THE TECHNICAL AND EXPRESSIVE ASPECTS OF THE CLARINET IN THE
CHAMBER MUSIC OF NED ROREM

by

Brian Glenn McCurdy
A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Musical Arts
Performance

Committee:

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Date: ____________________________ Spring Semester 2013
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA
The Technical and Expressive Aspects of the Clarinet in the Chamber Music of Ned Rorem

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts at George Mason University.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated with great love and appreciation to my wife, Amy, and our three children, Madeline, Wesley, and Penelope. It is with their love, support, and encouragement that this project was completed successfully, and I will be eternally grateful to all of them.
Mr. Ned Rorem’s gracious hospitality was crucial to the timely and accurate completion of this project. His open candor and willingness to meet several times throughout the process provided a much deeper understanding of his music. The added benefit of getting to know Mr. Rorem on a personal level was a peripheral, yet meaningful aspect of this dissertation.

Dr. Tom Owens’s thoughtful insight and encouragement was a constant source of inspiration throughout the research, writing, and editing stages. He was always willing to provide direct, supportive feedback as quickly as possible. He also understood my deep enthusiasm for this subject, and he allowed me to explore this music to the fullest extent possible.

I would also like to recognize the rest of the committee. Dr. Rachel Bergman gave me timely feedback, particularly in manners related to the syntax of music theory terminology and formal analysis. Dr. Glenn Smith was always available for positive reinforcement. Finally, Professor Lora Ferguson guided me through some of the most difficult music that I have ever performed.

The faculty and staff at George Mason University always provided an environment that allowed me to perform and study this exciting music in a setting that was professional and receptive. I am truly grateful for all of the performance opportunities I received as a student in such a wonderful atmosphere.
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The End of Summer by Ned Rorem
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Eleven Studies for Eleven Players by Ned Rorem
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Ariel by Ned Rorem and Sylvia Plath
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ABSTRACT

THE TECHNICAL AND EXPRESSIVE ASPECTS OF THE CLARINET IN THE CHAMBER MUSIC OF NED ROREM

Brian Glenn McCurdy, D.M.A.
George Mason University, 2013
Dissertation Director: Dr. Tom Owens

Ned Rorem is one of the most prolific living American composers. His output includes over 300 art songs, three symphonies, concertos for nearly every instrument, numerous choral works, and a tremendous amount of chamber repertoire. His literary catalog includes sixteen books that chronicle his own life and capture his thoughts about music in the form of essays, diaries, and other collected writings. Rorem has composed eight chamber works that include the clarinet, and within these compositions, the role of the clarinet varies in scope and significance. Because there are no writings on Rorem’s treatment of the clarinet in chamber music, and also because his output is so prolific, it is necessary to explore the expressive and technical aspects of the composer’s clarinet writing in his chamber music. This study explores the small-scale chamber works with clarinet, and the following considerations regarding the clarinet are made: tessitura, melodic treatment, style, ornamentation, orchestration, and idiomatic aspects. Each of the works also exhibits Rorem’s use of serial techniques as an organizing and
developmental device. The works will be explored chronologically, beginning with a brief discussion of *Eleven Studies for Eleven Players* (1959) and ending with *Four Colors* (2003). While this study is not a performance guide, it should at the very minimum provide any clarinetist with insightful knowledge about Ned Rorem’s treatment of the clarinet in his chamber music.
CHAPTER 1

Ned Rorem was born in 1923 in Richmond, Indiana, and received the bulk of his early musical training in Chicago. At age twelve he studied piano with Margaret Bonds, a young African-American, who taught him about American composers—two of whom were Charles Griffes and John Alden Carpenter—and American musical styles such as jazz and ragtime. Shortly after Bonds’s death in 1972, Rorem wrote, “So closes the miniature dynasty of female piano teachers who taught me all I knew by the time I was fifteen…In this day it’s scarcely revolutionary for a child to have a female tutor. But for a white pupil to have a black piano teacher was not standard practice in Chicago during the 1930s.”¹ In 1938, at the age of sixteen, he performed Grieg’s *Piano Concerto in A minor* with the American Concert Orchestra. He applied to Oberlin (his father’s Alma Mater) in 1940, but was turned down due to mediocre grades.² After studying for two years at Northwestern in 1940, he went to the Curtis Institute in 1943, studying dramatic forms with Gian Carlo Menotti.³ His acceptance into Curtis was the result of his father, C. Rufus Rorem, presenting some of Ned’s work to the faculty. Rufus was a doctor, and was one of the founders of Blue Cross Blue Shield. He was one of the architects of the

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concept of group health insurance, and was very concerned about Ned’s financial well
being as a composer. Ned Rorem wrote, “When I was young, Father asked me, ‘Well,
how do you expect to earn a living?’ I gave a very un-American answer: ‘I don’t care
how I make a living as long as I have enough to eat and I can write what I want.’ He was
impressed.” ⁴ Even though Ned Rorem was only at Curtis for one year, he made some
professional connections. He studied composition with Rosario Scalero—whom Rorem
considers a very unsuccessful composer.⁵ Despite his lackluster enthusiasm for his
applied composition studies, he did meet Gary Graffman, to whom he would later
dedicate his *Concerto for Piano (Left Hand) and Orchestra* (1991).⁶ He studied piano at
Curtis with Freda Pastor, whom he credits with having taught him his basic knowledge of
piano repertoire. Through her he achieved broad acquaintance with the works of Bach,
Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, and Schumann.⁷ Rorem’s life changed dramatically when
he left Curtis in 1944. He moved to New York City and became Virgil Thomson’s
copyist in exchange for orchestration lessons and $20 per week. He enrolled at Julliard
and received his Bachelor of Music degree in 1946, and Masters degree in 1948.⁸ At that
time he studied with Bernard Wagenaar, who also taught Bernard Herrman. Of
Wagenaar, Rorem wrote, “I liked him as a man, but didn’t learn much from him, really.” ⁹
Rorem spent the summers of 1946 and 1947 as a fellowship student at Tanglewood,

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⁵ Ibid.
⁶ Ibid 263.
⁸ MacDonald 5.
⁹ Gagne 263.
where he was part of Aaron Copland’s composition class. He won the Gershwin Memorial Award for his *Overture in C*, receiving the check on the stage of Carnegie Hall from Oscar Hammerstein. He used the money he earned from the prize to travel to France. Shortly after Rorem arrived in Paris, he approached Nadia Boulanger about furthering his studies with her, but according to Rorem, she said his skills were already “well formed,” and he should seek guidance from someone else. He chose to study in Paris at the Ecole Normale de Musique with Arthur Honegger. Rorem lived in Morocco for two years before settling in Paris for six years in 1952. One of the most important people he met in Paris was the Vicomtesse de Noialles Marie Laurie—who was, “…rich, famous, talented, powerful, opinionated, with the most beautiful house in Paris.” She was an extremely wealthy patron of the arts, and provided Rorem with the financial means to spend his days and evenings composing without worry of monetary preservation. She entertained a great deal of artists, many of whom were at the peak of their productivity, as Rorem wrote, “Every day for lunch she would have worthwhile people, Cocteau, Balthus, Poulenc, the Aurics, Dora Maar. Well, not every day I did not lead an idle life; I worked hard.” Rorem wrote fondly of her in 1986, “I dream so often of Marie-Laurie that she still remains a quick and frequent friend. Thinking back on how

11 Ned Rorem, New York, to Arlys McDonald, Tempe, Arizona, 24 May 1988, transcript in the hand of Ned Rorem, Special Collections, Hayden Library (MS SC SM-26, Box 1, folder 3), Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.
12 Gagne 258.
13 MacDonald 6.
14 Gagne 264.
15 Ibid 267.
I once found her difficult and spoiled, I gasp, for I then was a narcissistic brat.”\textsuperscript{16} It was during this time that he was able to build his catalog of compositions.

After Rorem returned to the United States, he held teaching positions at the University of Buffalo (1959) and the University of Utah (1965). He has spent his entire life from this point forward living largely on commissions, saying, “I support myself, yes, but humbly. I’ve never been a whore though I sometimes wish I could be…I do live off commissions, it’s not a grand life, and with no guarantee with what will happen two years from now. But I do exactly as I want.”\textsuperscript{17}

Since 1970, Rorem’s life has consisted of spurts of compositional productivity, more positions in academia, and literary publications. In 1980, he became the co-Director of the undergraduate department at the Curtis Institute—a position he held until 2004—and he spent 5 summers as Composer-in-Residence for the Santa Fe Music Festival.\textsuperscript{18} He would commute bi-weekly to Philadelphia in order to instruct his composition students, and on alternating weeks they would come to New York.\textsuperscript{19} He published 11 more books during this time, revealing his penchant to be an insightful music critic and a well-read cultural scholar.\textsuperscript{20} Rorem said, “People who read my books often don’t realize I write music, and people that invite me to schools to do a stint often——

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid 268.
don’t realize I write books. I’m a composer who also writes, not a writer who also
composes."\(^{21}\) He won the Pulitzer Prize in 1976 for his orchestral work, *Air Music*.\(^{22}\)
Rorem received many offers outside of commissions, but he usually declined. In 1985 he
wrote, “Along with refusing BU in Boston and a ‘composership’ with the Atlanta
Symphony (several months back), I’ve just turned down another well paying job at
Queens College, and (after a phone call from John Duffy) a composership with the
Houston Symphony. All of which amounts to about a quarter of a million dollars that I
won’t receive, but it’s nice to be wanted.”\(^{23}\) He began work on an autobiography in
1992, but has yet to complete it, as he has continued to publish his diaries.\(^{24}\) In 1994 he
offered to sell his archives to the Arizona State University Library, but has instead given
them to the Library of Congress.\(^{25}\) He wrote regularly as a music critic for *The New
Republic* (1973-75), *Christopher Street* (1980-83), and *Opera News*.\(^{26}\) He currently
resides in New York City and Nantucket, Massachusetts.\(^{27}\)

\(^{21}\) Gagne 268.
\(^{22}\) MacDonald 11.
\(^{23}\) Ned Rorem. *The Nantucket Diary of Ned Rorem*. (San Francisco: North
\(^{24}\) Ned Rorem, New York, to Arlys McDonald, Tempe, Arizona, 9 Dec 1992,
transcript in the hand of Ned Rorem, Special Collections, Hayden Library (MS SC SM-
26, Box 1, folder 3), Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.
\(^{25}\) Ned Rorem, New York, to Arlys McDonald, Tempe, Arizona, 19 Dec 1994,
transcript in the hand of Ned Rorem, Special Collections, Hayden Library (MS SC SM-
26, Box 1, folder 3), Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.
\(^{26}\) Ned Rorem, New York, to Arlys McDonald, Tempe, Arizona, 27 Feb 1988,
transcript in the hand of Ned Rorem, Special Collections, Hayden Library (MS SC SM-
26, Box 1, folder 3), Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.
2011).
BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature on the subject of Ned Rorem’s clarinet writing in chamber music is very limited. One such book, *Ned Rorem’s Song Cycle Ariel: A Musical Dramatization of Five Poems of Sylvia Plath* by Armand Ambrosini (2001), deals with Rorem’s treatment of the text in relation to the melody, harmony, texture, dynamics, and other musical elements in *Ariel*. There is no mention of the technical treatment of the clarinet in particular. In “A Musical Analysis and Poetic Interpretation of Ned Rorem’s *Ariel*” (1987), Beverly Hubbard Clafin includes a very detailed harmonic and thematic analysis of the song cycle. This study, however, does not discuss the technical aspects of the clarinet, but it does contain a lengthy discussion of the role of the text in the music.

Paul Howard Kirby’s dissertation, “Tonal and Nontonal Elements in the Recent Chamber Music of Ned Rorem,” provides lengthy harmonic and thematic analysis of Rorem’s chamber music between 1981 and 1991. It discusses works such as *Winter Pages* (1981) and *End of Summer* (1985)—both of which use the clarinet in substantial fashion. Kirby makes quantifiable comparisons between tonal and nontonal aspects in Rorem’s chamber writing from that period. He does not focus on the technical or expressive elements of the clarinet.
Arlys McDonald, former Head of the Music Library at Arizona State University, wrote *Ned Rorem: A Bio-Bibliography* under the direct supervision of Mr. Rorem. This text has a very short biography, followed by a catalog list of Rorem’s compositions organized by date of composition. Each entry includes information about premier performances, dedications, and commissions. There is also a detailed discography, a list of literary sources, and brief sample quotations from concert reviews. Rorem wrote to McDonald in 1989, “The book is valuable beyond diamonds, both to me and, let’s hope, to history.”

Rorem makes very little mention of the clarinet in his prose, even when discussing works where the instrument is included. One of these instances occurred when Rorem was asked to explain why *Ariel* is programmed so frequently. He answered, “…one singer will hear it and then decide to perform it on tour; or the shove will come from a clarinetist, because it’s a showy piece.”

Rorem’s eighteen books rarely mention his own music. In his eight diaries, he discusses thoughts and reflections about the daily events in his life, and he also includes poetry and other short snippets of wit. He feels that his diaries are more useful than a biography, saying, “No biography, however cursory, could afford to ignore my prose. I am the sum of my parts, of course, and almost everything I have to say about music (as well as about every aspect of my life) is in the

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28 Ned Rorem, New York, to Arlys McDonald, Tempe, Arizona, 24 July 1989, transcript in the hand of Ned Rorem, Special Collections, Hayden Library (MS SC SM-26, Box 1, folder 3), Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.

diaries and the collections of essays.\textsuperscript{30} The other ten books that have been published contain collections of correspondence, essays, editorials, obituaries, and letters to various editors.  \textit{Wings of Friendship}, a collection of selected letters from 1944-2003, documents the broadness of his influence, as he corresponded with Alfred Kinsey, Gloria Vanderbilt, Gary Graffman, Judy Collins, Angela Lansbury, Gore Vidal, Virgil Thomson, and many others.\textsuperscript{31} Most of his prose discusses the work of other composers, authors, playwrights, film directors, and almost every other performance art. In many circles, it is not known that he is both an author and a composer.\textsuperscript{32} While he has written extensively about many subjects, he has rarely mentioned the clarinet.

\textsuperscript{30} Ned Rorem, New York, to Arlys McDonald, Tempe, Arizona, 7 Dec 1986, transcript in the hand of Ned Rorem, Special Collections, Hayden Library (MS SC SM-26, Box 1, folder 3), Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.


STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The music of Ned Rorem is highly accessible to both performers and audiences. His harmonic language is generally tonal, and his diatonic melodies are easily digestible. Many clarinetists struggle with programming modern music because it can be difficult for listeners to comprehend. It is the goal of this study to provide pertinent information on how Ned Rorem has written challenging music for the clarinet, making full use of its expressive and technical capabilities without sacrificing audience interest. Rorem’s clarinet music should be programmed more often, and this study will provide clarinetists a clearer picture about the accessibility of his music and the worthy challenge that it provides.
HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Questions should be both specific to each individual composition and to all of the discussed works as a whole regarding Rorem’s treatment of the clarinet. Specific queries may include the following: What are some of the techniques that Rorem uses consistently throughout his career when writing for the clarinet? Does he utilize the entire range of the instrument? Is there a difference in style from one movement or composition to the next? Is the clarinet the primary voice, or is it accompanying other instruments? Does the technique require any unusual fingerings or special considerations? Does he treat the clarinet differently in his vocal works because it is sharing the orchestration with a singer? These questions are thoughtfully addressed through careful examination of each work.

This study is not intended to be a performance guide for clarinetists, but it informs the reader about the methods that Rorem uses to explore the expressive and technical capabilities of the clarinet. Theoretical analysis is applied only if it is helpful in understanding how the clarinet is being used.

The individual works are examined chronologically by date of composition. When appropriate, comparisons are made between two or more works. At the conclusion of each individual work’s discussion, the ideas presented in that section are synthesized with the material from previous sections. After the works have been individually
examined, conclusions are drawn about consistencies of the clarinet style in all of the selected compositions.
LIMITATIONS

This study is limited to the following five works: *Eleven Studies for Eleven Players* (1959-60); *Ariel* for soprano, clarinet and piano (1971); *Winter Pages* for clarinet, bassoon, violin, cello and piano (1981); *End of Summer* for clarinet, violin and piano (1985); and *Four Colors* for clarinet and piano (2003). All of these compositions use only one clarinet. *Eleven Studies* is only used to illustrate Rorem’s early clarinet writing, and only the one movement from that work that includes significant contributions from the clarinet is discussed. The other four works are analyzed and discussed in great detail. In *Winter Pages*, there are some movements that either do not include the clarinet, or that use it sparingly. In those cases, brief discussion is limited to analysis and how the movement fits into the work as a whole.

There are other works by Rorem for the clarinet that are not included in this study. *Sinfonia for 15 Wind Instruments* (1960) is traditionally performed as a symphonic band work, with multiple players often doubling or tripling the individual parts. Its scoring includes 4 clarinets (2 clarinets in A, one clarinet in E-flat and one bass clarinet). *Water Music* (1966), scored for clarinet, violin, and orchestra, is more a concerto than a chamber work. Because it is a large-scale work (in terms of orchestration), *Water Music* will not be considered in this study. *Four Poems without Words* for clarinet, violin, double bass and piano (2001) was arranged by Thomas Piercy from four of Rorem’s art
songs, and is also not included. The focus of this study is on Rorem’s chamber music in its original orchestration. *Nine Episodes for Four Players* for clarinet, violin, cello and piano (2004) is not included in this study. Its close chronological proximity to *Four Colors* makes it redundant, and its orchestration is similar to *Winter Pages*. This study is intended to cover works that are unique in instrumentation and spread apart chronologically.
Chapter 2

Composer Troy Peters, a former student of Rorem’s at the Curtis Institute, said of Rorem, “From his mother, Ned seems to have gotten a powerful sense of justice and idealism, and from his father, a powerful aversion to wasted effort and sloth.” Rorem considers himself a man of many contradictions, saying, “Born and raised a Quaker, I still adhere to the philosophical tenets of that group, yet I am an atheist. I do not believe in God, yet some of my most inspired music has been settings of scripture from both the Old and New Testaments.” While Rorem has mainly been known as a song composer, his instrumental music evokes lyricism and directness of expression. He favors tonality, avoids overstatement, and imaginatively uses timbre, form, and rhythm. It is apparent that he truly understands the limitations of the instruments for which he writes, and this is evident when one observes the clarinet writing in his chamber music. His writing is technically challenging and uses the highest altissimo notes, and yet can still be performed with great accuracy if prepared correctly.

He does not believe that music can express anything beyond the printed page. In a 1982 interview, he said, “Music has no literary sense unless it has a text. No one can prove that a piece without words, a symphony or a tone poem or a string quartet, means

anything beyond what the composer tells you.”  

Furthermore, he also said, “The music tells you more than I could tell you in words. Music itself does not mean anything. Mozart’s music can represent a murder or a wedding.”

Rorem’s style is the mark of a tonal composer who places melody and craftsmanship above all else. He said, “There are two kinds of composers: experimental and conservative, and I fall under the latter.” While Rorem may have had strong feelings about serial music and its negative impact on composition, it was Lou Harrison who encouraged him to start using more serial techniques, placing order and intervallic relationships on a higher level of importance. These techniques become apparent as all of the works of this study are examined. Rorem still considers all music to be tonal, as he wrote in 1999, “All music, including Boulez and Babbitt, is tonal to my ear, and I’m convinced (but can’t prove it) that everyone, including Babbitt and Boulez, hears music tonally.”

Even though serialism is part of his style, it is not a device that is critical to his music. Furthermore, he feels that recordings do not accurately represent his own style, and they only offer a reflection of a composition. When discussing the musical style one of his compositions, he said, “Once the piece is done, I forget about it.”

Rorem’s feelings about the clarinet are largely underwhelming. In his words, “An oboe is an oboe, a flute is a flute, but the clarinet can pretend to be any number of

37 Ibid.
instruments. It has variety, but is not an identity. The clarinet is a showboat instrument—more of a useful go-between.”^40 His first exposure to clarinet performers was through Artie Shaw and Benny Goodman, and the first composition he heard for the clarinet was Claude Debussy’s *Premiere Rhapsody*.^41 Note the similarity between Debussy’s delicate use of the clarinet in figure 1a in comparison with a transposed^42 excerpt from Rorem’s *End of Summer* in example 2.1:


^40 Ibid.
^41 Ibid.
^42 Solo clarinet examples are transposed in this study. Examples that include other instruments are always pitched in C.
In the Debussy example, the composer gives little consideration to the range and capability of the clarinet. This line could very well be a flute or violin figure, but it is fact written for the clarinet. The Rorem example uses a much more accessible range of the clarinet, and while this line could be played by any number of instruments, it is most effective on the clarinet. Rorem also considers Bartok’s *Contrasts* for clarinet, violin and piano to be an important work for the clarinet. Both composers used altered scales in their writing, with Rorem most notably using them in “Lady Lazarus” from *Ariel*.

Rorem cites influence from Benjamin Britten and Europeans such as Poulenc, saying of the latter, “There is a huge store of songs by Poulenc, and the texts are all good.”

Regarding some of Britten’s work, Rorem said, “Peter Grimes overwhelmed me. I first heard it at Tanglewood in 1946, and Britten was there. That was very special back then. He has written a lot of songs, and is a very important song composer, too. A lot of song composers have never written for the orchestra at all. Britten, however, was very well rounded.”

He is more influenced by European composers than Americans, but still thinks very highly of American Modernists such as Charles Ives. Even though Rorem never corresponded with Ives, he said, “I was quite bowled over when I heard his music.”

Orchestration is also a major component of Rorem’s style. He takes it very seriously, and he feels that it is a craft that one spends a lifetime perfecting. He said, “I don’t play anything except for the piano. I can’t even play an open string on a violin.

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43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
Even if I could play all of the instruments, I couldn’t play them all together.” His clarinet writing indicates that he understands the limitations of the instrument, and the writing in his instrumental chamber music echoes that same mastery.

Collaboration is very important to Rorem during the compositional process. The works discussed in this study all represent different levels of collaboration between composer and performer. In Rorem’s words, “There are as many different ways to play a piece of music as there are players. There is no one right way, even as far as tempo is concerned.” In vocal works such as Ariel, he did collaborate with Phyllis Curtain, the singer to whom the work was dedicated. He does not evaluate a singer with whom he collaborates based on vocal tone, but rather on clarity, as he reflected, “I judge singers mostly by diction rather than the beauty of their voice.” He worked with clarinetist Thomas Piercy on several occasions before the first performance of Four Colors.

Eleven Studies for Eleven Players was the first chamber work that Ned Rorem composed that included the clarinet. The work was dedicated to Carmen Baird, who served as the head of the music department at Buffalo University in the late 1950s. It was Baird who hired Rorem in 1959 to teach a class in composition, give public lectures, and write a chamber piece. Baird died before the premiere of the work, which took place in May of 1960 with Rorem conducting. It was written shortly after Rorem returned to the U.S. from his time in France. He says of the work, “The title refers to eleven players, not

\footnote{Ibid.} \footnote{Ibid.} \footnote{Ibid.} \footnote{Ibid.} \footnote{John Michel, American Profiles, liner notes to the recording. (Albany Records, Troy 175, 1995), 4.}
instruments. The flute changes to piccolo, the oboe to English horn, and the two percussionists between them bang on 15 different surfaces."\(^{50}\) The unique orchestration was a result of the personnel who were capable of performing it. Rorem said, “Those were the faculty available, at least the good ones.”\(^{51}\) Not all of the players are used in all eleven studies. Four of the movements feature individual voices: trumpet ("Prelude"), flute ("Bird Call"), English horn ("Elegy"), and clarinet ("Epilogue"). The other movements feature different combinations of the remaining instruments; Rorem would employ this orchestration technique again three decades later in *Winter Pages*. Some of the movements from this work come from incidental music he composed for plays. ‘Bird Call” and “The Diary” were originally composed for the 1958 premier of the Tennessee Williams play *Suddenly Last Summer*, and “Contest” was written for a 1960 production of Jean Claude van Itallie’s *Motel*. “Contest” was intended to depict the sound of a busy traffic scene. Recycling his own music was not unusual for Rorem, as he used his own material for *Winter Pages* (several movements were taken from the unpublished *Birthday Suite* for solo piano and several other works).\(^{52}\) Rorem’s music, even at this very early stage, was influenced by literature. The movement “In Memory of my Feelings” is indicative of his philosophy of music as it relates to a program. Rorem refers to a Hindemith quote in the score, saying, “The reactions music evokes are not feelings, but they are images, memories of feelings.”\(^{53}\) The title to this movement originated in the first line of a poem by Frank O’Hara, and Rorem considers this movement the “most

\(^{50}\) Ibid.  
\(^{51}\) Ned Rorem, interview by author, New York City, June 23, 2012.  
\(^{52}\) MacDonald 16.  
\(^{53}\) Ibid.
expressive” section of the entire work.\textsuperscript{54} The New York premier took place in Town Hall in October of 1961. The work was choreographed several times, including once in 1967 by Martha Graham in a ballet called \textit{Dancing Ground}.\textsuperscript{55} It was also used in a 1963 ballet production under the title \textit{Eleven by Eleven}.\textsuperscript{56} The first two and the last four movements are variations on a theme.\textsuperscript{57} The use of percussion in this work is a hallmark of his early writing, as he no longer feels the need to write for these instruments. He said, “I don’t write for percussion at all anymore. It’s all just sound effects.”\textsuperscript{58}

The final movement of \textit{Eleven Studies} is a feature for the clarinet. It is an early example of his method of writing for the clarinet with wild technical passages that cover the entire range of the instrument in a very short period of time. Note in the following transposed example how he starts in a lower range of the instrument before moving to the altissimo register:

\begin{musicnote}
\begin{music}
\mnote{c\sharp 4}{mf} \\
\mnote{d\sharp 4}{f} \\
\mnote{e\flat 4}{6} \\
\mnote{f 4}{6} \\
\mnote{g 4}{6} \\
\mnote{a 4}{6} \\
\mnote{b 5}{ff} \\
\mnote{c\# 6}{6} \\
\mnote{d\# 7}{6} \\
\mnote{e 8}{6} \\
\mnote{f 9}{6} \\
\mnote{g 10}{mf} \\
\mnote{a 11}{mp} \\
\mnote{c\# 12}{p}
\end{music}
\end{musicnote}

\textsuperscript{54} Ned Rorem, interview by author, New York City, June 23, 2012.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Ned Rorem, New York, to Arlys McDonald, Tempe, Arizona, 25 Dec 1986, transcript in the hand of Ned Rorem, Special Collections, Hayden Library (MS SC SM-26, Box 1, folder 3), Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.
\textsuperscript{57} Michel.
\textsuperscript{58} Ned Rorem, interview by author, New York City, June 23, 2012.

In just a few bars, Rorem moves the musical line quickly from the throat tone A to the altissimo F-sharp, and then back down to the lowest E. These rapid passages frequently span a wide range, and he uses this concept in much of his clarinet writing. In the next transposed example, he moves even higher in the tessitura, asking the performer to weave in and out of the altissimo register:

![Example 2.4](image)


He arrives at the altissimo B in the sixth bar only after a long, sweeping passage that begins over two octaves below. In this particular example, he uses the variation and ornamentation to develop the theme that is first heard at the very beginning of the work. The result is his most frequent style of writing for the clarinet: using technically
demanding passages and expanding the altissimo range. This will be apparent in all of
the works discussed in this study. Often, his clarinet writing is a result of one of his
compositional techniques, such as modality, pitch sequences, or other forms of musical
development. The combination of these compositional ideas and virtuosic writing for the
clarinet will be the focus of the discussion of *Ariel, Winter Pages, End of Summer,* and
*Four Colors.*
CHAPTER 3

Rorem wrote *Ariel* in 1971 for his friend, the soprano Phyllis Curtain. Their correspondence indicates that they maintained a very friendly relationship during the creative process. Other works Rorem composed for her include the songs “Are you the person?” and “Some Trees.” Their collaboration was key to the success of many of his works, and her interpretation of his songs, including the texts in *Ariel*, is considered the standard. Rorem considers her to be “the most important singer in the world.” Rorem first heard Curtain perform in 1946 in Tanglewood’s production of *Peter Grimes*. The two performed recitals regularly together (with Rorem at the piano) in the 1960s and 70s. He feels that she always put the needs of the composer first, as he wrote, “I like to think that I learned as much about performance from Phyllis as she from me. If what I composed came first, she, as interpreter, literally had the last word.” He feels that the text is much more important than the music, saying, “All singers should forget about their voice 99% and think about the words 99%. The great ones, like Donald Gramm, when teaching classes for singers, don’t talk about diphthongs. They talk about verse.”

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61 Ibid 186.
62 Gagne 275.
There were some difficulties and controversy from the outset when Rorem began to work on *Ariel*. Sylvia Plath’s widowed husband, poet Ted Hughes, did not easily relinquish the rights to the poetry. Furthermore, according to Rorem, “1971 was the beginning of the women’s movement. [Feminist activist] Robin Morgan…told me, ‘Keep your hands off Plath, she belongs to our sisters’…there’s a lot of woman in me, and half of my ancestors are women.” She felt that he was not an adequate musical voice for the feminist movement. He was very close to Morgan, and was shocked when she spoke to him in this manner. However, it was not the controversy with Morgan that affected the composition, but rather the poetry itself. Because of the foreboding nature of the text, Rorem felt rather limited artistically in terms of how he would set the words to music. He reflected in 1991, “Time has passed and I don’t know whether I would use [the poems] today.” When Phyllis Curtain’s mother asked Rorem if composing music to Plath’s text was draining, Rorem responded, “On the contrary, it fills me…I feel good when I work, bad when I don’t.” As further examination reveals, these limitations certainly do not appear in the clarinet writing.

The clarinet is used in several manners throughout *Ariel*. There are points at which it stays in the background, submissive to both piano and text. In other instances, it is used to emphasize the various emotions that are evoked by the text, such as misery, doubt, anticipation, hopelessness, anger, and insanity. This is done in the clarinet through extended tessitura, passages of demanding technique, and contrasting textures.

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63 Ibid 277.
64 Ibid.
Regarding the choice of the clarinet for inclusion in the song cycle, Rorem wrote in 1978, “The clarinet signifies the alter ego, I guess—Plath’s blurred otherness—though I didn’t know this eight years ago, when the piece was composed.” All of the compositional elements are driven by the text, and particular attention should be paid to his use of repeated pitch sequences as a means of thematic development.

Rorem’s setting of the first poem, “Words”, uses a texture between the clarinet and the voice that is very collaborative. There is a gentle ebb and flow between the two voices, with one generally taking over when the other stops. In some cases, one voice fades out at the point when the clarinet begins. The notes in musical example 3.1 indicate the pitch sequence on which the movement is based. Whether played by the instrumentalists or sung by the voice, the angularity is directly a result of ordered pitches. Careful attention should be given to the first four notes:

![Example 3.1](image)

**Example 3.1:** Ned Rorem, *Ariel*, movement 1, pitch set from measures 2-3.

When the first four notes from the example above are repeated throughout the movement, they become a pitch sequence. The following example illustrates the notes from the voice that are repeated in sequence, with the numbers corresponding to the first four

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pitches in the previous example. Regardless of rhythm, the same notes are repeated. This technique is used in several instances in the works discussed in this study, and is the primary means of thematic development for this movement.

Example 3.2: Ned Rorem, *Ariel*, movement 1, pitch sequence from measures 14-16.

In the extended clarinet solo passage in the following example, the same pitch sequence appears along with other notes. While this technique is not strictly serial in nature, it does still apply the same pitches in their original order:

Example 3.3: Ned Rorem, *Ariel*, movement 1, measure 25, four-pitch sequence now increased by two notes.

The first use of the extended clarinet range occurs in the following example. The clarinet part is in concert pitch, and the highest note is the G (written A for the clarinet). While this note is not completely out of the normal range of the instrument, it requires special attention when coming from the sounding E that occurs before it. The two notes are on
different partials of the instrument, which requires the performer to make a quick adjustment to the embouchure and the aural cavity in the middle of the phrase between the E and the G at the beginning of the third bar.


The rhythm in example 3.4 is also indicative of Rorem’s style, as he tends to write “rubato” directly in to the instrumental part, rather than leave note duration up to the interpretation of the performer. This results in a passage that sounds free and rhapsodic, but is in fact written very meticulously in terms of the rhythm. This is not to say that there is no room for interpretation for the performer (this passage is only for the solo clarinet), but he gives the player a starting point for interpretation.

In the second movement, “Poppies in July,” the performer encounters Rorem’s use of cumulative phrases. That is to say, each passing phrase in the first half of the movement reveals the larger melodic lines in an incremental manner. This is presented as a pitch sequence (in concert pitch) in example 3.5:

The voice uses a four-note pitch set in this movement: C, D-flat, G and F, emphasizing the use of modality as a means of composition. The notes of the piano, clarinet, and singer all derive from a Phrygian mode with a raised third degree. In example 3.6, the clarinet line uses five notes: G, E, A, D, and C—clearly C major—with the B-flat functioning as an embellishing tone. The piano also uses these five notes in varying rhythms throughout the movement. This is an example of how Rorem uses two pitch sets at the same time, and the result is the Phrygian mode.

As he does in *Four Colors*, Rorem asks the clarinet to play in a very high altissimo range at a decreasing dynamic. In this particular case, the clarinet begins at ff and must get softer as the range stretches higher. What also makes this challenging is
that the text must still be heard, despite the clarinet being in its most strident register.

This is illustrated in example 3.7:


Once again Rorem begins a passage in a lower register before ascending into the altissimo range—remaining consistent with how he treats the highest range of the clarinet.
in all works in this study. The movement begins and ends with the unaccompanied singer, uttering the word “colourless” at the conclusion.

In the third movement, “The Hanging Man,” the clarinet plays a very dominant role. There is more conflict with the texture in this movement, as the clarinet and voice trade back and forth with one another. The first seven bars introduce the melodic material for the movement in the solo clarinet. The piano enters briefly with chord clusters, played both in short duration and in tremolos. The very angular clarinet line sets up the entrance of the voice, which is also terse and angular. These elements create an overall mood to this movement that is unsettling and frantic. The soprano interjects with the poetic lines in between clarinet flourishes, with the clarinet “completely taking over during the line ‘got hold of me.’”

The technique in this movement is very difficult, especially with the demands of the altissimo register. In the following example, Rorem requires the player to slur from altissimo G-flat to G natural in the first bar (A-flat to A when transposed). This is highly problematic for the performer, especially when moving from the previous concert C. Near the end of the example, he also demands that the clarinet slur from G-flat to D-flat. This is another case, as in “Words,” where the performer must make an adjustment to the embouchure and aural cavity in the middle of a phrase. What also makes this passage difficult is the ensemble coordination, where the pianist must strike a chord at the very end of this excerpt on the downbeat of the fourth bar.

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Because this section requires such pinpoint ensemble coordination, the clarinetist must play the passage as accurately as possible in terms of rhythm. This allows the vocalist and the pianist to be able to follow the clarinetist without difficulty. The texture conflict is eventually settled at the end of the song, when the clarinet takes over completely with an extended solo passage. Note the contrast in texture with the first movement, which was much more seamless between the two voices. In the solo passage at the end of the movement, the clarinet ascends through several registers to the high A (B when transposed), illustrating Rorem’s preference to begin a passage in a lower octave before it terminates in the altissimo register. While there are times where he remains exclusively in one octave, he still prefers to not start a passage in the altissimo register. This is illustrated in example 3.9.

The poetry in this movement consists of three one-sentence stanzas that are the basis for the phrase structure in the music. He uses one musical phrase for each stanza. This is different from the first movement, “Words,” where Rorem follows Sylvia Plath’s sentence structure rather than the stanza grouping. When discussing setting text to music, Rorem said, “I never repeat words that are not repeated by the author. The words must be comprehended.” He also said, “When I take liberty with prosody, I have a reason. I don’t repeat words that the poet has not repeated, but I will do a melismatic thing. I don’t do this out of inspiration, but out of calculation.”

The fourth movement, “Poppies in October” is unique in this song cycle. The clarinet is the least dominant in terms of texture in this movement, and there is more of an amicable blend between the three performers. Rorem uses key signatures in this movement, in this case alluding to tonal centers of B-flat, B, and back to B-flat again. In musical example 12, all three voices illustrate Rorem’s use of the interval sequence containing a descending third and second followed by an ascending major second. This

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68 Ibid.
69 Gagne 276.
sequence is used to conclude every musical phrase in this movement, even when the voices overlap:


In the above example, the clarinet finishes a phrase in the second bar, while the voice and the right hand of the piano conclude their phrase in the fourth bar. In another example of writing in the highest tessitura of the clarinet, the movement concludes on a high sounding D in the clarinet at a dynamic of *pianissimo*. This is best achieved with an alternate fingering, such as the overblown G with the added G-sharp key. The singer must also sustain the F for seven bars at a very slow tempo, which adds to the quiet, softening ending in example 3.11.
Example 3.11: Ned Rorem, Ariel, movement 4, measures 43-49.

The last movement, “Lady Lazarus”, is the longest song in the entire cycle. There are five verses of text, and several of Rorem’s hallmarks permeate this movement. In order to accommodate the high volume of text, this movement is un-metered. That provides Rorem the ability to compose rhythms without having to be concerned about vocal syntax as it relates to meter. The movement could have been written with different
time signatures indicated for each measure, but he goes to great lengths to ensure that the rhythm of the speech is as natural as possible. There are no lengthy melismas, as he usually just writes one note per syllable of text. This underscores his philosophy that the text is the most important part of the music.

As mentioned before, Rorem regards Bartok’s *Contrasts* as one of the most important pieces for clarinet. When asked about the composition, Rorem would sing the melody in the following example. This melody is indicative of Bartok’s use of altered modes, often combining the Lydian and Mixolydian modes. Note the raised 4th degree and lowered 7th degree from *Contrasts* in example 3.12:

![Example 3.12](image)

**Example 3.12:** Bela Bartok, *Contrasts*, movement 1, measures 3-7.

The example from *Contrasts* is based on the altered Lydian mode in musical example 3.13:

![Example 3.13](image)

**Example 3.13:** Altered Lydian mode from Bartok’s *Contrasts*.

In the next example, taken from “Lady Lazarus”, Rorem combines scales. In this case, he uses G harmonic minor and raises the fourth degree by one half-step.
Example 3.14: Altered harmonic minor scale from Ned Rorem’s “Lady Lazarus”.

The result becomes the melodic basis for the clarinet in much of the last movement:


Example 3.16 illustrates the first appearance of an important motive in this movement. Two chromatically ascending sixteenths—followed by a longer held note one half step higher—are repeated (either transposed or in some other melodic or rhythmic variation)
over 20 more times in the movement. Note the repetition of the motive in the following example:


In another case, the unifying motive is presented as a pitch sequence. The clarinet repeats the E-flat, E, F, G-flat figure, but over a rhythm that only includes three notes grouped together at a time. The result is a hemiola rhythm and an unsettled ostinato. The pitch set is repeated in the following sequence: 123, 412, 341, 234, 123, 412, 341.

Example 3.18: Ned Rorem, Ariel, movement 5, measures 40-41.

At the climax of the movement, the last note of the unifying motive is elongated.

When combined with the text of the voice in example 3.20, the movement reaches its capacity in terms of drama and intensity.


At the conclusion of the movement, the motive returns one last time in the clarinet—this time in its compressed form similar to example 3.17:

In *Ariel*, Rorem uses the clarinet in many different ways. He uses contrasting textures in the different movements to highlight the conflict between Sylvia Plath (represented by the singer) and her alter-ego (represented by the clarinet). He uses pitch sequences, modality, and variation as developmental techniques, and these principles often lead to some technical challenges for the clarinetist. Range and technique for the clarinetist are primarily affected by these compositional principles. However, he often accommodates these challenges by scoring for the clarinet that is sympathetic to the needs of the performer, such as using the full range of the instrument in a single passage by starting in a low register and terminating in the altissimo range. The remaining works in this discussion will also adhere to some or all of these principles.
CHAPTER 4

*Winter Pages* is a suite of 12 pieces describing different parts of the winter season. Each movement is intended to flow to the next, sometimes *attaca*, and other times with a break, but always with the idea that there is a constancy to the work as a whole. In Rorem’s words, “The work represents a plateau from where, as the future grows narrower, the past seems more widely open to interpretation.” Rorem has said that his non-vocal works are “songs without texts”, and he attempts to suggest images through the descriptive titles of each movement. He felt, “Music can never contain a uniformly identifiable program.” The work originally contained a 13th movement, but it was cut after the premiere on February 14, 1982. Rorem wrote in 1982 about the early performances, “The thirteen movements take close to forty minutes and are accompanied by my program note, which is almost as long but fairly clever, describing the work as a memoir, an autumnal (or winterish) dwelling upon my teens in Chicago and twenties in Paris.” *Winter Pages* starts aggressively and ends quietly, much like the season itself. The work draws its literary inspiration from prose by American and European writers.

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71 Ibid.
Many of the themes in this work are taken directly from Rorem’s unpublished “Birthday Suite” for four-hand piano—a work that he wrote for Shirley Perle.\textsuperscript{73}

Thematically, \textit{Winter Pages} has two unifying motives. These themes occur several times over the course of the work, often in a manner that is different from the original presentation. The following examples show these unifying themes:

\begin{center}
\begin{figure}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example1.png}
\end{figure}
\end{center}


The first movement, “A Mirror,” is a thematic palindrome. The material backtracks at the halfway point and then rewinds itself in reverse. According to the composer, the music is “a very short curtain raiser that plants the seeds for most of the succeeding sections.”\textsuperscript{74} Despite the composer’s disdain for serial music, this movement represents a very orderly, objective composition method as opposed to the very literary, almost programmatic elements of the rest of the work. And yet, it is through this ordered method that Rorem musically represents a mirror. Note in example 4.2 how the motive is

\begin{center}
\begin{figure}
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example2.png}
\end{figure}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{73} Gagne 271.
turned around at the end of the movement from its initial statement, paying particular attention to the third bar in example 4.2 and the two bars in example 4.3:

Example 4.2: Ned Rorem, Winter Pages, movement 1, measures 1-5.
The clarinet plays a compression of the first seven notes from example 4.2 in the middle of the movement in hemiola. This is illustrated (transposed up one step) in example 4.4.

This section is difficult to perform, even with the mechanics of today’s clarinet. In the first and second bars of example 4.4, the slurred skip from the written G-sharp to E is a difficult interval to execute. Rorem exchanges some of the octaves in this theme from the
original statement in example 4.2. This results in one of the least idiomatic passages in Rorem’s clarinet music, without consideration of difficulty for the performer, even though writing the passage in its original form would have been more natural for the instrument. His serial writing in this section avoids literal repetition, displacing the octaves in order to achieve a desired effect. Another reason why he changes the octave is that he also uses this identical motive in the seventh movement, “Urged by Earnest Violins.”

“The sun that brief December day…” features the solo bassoon while the other instruments provide a background. The title comes from the poem *Snow Bound* (1866) by John Greenleaf Whittier. The clarinet is a musical bystander in this movement, contributing only to the harmonies set forth by the piano and strings. Of note is the manner in which Rorem scores the clarinet in its very lowest register under the harmonics of the strings. This is illustrated in example 4.5.
He uses the compositional idea of “call and response”, a technique that he repeats later in the work. The intonement or “call” theme serves as the basis for the unifying motive #2 (see example 4.1). The first statement in the bassoon is based on unifying motive #1.

The third movement, “Around the house the flakes fly faster…,” is some of the most difficult technical writing in this work for the clarinet. The music is a response to the poem “Birds at Winter Nightfall” (1920) by Thomas Hardy. The trio of performers—clarinet, violin, and cello—must be able to seamlessly connect one melismatic line to the next. In example 4.6, the three instruments actually form one lengthy technical pattern.
Passing long melismas is a technique that Rorem uses in a number of other works, including “Red” from *Four Colors*. As previously seen in *Ariel*, he uses the full range of the instrument even in the most difficult technical passages. Example 4.7 illustrates his thorough understanding of the tessitura of the clarinet without necessarily regarding the mechanics.
In the passage above, all of the notes above the F in the second bar (G when transposed) pose a great challenge to the performer. The partials are very difficult to execute in this register, and when part of a chromatic or diatonic passage, the problems increase two-fold. What makes this passage especially difficult is the jump down from A-flat to E (B-flat to F-sharp when transposed). These two notes are very weak on the instrument, and to go seamlessly from one to the other requires extreme dexterity. The typical range of the clarinet is up to the sounding B-flat, which is exactly where this excerpt terminates.
Rorem spoke of passages like this, saying, “I like to write so that the clarinet works its way up to the highest notes. As long as the performer is not asked to start in that register, but is allowed to work his way to that point, it is much easier to execute.”\textsuperscript{75} Ironically, that section is followed by a passage of the very lowest notes on the instrument, contributing to the chaotic frenzy illustrating the “flying snowflakes” of this movement. Another passage from this movement that stands out is the hemiola section that recalls a similar passage from the first movement. This is seen in example 4.8:


The above example also uses the unifying motive #1 theme from the “A Mirror.” That theme is also the melodic basis for much of the material in this section. The movement closes with another hallmark of Rorem’s—an implied five against four. In example 4.9, the clarinet and violin execute this pattern in contrary motion with the cello. The

\textsuperscript{75} Ned Rorem, interview by author, New York City, June 23, 2012.
placement of the slurs in the clarinet and the melodic contour of the strings help imply the 5-note pattern.


“Paris Then” is a waltz for clarinet and piano. It is probably the most “melodic” movement of the entire work, with the clarinet playing the role of vocalist and the piano serving as the accompaniment. The texture is conventionally homophonic. The only performance issue lies in the intonation, as the clarinet plays in unison with the upper voice in the piano. This is seen in musical example 4.10:

The register for the clarinet in the above example is particularly problematic, as pitch tends to run sharp. Most phrases start on a nonharmonic tone, resolving immediately on the next beat. The concluding figure of the movement gives some room for musical interpretation, and is often performed with a slight ritardando.

Example 4.11: Ned Rorem, Winter Pages, movement 4, measures 91-94.

“Dorchester Avenue” is an address near Chicago’s 57th Street, and served as the composer’s home between the ages of 9 and 17. It is also where he studied piano with
Margaret Bonds as a young boy, and it is the piano that dominates the movement with a simple, easy melody. The clarinet plays a submissive role in this movement, filling in voices on various 7th, 9th, and 13th chords. The music is in a small ternary form, with the second theme occurring at the change of tonal center. The pianist only uses the right hand in this movement, as illustrated in example 4.12.


The sixth movement, “Hesitations,” is a trio for strings and piano. The title is very apropos when the piano and strings move slowly closer and then apart from one another throughout the movement. The clarinet is tacit in this movement. The three instruments are in three different styles, keys, and subdivisions.

“Urged by Earnest Violins” takes its title from a poem by the English war poet Wilfred Owen. It is the long, central movement of the work, and is in rondo form. The
violin is supported and contradicted by the other instruments. In the A section, the melodic material is dominated by wide intervals in the violin, particularly in the second bar of example 4.13.


The minor 9th from the G to the A-flat is part of the violin motive that manifests itself with each statement of the A theme. This melodic material is derived from unifying theme one from the first movement, as he simply changes the octave placement of the fourth note. The similarity is illustrated in the following example, first with the violin in the seventh movement:


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Next, the clarinet line (transposed up one step) from the first movement is illustrated:


Once again, Rorem is using a pitch sequence to derive this new theme. The first five notes in each example are the same, but with changes to the octave placement.

The B theme uses an ostinato in the piano to provide a hemiola accompaniment to the melody in the violin. The clarinet is just a background in the texture, similar to “Dorchester Avenue.” Note the colors established by the trills in the clarinet and bassoon in the following example:
The C theme at rehearsal 9 evokes the rhythmic character of Stravinsky, and also recalls similar eighth note passages from *Eleven Studies for Eleven Players*. It also mimics similar passages in the “Sinfonia” movement from Stravinsky’s *Octet* and the staccato eighth note lines in Gian Carlo Menotti’s opera *The Medium*. The irregular meter, combined with the harmonies in seconds, sets this section apart from the others. This is illustrated in example 4.17.

The piano fills in the rests for the other instruments, creating an isorhythmic pattern. The piano, as well as the clarinet and bassoon, moves in parallel major seconds. At the conclusion of the C theme, the piano borrows a motive from the accompaniment of the B theme, first playing it in diminution in parallel seconds and then in its original time but in retrograde. The A theme returns one last time at the end of the movement. The clarinet, outside of the C theme, serves as a background color of the other two themes of the movement.

The eighth movement, “Moments fly by like a snowstorm,” is derived from *Stoplight* (1941), a collection of five poems by Paul Goodman. Goodman’s writing served as a primary influence on Rorem’s songwriting, and was a tremendous influence on the composer’s youth. The music in this movement is constructed in fragments,
presented cumulatively in each instrument. The bassoon, clarinet, and piano each has its own set of notes in the A theme, illustrated in the following examples:

**Clarinet**


**Bassoon**


**Piano**

This theme is based on the same altered harmonic minor as in “Lady Lazarus” from *Ariel*.

In the clarinet, note the use of G harmonic minor in combination with the raised 4th degree.

![Musical notation image](image)


The B theme blends the different timbres of the clarinet, bassoon, and piano, giving each instrument the opportunity to display a different tone color on the same pitch. This section, still in 9/8 time, has more of a “waltz” feel with one beat per measure. The melodic construction of this movement reveals Rorem’s predisposition to music based on pitch sequences, but still with an emphasis on melody and lyricism. While he does not prefer the techniques of serial composers, it is evident that he does prefer organization to the notes in a given phrase. This order then becomes the basis for succeeding material, with the melody consisting of an accented neighboring tone followed by a resolution.
This brief idea is passed between the three voices, and is illustrated in the following example:


The A section is repeated, and the movement ends quietly with short statements in the clarinet and bassoon.

The ninth movement evokes “…one of the many hotels which I once called home at five every morning.” Rue des Saints-Peres” could easily be a song without words, with a simple melody constructed in two eight-bar phrases. Rorem uses a four-bar introduction and a coda to serve as the movement’s boundaries. The clarinet is used in a manner similar to Ariel and End of Summer, acting as obbligato in the second statement of the theme in example 4.22:


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77 Ibid.
“Valse oubliee” is a title that is taken directly from Liszt. This movement uses a call-and-response style, with an intonement “call” theme introducing each statement of the waltz. In musical example 4.24, the violin and bassoon state this idea:


The intonation theme in this movement is taken directly from similar material from the first movement, earlier referred to as “unifying theme 2.” The waltz theme that follows in bar four is also derived from that material.

“Stone Snowballs” derives from John Cocteau’s avant-garde film, Blood of a Poet (1941). The original title of the movement was “Cello Alone,” but Rorem felt that Cocteau’s phrase had inspired the music. Rorem recycles material from the previous movements, and foreshadows themes that occur in the final movement, Still Life. He
uses unifying theme two throughout the movement, with one such statement in the following example:


In the next example, Rorem uses the theme from “Still Life” as the basis for material in this movement. The intervallic relationship in examples 4.26 and 4.27 is identical.


In the final movement, Still Life, the five instrumentalists produce a quiet, formal ending. In the first phrase, the clarinet doubles the violin in octaves:

\[ \text{\footnotesize 78 Ibid.} \]
Note how the first phrase in example 4.27 uses the same intervals as the previous example. This is another example of how Rorem uses sequences—in this case interval sequences—as a means of development. In the subsequent phrases through the end of the movement, the clarinet doubles the cello in octaves. Intonation and stamina are the most troubling performance issues with this movement, as the clarinetist must match pitch and timbre with both of the string instruments.

In *Winter Pages*, Rorem uses many techniques that are similar to his other works, such as modality, extended tessitura, pitch sequences, and literary influence. He writes in altered scales, often combining harmonic minor with the Phrygian mode. He uses the full range of the clarinet in very technically demanding ways. Pitch sequences are quite abundant, as he uses them as a means of thematic development. Finally, most of the movements are given titles derived from works from some of Rorem’s favorite authors. The remaining works in this study will also illustrate many of these principles.
CHAPTER 5

*End of Summer* was composed in 1985 on a commission from the Verdehr Trio—the ensemble-in-residence at Michigan State University. The clarinetist, Elsa Ludwig Verdehr, was the professor of clarinet at Michigan State at that time, and their ensemble had commissioned numerous new works and transcriptions. The Verdehr Trio premiered the work in Alice Tully Hall on December 10, 1986, and then performed the work regularly over the next several years.\(^{79}\) Other composers that the ensemble commissioned included Gian Carlo Menotti, William Averitt, and William Bolcom. *End of Summer* was composed while Rorem was in Nantucket in the summer of 1985, and is frequently compared (by the composer himself) to the septet, *Scenes from Childhood*.\(^{80}\) Rorem states, “There are but three movements, each suggested by musical works of yore. There are hints of Satie, Brahms, hopscotch ditties, and Protestant anthems.”\(^{81}\)

Reviews of *End of Summer* were highly favorable, with a critic for the *Indian Express* stating after the premiere, “There is a bit of descriptive programming in the work which, on the whole is quite enjoyable.” A critic for a Terra Haute newspaper wrote, “*End of Summer* evokes fall and the coming of winter and is noticeably technically

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\(^{79}\) MacDonald 70.


\(^{81}\) Ibid.
demanding on all three players.”

Rorem spoke of the work after the American premiere in 1986, “Thea Musgrave and Peter Mark sit with us in the Tully box, and after our pieces, Thea and I bow self-consciously to the scant audience…[Jim Holmes] dislikes my piece, feels it is self-indulgent (I use my old tricks) and mad (fragments that don’t fit together).” The New York Times reviewed the work in 1986, stating that the work “…had a sad quality that was really moving, an elegant mourning for something lost that never stooped to pathos. The gentle quotations in the second movement seemed especially affecting.”

In one final example of the positive effect the work had on its critics, another review from the premiere stated, “This is contemporary program music at its most accessible and tuneful.”

In the “Capriccio”, an extended violin cadenza states all of the melodic material that will be used in the movement. The principal theme of the movement is shown in the example below.

Example 5.1: Ned Rorem, End of Summer, movement 1, measures 1-9.

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82 MacDonald 144.
83 MacDonald 144.
84 MacDonald 198.
85 MacDonald 237.
After the cadenza, the violin restates the first theme over sweeping melismatic lines in the piano and the clarinet. There are several compositional techniques occurring at this juncture. In the following example in concert pitch, the clarinet contains a 14-note pitch sequence that is repeated 18 times throughout this section. In the event of a rest, Rorem continues the sequence right where he left off.


When viewed in context with the rest of the score, the pitch sequence in the clarinet is contrary in melodic contour to the piano. All of this is occurring under the restatement of the main theme in the violin.

When the clarinet states the first theme of the movement, Rorem stretches the range to its maximum. This is illustrated in the following example, with the clarinet part transposed:
Example 5.4: Ned Rorem, *End of Summer*, movement 1, measures 78-98.

He arrives at the high C in the 19th bar after gradually climbing through the middle clarion register. This technique is, once again, indicative of his philosophy of starting in a lower register before moving into the altissimo range. The grace notes are used in this excerpt to imitate the double stops of the violin from a previous statement of this theme. This illustrates how Rorem is not afraid to use the same melodic material for more than one instrument, without regard to difficulty.

The principal theme from the example above is developed in different ways throughout this movement. In the example 5.5, Rorem has all of the instruments change roles: the clarinet and violin perform pitch sequences melismatically, and the piano states the principle theme with the left and right hands spread far apart. The result is the same theme, but a different texture.
Example 5.5: Ned Rorem, *End of Summer*, movement 1, measures 142-147.

There is significant development of the first theme (illustrated previously in example 5.1) throughout the movement. In the coda, Rorem uses the violin and the clarinet to state the first theme in variation. This is illustrated in example 5.6:

The three instruments drive this transformation, with the final statement in example 5.7 at the conclusion of the movement. The original theme is in the clarinet and the upper voice of the right hand of the piano. Even though this presentation of the theme is in C major, the dense, chromatic harmonies suggest otherwise. Note the cluster chords in the piano in the last bar, evoking the pandiatonic harmonies of Copland:
Example 5.7: Ned Rorem, *End of Summer*, movement 1, measures 268-270.

The second theme in the first movement, while not directly quoting a hymn, evokes the simple “protestant hymn tune” that Rorem mentions. In the following example, the violin states the theme while accompanied by the left hand of the piano and the clarinet. With this idea being stated in its simplest form in C major, the listener can easily comprehend this theme when it is repeated later in the movement:
Example 5.8: Ned Rorem, *End of Summer*, movement 1, measures 113-122.

Harmony and texture play a significant role in this movement. All three instruments serve equally as melodic voices and accompanying textures. All of the instruments have the opportunity to state the melody from example 5.8 above, but in different keys. Note how Rorem uses all three players in the following example to state the same theme, this time in a canon:
Example 5.9: Ned Rorem, *End of Summer*, movement 1, measures 210-221.

The clarinet and violin lines weave in and out with each other. When the melody goes too high for the clarinet, Rorem continues the line in the violin. The instruments trade this melody back and forth with each other while remaining in canon with the piano. It is apparent here that he is aware of the most effective use of the upper range of the clarinet, thoughtfully orchestrating the line by passing the melody to the violin when it becomes
impractical for the clarinet. This also creates an isorhythm with the melody, emulating a compositional technique that he uses in all of the other works in this study.

Another interesting texture in this movement is the rhythmic subordinate theme that bridges the two main ideas. In example 5.10, the instruments play unison rhythms, with the ensemble forming tight chords in close proximity.


The piano remains with the ensemble in this instance, but when this theme is repeated later in the movement, it plays staccato notes during the rests.

In terms of harmony, the opening violin cadenza creates the harmonic structure for the movement’s two principle themes, and the piano plays an important role in sustaining the harmonies throughout the movement. In example 5.5, the first principle
theme has a clear harmonic presentation, implying the progression I-IV-V-IV in the key of G-flat. This is offset by the texture of the violin and clarinet, with many notes outside of the center of G-flat. It is the piano, however, that provides stability to the tonality.

The aforementioned chords in example 5.10 represent a harmonic departure from the functionality of the diatonic chords in the rest of the movement. In bar 99, the clarinet and violin play a D major chord over the piano’s notes of F, G, B and A. While the harmonies are not sustained, they are significantly unique to the movement. C major is implied in the right hand (doubled in the clarinet), ending on a pandiatonic chord in C with a bass note of A. Despite all of the development and transformation, it should be noted that the form of this movement is not sonata, but rather binary with a coda. The formal thematic illustration of the first movement is seen in table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 98</td>
<td>Theme 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99 – 112</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113 – 141</td>
<td>Theme 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142 – 174</td>
<td>Theme 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175 – 191</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>192 – 221</td>
<td>Theme 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>222 – 270</td>
<td>Coda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rorem considers his chamber music, as with all of his instrumental music, to be “songs without texts.” He continues, “Yet, since non-vocal music can never contain a uniformly identifiable program (music is music, not literature), I often, like many another ‘impressionist’, take pains to suggest images through titles.” Much of Rorem’s instrumental music, including *End of Summer*, reflects an image that originates through art or literature. Other instrumental compositions by Rorem that imply a musical program include *Spiders* for harpsichord, *Pastorale* and *Views from the Oldest House* for organ, and *A Quiet Afternoon* for piano.

The second movement contains programmatic connotations throughout, with markings such as “Like falling leaves, from beginning to end,” and “Surging”. The climax of the movement is marked “Madly swirling.” Much of the program is also depicted with the texture of the instruments, again with the anchorage of the piano. In example 5.11, the descending melodic tritones in the piano and the trills in the violin and clarinet signify wind gusts and falling leaves.

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87 Ibid.  
88 Tommasini.

The second movement contains three thematic ideas. The first two are stated in quick succession in the first 10 bars. Both themes are illustrated in example 5.12, where theme one is in the clarinet, and theme two is in all three voices:

In the fifth bar of the previous example, Rorem writes in the low register of the clarinet, as well as the other two instruments. This texture occurs in other places in this movement as well, with the piano emphasizing the harmonies in low clusters of notes. This second theme is developed in a number of ways in this movement, each with its own unique texture. Beginning at measure 51, the piano uses a similar texture, with both
hands playing the block chords in a very low register. As the movement continues, Rorem develops this theme. At the climax of the movement, the theme is transformed from 4/4 time to 5/4, with the clarinet and violin stating the melody in octaves:

Later on at measure 85, the piano moves to the upper range while the clarinet and violin sound tremolos. The rest in the beginning of bar 87 is unexpected, as Rorem sounded a pedal point here in previous statements of this theme. The silence is critical, as the music is winding down to the coda.

The third theme in this movement contrasts the other two in terms of style, texture, and meter. It is homophonic in nature, and each instrument eventually has the opportunity to state this melody in 6/4 time. There are interjections in the right hand of the piano that are derived from measure 4 of the he first statement of theme one in the clarinet. While disruptive, this interjection serves to give this theme its own unique texture:
When this theme is stated again at the end of the movement, the instruments change roles. The clarinet is once again in the highest part of its range, often entering without an opportunity to start in a lower register. Alternate fingerings, such as the “long” F-sharp and F, are recommended here, especially because of the soft dynamic:


There is another instance in this movement where the range of the clarinet is pushed to its highest limitations. In the following example, the clarinet moves from its lowest E to the highest C (after transposing up one step from the score).
Example 5.16: Ned Rorem, *End of Summer*, movement 2, measure 75.

It is not often that a clarinetist is asked to play such a high passage, particularly with such demanding technique. The next four bars in the example illustrate a cold cluster of notes in the low range of the piano, producing a dark, rich timbre that contrasts the homophonic texture of the first theme. Theme three is in the right hand of the piano. In this final statement, the clarinet interjects with fragments of the first theme. These ideas form an alternating structure similar to the first movement, illustrated in Table 2.
Themes one and two, while almost always occurring consecutively, should still be annotated separately. This is because Rorem transforms theme 2 significantly throughout the movement. While *End of Summer* does not utilize strict sonata form, earlier works—
such as the First Piano Concerto (1950)—make much use of larger forms. Rorem’s later works tend to favor smaller forms, allowing more flexibility for thematic placement.  

Rhythmically, the second movement uses many different divisions of the beat. Both simple and compound subdivisions can be found, at times requiring 12 or 13 notes to be played within the duration of one beat. Note the complexity of the rhythm in the following transitional passage:

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This is representative of the French influence on Rorem’s music, especially when observing the following example from Debussy’s first prelude from *Preludes: Book 2*. Compare Debussy’s use of rhythms to the previous Rorem example.


In many cases, there is a simultaneous statement of different divisions of the beat. His affinity for Debussy and Ravel is quite evident by his use of these varied rhythms.

The harmonies in the second movement are more complex than the outer movements. This is most apparent in previous musical example 5.12. The harmony is completely pandiatonic, with no key center, but yet no complete avoidance of tonality altogether. This style of harmony was described by Vincent Persichetti as, “…a specific kind of static harmony in which an entire scale is used in order to achieve an implied secondal static chord.”

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American music is Aaron Copland. In example 5.19, note how Copland limits use of the tonic note, F, while never departing from the key signature.


Like serialism, pandiatonicism utilizes all of the notes of a given scale, but the latter normally uses 7 tones instead of 12. The first chord in example 5.12 uses every note of the C major scale, with a B in the bass. This is an illustration of how Rorem employs pandiatonicism in his music. Rorem refers to himself as a conservative composer, and he employs elements of serialism and pandiatonicism in his style.

The final movement, “Mazurka”, is presented in three large sections. The five-note motive, illustrated in example 5.20 is the basis for the entire movement.

This melodic idea is presented in a variety of ways: in fragments in the first section, augmentation in the second section, and then in layers in the third section. Example 5.21 also illustrates the transformation of this motive.

In the example above, Rorem uses the material to create the second theme. In the second bar in the clarinet, beginning with the A-flat on beat two, the same five-note motive was taken from the first theme. This thematic transformation again brings to mind the music of Franz Liszt, with Rorem’s use of this developmental technique being based more on rhythmic variation rather than melodic. The resulting theme is illustrated below in example 5.22:

Table three displays the thematic structure of the movement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (1 – 64)</td>
<td>1 – 64</td>
<td>Theme, fragmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (65 – 128)</td>
<td>65 – 128</td>
<td>Theme, augmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A (129 – 179)</td>
<td>129 – 146</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>147 – 150</td>
<td>Theme, inverted, augmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>151 – 158</td>
<td>Theme, augmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>159 – 169</td>
<td>Theme, fragmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>170 – 179</td>
<td>Theme, augmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coda (180 – 220)</td>
<td>180 – 220</td>
<td>Theme, fragmented and augmented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another technique that Rorem uses for thematic development is inversion. As we have already seen in *Winter Pages*, he uses retrograde, inversion, augmentation, and diminution. The example below illustrates how the second theme has been repeated, but this time in its inverted form:

![Musical Example](image)

**Example 5.23:** Ned Rorem, *End of Summer*, third movement, measures 147-150.

This form of thematic development is often seen in the fugues of J. S. Bach. Bach’s keyboard music was an integral part of Rorem’s piano studies at Curtis. Rorem was fond of the music of Bach, stating, “Bach was the greatest composer who ever walked the earth.”

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The 5-note motive that unites the movement ends on a tritone. This particular set of intervals is also present in the first unifying theme of *Winter Pages*. Note the comparison below:


This interval is used melodically throughout the movement, particularly in a descending chromatic fashion in the piano in bars 5 and 6.

Rhythm is the driving force behind the large “A” sections of the movement. In example 5.23, the main rhythmic motive is stated in the left hand of the piano. This is repeated relentlessly throughout the outer sections of the movement. There are also complex divisions of the beat, mimicking occurrences in the second movement. Hemiola plays a major role in this movement, particularly at bar 136. The left hand continues the movement’s central rhythmic motive, while the right hand divides each bar of $\frac{3}{4}$ in half. Finally, there is a great deal of syncopation at the beginning of the coda in example 5.25.

With all of the instruments playing syncopated figures in different places, Rorem creates a thick “rhythmic texture.”

The melodic texture of this movement is generally homophonic, but with a few exceptions. In the previous example 5.20, the piano and the clarinet form an isorhythmic figure, with the instruments alternating the 5-note theme. Also, note the contrary motion
between all of the instruments, juxtaposed with the movement’s main rhythmic motive in the left hand of the piano in example 5.26.

This is both the textural and dynamic climax of the movement, with all of the motion coming to a cathartic stop in the last bar of musical example 76. The kind of texture from a Chopin Mazurka—one in which a singular melody is heard over a waltz-style accompaniment—is far different from what is heard in this movement. The central “B” section does reflect a more homophonic texture—with the left hand of the piano emphasizing beats one and two, and the right hand stating the lamenting, transformed version of the movement’s 5-note melodic motive.

One last aspect in the final movement is key center. The Mazurka is tonal, but with an ever-changing center. This is especially true of the B section. This theme is repeated several times, beginning in F minor and ending on C-sharp minor. From F, the tonic shifts through the keys of D, F, A-flat, F-sharp, A, C, B-flat and C-sharp. Many of these keys are related by a third—a characteristic of many 19th century composers such as Brahms and Liszt.

While this movement requires similar technical dexterity to the first movement, the range is not nearly as demanding. In the following transposed example, the clarinet goes beyond the normal range to an altissimo A. However, Rorem arrives at this note after starting in the lower chalumeau register in the clarinet.
In *End of Summer*, Rorem adheres to several compositional principles that have a significant impact on the clarinet. He repeats pitch sequences that are often angular and technical in nature. Rorem develops themes via textural changes, augmentation, and diminution. He uses thematic transformation in all of the movements, often as a result of a change of rhythm or meter. Finally, he uses retrograde and inversion to change the notes of a given set. These techniques are also present in the final work of this discussion, *Four Colors*.
CHAPTER 6

Four Colors was commissioned by clarinetist Thomas Piercy in 2003. It is the only work that Rorem composed specifically for clarinet and piano. The composition was premiered at Rorem’s 80th birthday celebration at Carnegie Hall in the fall of 2003. It contains four short movements, each with a single-word title corresponding to a particular color: “Red,” “White,” “Blue,” and “Orange.” This is very different from the other chamber works in this study, as he tends to have lengthy titles inspired by poetry, prose, or some other literary form.

The first movement, “Red”, follows a pattern in form and composition that is similar to “A Mirror” from Winter Pages. He uses the techniques of pitch sequences, retrograde, and variation. The following examples illustrate how Rorem uses these techniques.

Example 6.1: Ned Rorem, Four Colors, movement 1, measures 1-8.

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The same theme is stated again at the end of the movement, but this time in retrograde:


Example 6.3 shows theme one in variation, and in this case Rorem uses the same intervals from the first five notes of the original theme. The rest of the phrase is based on the same rhythm but different intervals.


This movement is in a brief ternary form, with the music turning around to its retrograde halfway through the B section. The style the Rorem uses to connect long melismatic lines is similar to “Around the house the flakes fly faster…” from *Winter Pages* (see previous example 4.6). Note in the following example how Rorem connects the ideas between the piano and the clarinet:

This passage at letter B in example 6.5 is an example of how Rorem uses very compact motives in his composition. The passage is based on 4 notes in the clarinet and the right hand of the piano: E, C, E-flat, and D-flat. He does not change the order of this sequence, but he does begin the motive one note later on each occurrence. The statements occur in groups of 4, and cycle back to the beginning after the D-flat.

Example 6.5: Ned Rorem, *Four Colors*, movement 1, measures 31-36.

This style of patterned, sequential writing is consistent with other works, such as *Winter Pages*. When this theme returns again in the recap (this time in retrograde), the motive starts on the E-flat. When compared to the original pitch sequence in the previous example, it becomes the retrograde inversion—but transposed down one half-step.

The clarinet is the only voice to play in the last measure of the movement. This is because the instrument also begins the movement, and since the work is in retrograde the clarinet has the first and last musical word. This scoring results in a lack of finality, as his the strict use of retrograde does not allow for any more notes. This is a very good example of Rorem using a serial technique in a tongue-in-cheek manner.

The movement is also marked “Strident”—a term that is usually associated with the clarion register of the clarinet. The notes above b¹ are generally considered the brightest on the instrument, and most of this movement (especially theme one) is based in that tessitura. The most strident color comes when the clarinet plays in its highest range of this movement, which happens in the second theme. At the end of this section, the clarinet plays a figure that goes up to a concert F, which can be played in this passage with just the thumb and resister key.

The second movement, “White”, functions as a song without words. It is very similar to “Paris then” from *Winter Pages* in that it is scored with a very simple homophonic texture for clarinet and piano. However, the clarinet and piano are in different implied meters, as the piano uses hemiola to disrupt the simple melody. This is illustrated in example 6.8:

The key centers change from B-flat to G and then back to B-flat again. In the G Major section, the harmony in the piano is much more chromatic, and the hemiola stays intact. This is illustrated in example 6.9:


“Blue” uses many compositional techniques found throughout this study. He uses pitch sequences both rhythmically and melodically, writes in the highest register of the clarinet, and employs different textures within the confines of the same movement. He uses all of these elements in order to enhance thematic development.

The pitch sequences occur in the accompaniment in the piano. Not only does he use them rhythmically, but writes them in groups of five. This disrupts the 4/4 meter that is established at the beginning of the movement. Notice in musical example 87 how the sequence is grouped, both melodically and rhythmically:

The repeated sequence in the piano is similar to example 4.16 from “…urged by earnest violins” in *Winter Pages*. The result is a metric feel of five against four, where in the *Winter Pages* example it was three against four.

Rorem uses the full range of the clarinet in this movement. The opening and closing passages use the entire range of the clarinet within the confines of two musical phrases, and their contour is contrasting. The end of the movement is transposed in example 6.11:

He asks the clarinet to enter at a very soft dynamic on a high G. Beginning a high passage at such a soft dynamic is an anomaly in his writing style, as he usually stretches the range of the instrument only after beginning the passage in a lower register. He writes in a similar manner in terms of range in “Orange” as well.

The textures in “Blue” are also worth noting. Like “Red,” the movement starts and ends with the clarinet alone. The first entrance of the piano is illustrated in previous example 6.10. After the clarinet states the movement’s theme, the piano enters quietly without disrupting the established mood. In “Red”, the piano enters very abruptly after the solo clarinet begins the work. Rorem uses texture as a point of contrast between all of the movements, in addition to the elements of tempo, meter, and dynamics. When Thomas Piercy was asked about this, he said, “I asked Ned for something high, something low, something loud, and something quiet.”

The last movement, “Orange”, uses range, meter, and texture as a means of compositional expression. Rorem uses meter in a similar style to “Mazurka” from *End of Summer*. In the following two examples, the bass line in the piano emphasizes larger beat groups in such a manner the feel alternates between ¾ and 3/2, or a “broken waltz.”

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Rorem also uses pitch sequences in example 6.12, but this time the concept occurs over individual notes as well as chords. The original sequence is revealed in the two bars preceding example 6.12, and it contains eight notes or chords. When the sequence is applied to the accompaniment in the left hand of the piano, there are only seven notes in the rhythmic ostinato. Because of this, the rhythm “runs out” before the sequence, and therefore the sequence must start over on the last beat of the rhythm. As this figure occurs in repetition, the original beginning of the sequence never aligns with the beginning of the rhythmic ostinato. The combination of rhythmic and melodic sequences is a concept that occurs in all of the works in this study. At some points, the sequences run together—beginning and ending at the same time—but in other cases, as in this instance, the two do not align. This sequence between melody and rhythm creates an isorhythm between the two elements.

There are also several instances of Rorem using the highest notes of the clarinet. In the following example, he uses a chromatic row of pitches that gradually expands each melodic interval by one half step:

While Rorem is not a serial composer, he does use this passage to illustrate all twelve pitches of the chromatic octave. This is very tongue-in-cheek, as he combines the predictability of serialism with his own style of tonality. In terms of range, he asks the clarinet to slur to the high B-flat at the end of the passage. This is not difficult, but can be treacherous given the context of the entire passage. The result is a wild combination of themes between the clarinet and the piano. In the final measure, he even calls for the D above the highest C. This is technically not a playable note on the instrument, and can only be achieved through false fingerings. What makes this passage even more difficult is that the composer asks for the performer to diminuendo from \( p \) to \( ppp \) while playing this note. As stated before, Rorem believes that such a passage can be achieved on the clarinet if the music rises step-wise from the lower register. This is illustrated in example 6.15:

![Example 6.15: Ned Rorem, Four Colors, movement 4, measures 84-87.](image)

In one final example of his use of the high range, Rorem begins a very high passage abruptly on a high C. As in the previous movement, there is no lower octave “lead-in” as
we have seen in much of his other high clarinet writing. Given the abrupt nature of all of the themes in this movement, this style of writing is very appropriate. As illustrated in example 6.16, the passage is not only high and loud, but also heavy and accented:


Finally, the texture of this movement is very thick and layered. There are only a handful of themes in this movement, and at one point, they are all occurring at the same time. Note the drastic contrast both rhythmically and melodically between the voices in example 6.17:
In this case, there are three motivic ideas occurring at one time. The first is in the clarinet at the beginning of the example. The two dotted quarters that divide the $\frac{3}{4}$ bar evenly are used throughout the movement. In the left hand of the piano, the pitch sequences continue in the same manner—always creating 2 bars of $\frac{3}{4}$ and two bars of hemiola. Finally, the running eighths in the right hand of the piano use the row from the clarinet in example 6.14, but in retrograde.

In *Four Colors*, Rorem uses many of the techniques discussed in this study. He expands the range of the clarinet to the altissimo D in the last movement. When writing in the upper altissimo register, he often begins the passage in a lower register, but this is not always the case. He uses pitch sequences both melodically and harmonically, often
times creating ostinato rhythms that are uneven when compared to the phrasing in the melody. Each movement, as with his other works in this discussion, has its own unique texture. At times it is thick and layered, and in other instances it is simple and homophonic. *Four Colors* is very indicative of Rorem’s instrumental style, particularly in the manner in which he writes for the clarinet.
CHAPTER 7

Several consistencies occur in the works examined in this document, particularly in relation to the clarinet. Rorem’s intimate understanding of the full capabilities of the clarinet is evident throughout. He demonstrates this through the fact that he uses the entire range of the instrument and he consistently scores it in a manner that is appropriate based on the given circumstance. In *Ariel*, the clarinet is used to emphasize the angst and drama that occurs in Plath’s text. The clarinet takes a more submissive role in *Eleven Studies*, as well as in certain points of *Winter Pages* and *End of Summer*. As the instrument is the feature of *Four Colors*, the clarinet takes a much more dominant role throughout. In the places of these works that are intended to serve as a feature for the clarinet, Rorem uses the entire range—from the lowest E to the highest C. Very often, composers treat the altissimo register of the clarinet with ease and care in terms of the technique, but Rorem does not. Regardless of register, he writes based on the notes that are required rather than those technically available. This is evident in “The Hanging Man” from *Ariel, Four Colors*, and “Around the house the flakes fly faster” from *Winter Pages*. There are similar passages of high tessitura in *End of Summer*, particularly in movements one and two. The very last note in the clarinet in *Four Colors* is an altissimo D, which is beyond the mechanical range of the clarinet, but is called upon by composers on the rarest of occasions.
Another factor that is consistent in Rorem’s clarinet music is the melismatic figures that appear frequently. *Ariel, Winter Pages, and End of Summer* all contain technically demanding melismatic passages that vary the use of altered diatonic scales. While the rhythms are different, note the similarities in the musical lines in the following examples:

![Example 1](image1)


![Example 2](image2)


![Example 3](image3)

**Example 7.3**: Ned Rorem, *End of Summer*, movement 2, measure 75.
Not only do these kinds of passages alternate varying diatonic intervals in Rorem’s music, they are also often orchestrated in contrary motion with the other instruments.

There are several of Rorem’s compositional techniques that share commonality in all of his clarinet music. In several instances, he writes in retrograde or inversion, changing the order of his established musical material. In the following two examples, he uses retrograde as a means of changing the original theme:

Example 7.4: Ned Rorem, *Four Colors*, movement 1, measures 1-8.


In yet another instance, Rorem uses the inversion of an established theme. In the third movement of *End of Summer*, he inverts the second theme:

For a composer who is so quick to deride serial composers, referring to them as “serial killers”, there is an irony to his orderly approach to composition in these instances.\(^94\)

Ned Rorem is quite frank when discussing the current and future states of American classical music. When asked about composers who work outside of the musical profession in order to survive, he said, “It’s too bad that a composer has to earn a living doing something that he really doesn’t want to do. However, a composer who’s in it for the money should change jobs. I’ve never done anything I didn’t want to do. I certainly don’t write for money…I like to be appreciated.”\(^95\) He also feels that the ebb and flow of the musical market sometimes corrects itself, saying, “Bad things have solved problems in a productive way. The rules change every generation or so.”\(^96\)

\(^{95}\) Ned Rorem, interview by author, New York City, June 23, 2012.
\(^{96}\) Ibid.
His thorough understanding of the clarinet has led to the addition of several challenging and worthwhile pieces of music to the repertoire. *Eleven Studies for Eleven Players* is an early example of his understanding of the range and technical capabilities of the clarinet. In *Ariel* he uses the clarinet to serve as a contrast in the texture with the voice, and also to emphasize the dark, foreboding text. *Winter Pages* represents his ability to score evenly for the entire quintet, while at the same time using the clarinet both as a color and a feature instrument. In *End of Summer* he makes great use of thematic development, and he gives all three instruments prominent roles. Finally, *Four Colors* is representative of his mature instrumental style, writing in thick textures and a wide technical range for the clarinet. Ned Rorem’s vocal music is performed with great frequency today, but his clarinet music is largely unknown. Clarinetists should find his music both challenging and accessible, and worthy of being programmed for almost any audience.
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY


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