs

Figure 1 – Instrumentation of *viz.* (1 player to a part)

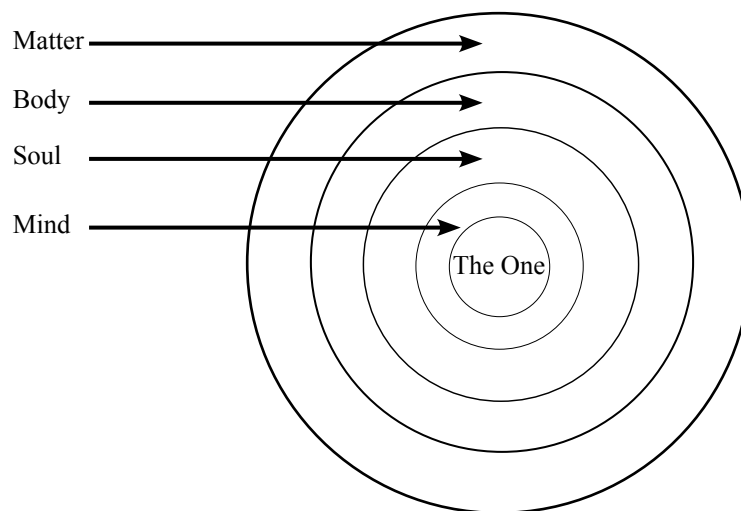
Orchestra score order:	Concertino grouping
Flute 1	1a. Flute 1 (soloist)
Flute 2	1b. Flute 2 and Clarinet (supporting voices)
Oboe	
Clarinet (B-flat)	2a. Oboe (soloist)
Bassoon	2b. Bassoon (supporting voice)
Horn in F	
Trumpet 1	3. Strings (violin, viola, cello, bass)
Trumpet 2	
Trombone	4. Percussion 1 and Percussion 2
Percussion 1	
Percussion 2	5a. Piano
Piano	5b. Yamaha DX-7
Yamaha DX-7	
Violin	6. Brass
Viola	
Cello	
Bass	

Figure 2a - Concertinos and the Neoplatonic Hierarchy (listed)

Levels of the hierarchy:

1. The One - concertino 6 (offstage brass)
Least corruptible; pure good. Everything emanates from the One.
2. Mind - concertino 5 (piano and DX-7)
3. Soul - concertino 4 (percussion)
4. Body - concertino 3 (strings)
5. Matter - concertinos 1 and 2 (woodwinds)
Most corruptible; formless and may be perceived as the influence of evil on the natural world.

Figure 2b - Concertinos and the Neoplatonic hierarchy (concentric circle graph)



Appendix A (continued)

Figure 3 - Form of *viz.*

Formal structure (table format)

A				B		C		Coda
I. Largo with rubato	II. Appassionato	III. Misterioso	IVa. Allegro	Interruption	IVb. Allegro	V. Formula-Adagio	VI. Largo	Slow - Fast - Slow
mm. 1-11	mm. 12-26	mm. 27-59	mm. 60-107	mm. 108-197	mm. 198-206	mm. 207,239	mm. 240-262	mm. 263-314
Fl.S., Ob.S., Str.	Fl.S., Conc2, Str.	Full Ensemble (FE), - brass	FE, - brass	FE, - brass	FE, - brass	FE, + brass	FE, - brass	FE, + brass

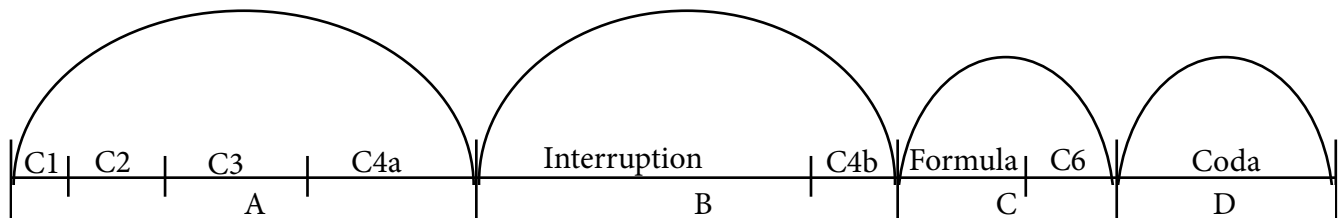
Column 1 - Macrostructure (ABCD)

Column 2 - Microstructure (cycle formula plus interruption and coda)

Column 3 - Microstructure measure numbers

Column 4 - relative instrumentation

Formal structure (proportional graph)



C# - Cycle number

ABCD - macrostructure sections

Graph shows the proportional relationship of the macrostructure and microstructure

Each progressive macro section becomes gradually shorter, while there is more of a push and pull found in the microstructure.

The interruption is the largest portion of the microstructure, which is notable considering it denotes a break from the cycle formula and limb formula. Even still, it contains some of the most important development in *viz.*

Appendix A (continued)

Figure 4a - m. 60

Handwritten musical score for measures 60-62. The staves are Violin, Viola, Cello, and Bass. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The score includes various musical notations, dynamics (ppp, p), and performance instructions like "senza sord." and "flauti".

Handwritten musical score for measures 62-64. The staves are Solo Flute, Flute, E-flat Alto Clarinet, Solo Oboe, Bassoon, Violin, Viola, Cello, and Bass. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 3/4. The score includes various musical notations, dynamics (ppp, p), and performance instructions like "senza sord." and "flauti".

Appendix A (continued)

Figure 6 - Woodwind chord from interruption and microtonal respelling in coda

Handwritten musical score for measures 172 and 179. The score is written for five woodwind parts: Solo Flute, Flute, B♭ Clarinet, Solo Oboe, and Bassoon. Measure 172 includes dynamic markings such as *p*, *mp*, *f*, and *ppf*, along with a *Ritard* instruction. Measure 179 includes a *Cresc.* marking and a *ppp* dynamic. The notation includes various musical symbols like slurs, ties, and articulation marks.

Handwritten musical score for measures 209 and 210. The score is written for five woodwind parts: Solo Flute, Piccolo, B♭ Clarinet, Solo Oboe, and Bassoon. Measure 209 includes dynamic markings such as *ff* and *no decrescendo!*. Measure 210 includes a *ff* marking and a *no decrescendo!* instruction. The notation includes various musical symbols like slurs, ties, and articulation marks.

Handwritten musical score for measures 206 and 210. The score is written for five woodwind parts: Solo Flute, Piccolo, B♭ Clarinet, Solo Oboe, and Bassoon. Measure 206 includes dynamic markings such as *ff* and *no decrescendo!*. Measure 210 includes a *ff* marking and a *no decrescendo!* instruction. The notation includes various musical symbols like slurs, ties, and articulation marks.

Appendix A (continued)

Figure 8 - Limb formula/Material assigned to each concertino per limb

	Melody	Apassionato	Mysterioso	Dynamic	Lament	Tailing Off
Concertino 1 (solo fl, fl/cl)	Alternating melodic contour, flourishes, gracenotes, ascending m3 interval.	Flutter tongue, broken triplets, pointillistic	Sustained notes, focus on timbral alteration, percussive sounds, smorzando	Rapidly ascending figures, clusters of ascending flourishes	Descending m2 interval presented two times (second statement is longer)	Trills, disjunct melodic material in a gradual descending motion
Concertino 2 (solo ob, bsn)	Single repeated staccato note, sustained notes with and without trills	Staccatos, mocking style, various grace note patterns in both oboe and bassoon	Trill and tremolo figures with angry/agitated timbres	Espressivo, wide range leaps, 1st note often longer, followed by punctuated staccato note	Tremolo melodic material, pointillistic	Gracenote to single-note patterns, repeated notes like in melody
Concertino 3 (strings)	Sustained harmonics	Sustain notes, harmonics and ord. mostly in sul pont.	Tremolo moving/glissing chords and harmonics	Sustained tones against timbral and percussive bowing	Gliss, trill, jetting figures. Overall focus on timbre	Timbral mass of string effects
Concertino 4 (perc.)	Ambient metal sounds (gongs, vibrahone, crotales)	Continued metal ambience from "Melody"	Shift to skin and wood timbres. Repeated note patterns on a single skin/wood	Continued focus on wood timbres, introduction of melodic wood. Dynamic swells and	Return to metal timbre, tolling bells, crotales, frenzied metal sounds	Ambient metals and brief melodic outbursts in upper register of crotales and vibraphone
Concertino 5 (piano, DX-7)	Muted single notes (mostly tacet)	Timbral support	Timbral support	Tremolo and disjunct melodic statements (appear at end of interruption)	Variations and elaborations of material from Dynamic limb (timbral support)	Jetting figures and frenzied melodic gestures (timbral support)

Appendix A (continued)

Figure 9 - Cycle 4, section 2 (mm. 99-102, pg. 28)

The image shows a handwritten musical score for Cycle 4, section 2 (mm. 99-102, pg. 28). The score is written on 12 staves, each labeled with an instrument: Sax, Flute, Flute, Bb Clarinet, Solo Oboe, Bassoon, Violin, Viola, Cello, Bass, Percussion, and Piano. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, dynamics (e.g., f, mp, pp, ff), and articulation marks. A rectangular box is drawn around the Violin and Viola staves, highlighting a specific musical passage. The score is densely written with many annotations and markings.

Strings begin to play more melodically. Boxed section contains the first glimpse into the quasi-ostinato from the violin and viola

Appendix A (continued)

Figure 10 - Full ensemble "lament" motive

Figure 10 is a musical score for a full ensemble, titled "lament" motive. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes parts for Solo Saxophone, Flute, Clarinet, Solo Piano, Violoncello, Violin, Viola, Cello, and Bass. The second system includes parts for Percussion I, Percussion II, Chimes, Piano, and DX-7. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 60. The score features various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings such as *f*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, and *mp*. There are also handwritten annotations and a circled number 152 at the beginning of the first system.

Voices in the square play statements and distorted versions of the "lament" motive

Appendix A (continued)

Figure 11 - Rising cascade of strings (first instance at m. 249)

Figure 11 is a musical score for four string instruments: Violin, Viola, Cello, and Bass. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a rising cascade of strings. The Violin part starts with a 4-measure rest, followed by a 4-measure rest, and then a 4-measure rest. The Viola part starts with a 4-measure rest, followed by a 4-measure rest, and then a 4-measure rest. The Cello part starts with a 4-measure rest, followed by a 4-measure rest, and then a 4-measure rest. The Bass part starts with a 4-measure rest, followed by a 4-measure rest, and then a 4-measure rest. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *p*, *pp*, *ppp*, and *pppp*, as well as articulation marks like accents and slurs. A tempo marking of *Rit. molto* is present at the bottom. The score is marked with a circled 'N' in the Bass part.

Figure 12 - Piano and brass chord, beginning of third portion of narrative development in cycle 6

Figure 12 is a musical score for a piano and brass ensemble. The score is written in 4/4 time and features a piano and brass chord. The Piano part starts with a 4-measure rest, followed by a 4-measure rest, and then a 4-measure rest. The Temple Bells part starts with a 4-measure rest, followed by a 4-measure rest, and then a 4-measure rest. The Offstage Trumpet part starts with a 4-measure rest, followed by a 4-measure rest, and then a 4-measure rest. The Onstage Trumpet part starts with a 4-measure rest, followed by a 4-measure rest, and then a 4-measure rest. The French Horn part starts with a 4-measure rest, followed by a 4-measure rest, and then a 4-measure rest. The Trombone part starts with a 4-measure rest, followed by a 4-measure rest, and then a 4-measure rest. The Euphonium part starts with a 4-measure rest, followed by a 4-measure rest, and then a 4-measure rest. The Tuba part starts with a 4-measure rest, followed by a 4-measure rest, and then a 4-measure rest. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *ff*, *resonant*, *mf*, *p*, *pp*, *ppp*, and *pppp*, as well as articulation marks like accents and slurs. The score is marked with a circled 'N' in the Bass part.

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