

STANISŁAW MONIUSZKO ACADEMY OF MUSIC IN GDAŃSK

Adrian S. Mackiewicz

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

prepared as part of the procedure for awarding the doctoral degree in the
field of arts, in the artistic discipline: musical arts

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Hab. Przemysław Stanisławski

Gdańsk 2025

ARTISTIC WORK
~Opus Harmonicum~
Ernesto Ferreri — Four Compositions
For String & Chamber Orchestra

1.

Symphony for Strings, Op. 7

Performers: Connecticut Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra

Live concert recording – world premiere April 10, 2022

New Britain Museum of American Arts, New Britain, Connecticut, USA

(16'11")

2.

"Hymnus ad Cosmos", Op. 25 for string orchestra

Performers: Camerata Gdynska

Concert recording – Polish premiere April 4, 2024

Maritime Basilica of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Gdynia

(12'51")

3.

"Verlangen" (Desire), Op. 28 for string orchestra

Performers: Camerata Gdynska

Concert recording – Polish premiere April 4, 2024

Maritime Basilica of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Gdynia

(11'55")

4.

Octet, Op. 32 for chamber orchestra

Movements: Overture (10'42"), Cafe Serenade (9'20")

Performers: Camerata Gdynska

Concert recording – Polish premiere April 4, 2024

Maritime Basilica of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Gdynia

(20'03")

Recording Engineer: Cezary Joczyn

DESCRIPTION OF THE ARTISTIC WORK

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Introduction

In the artistic world, we often encounter a highly talented creator whose long and fascinating career and body of work remain completely unknown to us. Each such encounter is an opportunity for a new experience, inspiration for our own creativity, or a chance to discover a new moment and place in music.

I believe Ernesto Ferreri is one such inspiring artist. An excellent composer, he represents the neoclassical movement of the 1980s in New York—a period that was highly significant in the development of contemporary American music.

Ferreri is unknown in Poland. Therefore, I would like to introduce and shed light on the profile of this very original and, in my opinion, an outstanding musician.

Ernesto Ferreri is a very private individual. For him, the act of creating is often the most important thing, and he frequently remains in his slightly closed-off world. He has written many compositions that deserve attention. For many years, he has also worked as a teacher, a professor of music at a local college, while continuing to compose works “...*because they were born within my soul and had to be written down*” (Ernesto Ferreri, 2024).

I met Ernesto Ferreri in May 2018. After performing his *Hymnus ad Cosmos*, op. 25, he called me to thank us for the premiere of his piece. That conversation led to a friendship, which resulted in premieres of his other works as part of the “We The People” series with the Connecticut Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra. Later, in April 2024, the composer was present in Poland for the recording of three pieces and a composer’s concert with the Camerata Gdynska.

Chapter I – The Composer’s Profile

The 1980s – Contemporary Music in New York

The second half of the 20th century, and especially the 1980s, was a fascinating period in the development of classical contemporary music in the United States. The creative scene in New York during this time can be divided into two groups (also based on geographic location in Manhattan):

- **The Academic Group** (known as Uptown — above 59th Street), primarily associated with institutions such as the Juilliard School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, and Columbia University. This group included composers whose works were performed by the so-called “establishment” and major ensembles like the New York Philharmonic. Notable representatives of the Academic Group include Luciano Berio¹ and Samuel Adler². Among Ernesto

¹ Luciano Berio (1925–2003) was an influential Italian composer and a pioneer of electronic music. He studied in Milan and at Tanglewood, co-founded the Studio di Fonologia in Milan, and taught at institutions including the Juilliard School of Music. Known for *Sinfonia* and the *Sequenza* cycle, he combined avant-garde techniques with lyrical, literary, and vocal experimentation.

² Samuel Adler (b. 1928) is a German-American composer, conductor, and educator, author of over 400 published works. A graduate of Harvard and Boston University, he taught at the Eastman School of Music and Juilliard, and also founded the Seventh Army Symphony Orchestra.

Ferreri's teachers were also figures from this tradition: Henry Weinberg³, Ludmila Ulehla⁴, and Hubert Howe⁵.

³ Henry Weinberg (1931–2017) was an American composer known for his chamber music and reflective approach to teaching. He co-founded the American Society of University Composers.

⁴ Ludmila Ulehla was born in Flushing, Queens, New York. She studied composition under Vittorio Giannini at the Manhattan School of Music. From 1972 to 1989, she served as the head of the Composition Department there. Ulehla was recognized as an outstanding educator in the “Who’s Who of American Women” and received ASCAP awards. She authored a book titled *Contemporary Harmony – Romanticism Through the 12-Tone Row*, published by Advance Music.

⁵ Hubert Howe studied at Princeton University, with James Kirtland Randall, Godfrey Winham, and Milton Babbitt. He was one of the early pioneers in computer music and became Professor of Music and Director of Electronic Music Studies at Queens College, part of the City University of New York. He also taught at the Juilliard School for 20 years. In 2009, he founded the New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival. Recordings of his computer music (*Overtone Music*, CPS-8678; *Filtered Music*, CPS-8719; and *Temperamental Music and Created Sounds*, CPS-8771) have been released by Capstone Records and Clusters and Ravello Records.

- **The Minimalist Group** in the East Village (south of 59th Street), including Terry Riley⁶, Steve Reich⁷, Philip Glass⁸, John Adams⁹, John Cage¹⁰, and others. These were experimental composers, including the so-called “Noise composers” such as John Zorn¹¹. Despite lacking support from academic institutions and having limited performance resources at first, they had a tremendous impact on the shape of American—and global—contemporary music.

⁶ Terry Riley (born 1935) is an American composer and a pioneer of minimalism. His groundbreaking work *In C* (1964) introduced elements of jazz and Indian classical traditions into classical music. Riley’s innovations in tape music, improvisation, and microtonality had a significant impact on experimental, electronic, and contemporary classical music.

⁷ Stephen Michael Reich is an American composer of minimalist music. Known for works such as *Music for 18 Musicians* and *Different Trains*, he revolutionized composition through phasing techniques, tape loops, and rhythmic patterns.

⁸ Philip Glass is an American composer known for minimalist music. He founded the Philip Glass Ensemble. Composed operas such as *Einstein on the Beach* and *Satyagraha*. His repetitive structures and rhythmic innovations transformed contemporary classical music and film scoring across the globe.

⁹ John Adams is an American composer, known for his innovative fusion of minimalism and expressive lyricism. His notable works include *Nixon in China*, *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*, and *The Dharma at Big Sur*. Adams reshaped contemporary classical music by infusing it with rhythmic vitality, political resonance, and emotional depth.

¹⁰ John Cage was an American composer and theorist who revolutionized 20th-century music. He pioneered the use of chance operations, indeterminacy, and the prepared piano. His iconic work *4'33"* challenged traditional notions of sound and silence. Influenced by Zen Buddhism, Cage expanded music’s boundaries to include philosophy, performance, and everyday experience.

¹¹ Since the mid-1970s, composer, performer, and producer of recordings and concerts John Zorn has been one of the most prominent and charismatic figures associated with the world of avant-garde alternative music, experimental genres, fusion, and free improvisation—known collectively as New York’s “downtown” music scene.

During his time studying and living in New York, Ernesto Ferreri, as he himself says, attended many contemporary music concerts. This was undoubtedly a rich and intriguing series of experiences.

About the Composer

Born in 1954 in Astoria, one of New York City's boroughs, Ernesto Ferreri grew up in a world of cultural contrasts. During his childhood, his family moved to the suburbs of Yorktown Heights, New York, and later relocated to Italy, where the composer lived for two years in Rome and Abruzzo (1962-1963). This period of his life was full of changes that had a profound impact on his artistic sensitivity. Upon returning to the United States, he began to develop his musical interests. In 1964, he heard *The Beatles*, which inspired him to start playing the guitar. Influenced by bands and artists such as *The Byrds*, *Cream*, *Jimi Hendrix*, and *Led Zeppelin*, he began his musical career, initially performing in rock and soul bands (1971-1974).

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Ernesto gained experience as a guitarist, but at a certain point, he began to notice the limitations of rock music. He lacked creative freedom. He had many ideas and musical concepts. He felt the need for something more. In 1973, a box set of Beethoven recordings inspired him and changed his perspective on music. The *Hammerklavier* Sonata (Sonata No. 29, Op. 106) left a particularly strong impression on him. It was during this time that the artist decided to become a composer.

Encouraged by his stepmother Lynda, who recognized his talent and supported him financially, Ernesto Ferreri applied to the North Carolina School of the Arts (NCSA), where he was accepted by Dr. Robert Ward¹². Meeting Ward was a pivotal moment in

¹² Robert Ward (1917–2013) was an American composer and the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize in 1962 for his opera *The Crucible*. He was born in Cleveland, where as a boy he studied composition and harmony. He pursued his education at the Eastman School of Music and the Juilliard School, studying with teachers such as Aaron Copland and Bernard Wagenaar. Ward served in the army, conducting the band of the Seventh Infantry Division. He was a professor at Juilliard and Duke University, and also served as president of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. His body of work includes eight operas,

his career. Ward, a respected composer—though seen by some as a relic of earlier eras—was an inspiring figure for the young artist.

During his four years of study at The University of North Carolina School of the Arts (1975-1979), Ferreri lived in a dormitory, focused on his musical education, and actively participated in the school's social life. He was surrounded by inspiring peers, including Daniel Foley¹³, who introduced him to Mahler's symphonies, the Second Viennese School, Bach's monumental organ works, and the music of Weather Report. Ernesto also formed a friendship with Simmons Jones¹⁴, who introduced him to Schubert's music, and William Zimmerman¹⁵, his piano teacher, who supported his musical development.

In his third year of studies, Ernesto met Barbara Gallagher, his future wife, who was also studying composition at NCSA. After graduating, the two moved to New York City, where Barbara began studying at the prestigious Juilliard School, and Ernesto enrolled at the Manhattan School of Music (1981-1982).

In New York, Ferreri encountered a dogmatic approach to contemporary music, which promoted atonality as the only acceptable form of expression. Ferreri, however, chose to defend his own musical vision, which ultimately led to his expulsion from the

seven symphonies, and numerous choral compositions. Known as a neo-Romantic, he admired Debussy, Ravel, and jazz. He passed away in 2013.

¹³ Daniel Foley (born April 24, 1952, in Toronto) is a Canadian composer who, as a self-taught musician, won the BMI Award to Student Composers at the age of 15—and went on to win it two more times. He studied at the North Carolina School of the Arts under Robert Ward, and later earned a master's degree from the University of Toronto, where his teachers included John Weinzwieg and Lothar Klein. Foley taught at NCSA and the University of Guelph, but since 1986 he has devoted himself entirely to composition. His style evolved from the formalism of the 1970s to a "humanistic expressionism" inspired by his ethnomusicological research.

¹⁴ A friend of the family, a man of culture, composer, photographer, author (*from E. Ferreri*).

¹⁵ William H. Zimmerman, professor of piano at NCSA – a student of Waiter Spry and Ernst Bacon.

institution. After transferring to Queens College (also in New York) (1983-1985), Ferreri continued his composition studies under Henry Weinberg, earning a Master of Arts degree by writing atonal works “in accordance with the program’s requirements.”

After completing his studies, Ernesto Ferreri worked in New York on freelance contracts, recording demos, writing jingles, and working as a copyist (1985–1989 — for example, preparing the full score and parts for Mussorgsky’s *Boris Godunov* for the Metropolitan Opera in New York, orchestrated by Igor Buketoff, with its premiere and broadcast on Texaco Opera Theatre in December 1997).

In 1989, Ferreri and his wife Barbara returned to North Carolina, where he began working as a music professor—initially at Brunswick Community College in Bolivia, North Carolina (1991–1993), and later at Cape Fear Community College (from 1993 onward).

Around 1988, Ferreri became interested in the emerging MIDI technology, which became a key tool in his work. The synthesizer allowed him to experiment with sound, develop compositions, and realize ideas in ways that had previously been impossible. MIDI opened up new possibilities, enabling him to present his work in the form of audio recordings. The synthesizer became, in his words, “composition on steroids,” giving him access to many versions of an idea and allowing him to choose the best among them.

His work was recognized by regional arts institutions, resulting in awards and honors:

- Vittorio Giannini Fellowship for Music Composition – North Carolina School of the Arts (1976–77, 1977–78)
- Young Artists Fellowship – Lower Cape Fear Arts Council (1992)
- North Carolina Visiting Artist List – Arts Council (1992)
- North Carolina Composers Fellowship – Arts Council (1993)
- Honorable Mention (*Symphony in C Major 2000*) – Minnesota Orchestra (2002)

Today, Ernesto Ferreri lives in North Carolina with his wife Barbara and their two daughters, Meredith and Melanie. He continues to work as a music professor at Cape

Fear Community College. This role has provided him with the conditions to "return" and focus on creating concert music.

Teachers and Inspirations

Ernesto Ferreri's work reflects a wide range of musical interests. His compositional style is rooted in classical influences, particularly Beethoven, and later developed admiration for Mahler's symphonies, Bach's organ works, and the music of Mozart and Schubert. Among living composers, Ernesto especially admires David del Tredici¹⁶, Michael Daugherty¹⁷, Aaron Jay Kernis¹⁸, and Thomas Adès¹⁹. He remains fascinated by the avant-garde, introduced to him by Daniel Foley, which he describes as "resembling psychedelia" - a quality he also values.

According to Ferreri himself, he was also inspired by American neoclassicists, especially Elias Tanenbaum²⁰ and David del Tredici, as well as by interactions with

¹⁶ David Walter Del Tredici received the Pulitzer Prize and was also a Guggenheim and Woodrow Wilson Fellow. He is considered a pioneer of the neo-romantic movement. The *Los Angeles Times* described him as "one of our most flamboyant outsider composers".

¹⁷ Michael Daugherty (born 1954) is an American composer acclaimed for his colorful, rhythmically vibrant music that blends classical traditions with pop culture and American folklore. His works, such as *Metropolis Symphony* and *Dead Elvis*, reflect a playful, postmodern character. Daugherty teaches at the University of Michigan and has won multiple Grammy Awards.

¹⁸ Aaron Jay Kernis (born 1960) is a renowned American composer known for emotionally profound and stylistically diverse music. A recipient of both the Pulitzer Prize and Grammy Award, Kernis teaches at Yale University and is celebrated for his skillful fusion of lyricism, intensity, and contemporary sensibility.

¹⁹ Thomas Adès (born 1971) is a British composer, conductor, and pianist, acclaimed for his inventive and emotionally intense music. His most renowned works include *Asyla*, *The Tempest*, and *Totentanz*.

²⁰ Elias Tanenbaum – Born in 1924 in Brooklyn, New York, Elias Tanenbaum studied trumpet and performed in numerous jazz ensembles. He graduated from the Juilliard School of Music and Columbia University. He studied composition with Dante Fiorillo, Bohuslav Martinů, Otto Luening, and

popular music creators of the time: Doug E Fresh²¹, Andrew Lloyd Webber²², Rupert Holmes²³,

Booby Gordon²⁴, Jellybean²⁵, and Marley Marl²⁶.

Ferreri describes himself as an “outsider.” His music, for its time, was traditional - some might even say non-progressive. After completing his studies in 1985, Ferreri decided to

Wallingford Riegger. His works span concert music, jazz, theater, television, ballet, as well as electronic and computer music. Tanenbaum was the founder and director of the Electronic Computer Music Studio and served on the composition faculty at the Manhattan School of Music in New York City.

²¹ Douglas Davis (born September 17, 1966), known professionally as Doug E. Fresh, is a Barbados-born American rapper, music producer, and beatboxer, also known as the “Human Beat Box.” He is a pioneer of 20th-century American beatboxing, and his extraordinary skill allows him to precisely imitate percussion and various special effects using only his mouth, lips, gums, throat, tongue, and a microphone.

²² Andrew Lloyd Webber, Baron Lloyd-Webber (born March 22, 1948), is an English composer and musical theatre impresario. Many of his musicals have been performed for over a decade both in the West End and on Broadway. He has composed 21 musicals.

²³ Rupert Holmes (born David Goldstein; February 24, 1947) is a British-American composer, singer, songwriter, playwright, and author. He is widely known for his hit singles “Escape (The Piña Colada Song)” (1979) and “Him” (1980). He is also recognized for his musicals, including *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, which earned him two Tony Awards.

²⁴ Booby Gordon – Sound Director from New York. He worked extensively at “On Broadway Studios” and “The Hit Factory.”

²⁵ John Benitez (born November 7, 1957), also known as Jellybean, is an American musician, songwriter, DJ, and music producer. He has produced and remixed tracks for artists such as Madonna, Whitney Houston, and Michael Jackson.

²⁶ Marlon Lu'Ree Williams (born September 30, 1962), better known by his stage name Marley Marl, is an American DJ, music producer, rapper, and record label founder, primarily active in hip-hop music.

stop composing “serious music” due to a lack of opportunities for performance and playback.

To earn a living, he turned to commercial work, recording commissioned R&B demos. As he recalls, he purchased equipment - synthesizers, mixers, and more.

His introduction to the newly developed MIDI system (1983) and instrument sampling gave him the ability to hear his compositions and reignited his passion for writing music.

In 1988, Ferreri composed two orchestral pieces. The first was *New Age Folk Music* (a post-minimalist pop piece), and the second was *From the Adventures of Gil Blas* (a neo-romantic work completed in 1989).

Because Ferreri worked “alone,” his artistic process involved developing ideas during long nights spent in his studio - sometimes until early morning. It didn’t matter whether the pieces were original or new to others; for Ferreri, it was a journey of discovering his own musical style. As he puts it: “It was all new to me.”

His body of work, though diverse, reveals deep commitment and passion. Student pieces, stylistic experiments, and concert compositions show how much Ernesto learned on his own, original artistic path. Thanks to MIDI technology, he was able to experiment and cultivate his unique style.

Artistic Output

Ernesto Ferreri is, in a sense, an “outsider” to the musical circles of his time. He allows himself to return to expanded tonal sonorism, thereby in some ways rejecting the avant-garde direction. He also creates “commercial” works—pieces not associated with “serious music,” but written for a mass audience.

Ferreri’s creative output can be broadly divided into two categories:

- Concert hall compositions

- Popular music for commercial use

Within the concert/classical group, three subcategories can be distinguished:

- Academic exercises — Music written as studies based on “academic” models—fugues, sonatas, and similar forms.
- Later, mature works — These are neo-romantic compositions that show the influence of Viennese composers such as Mahler and Schoenberg. In some pieces, Ferreri also incorporates expressionist elements. A notable example is his String Trio, Op. 12.
- Fusion works — Pieces that blend blues scales/harmony and rhythms more commonly associated with popular music and jazz. These works reference European traditions but also carry a distinctly American character.

“In my music, I freely draw stylistically, formally, and spiritually from the inspirations of both Viennese schools. They ceased to be idols and instead transformed into internalized conversations that manifest outwardly in my compositions.” - Ernesto Ferreri, 2024

Neoclassical Character of Ferreri’s Work

In my view, Ernesto Ferreri is a neoclassical composer. However, we must clarify this term, at least in the context of his work, because neoclassicism and neoromanticism can be interpreted in various ways.

Ernesto employs an expanded tonal language, meaning he returns to—or perhaps never lost—his sense of classical (or romantic) tonality. It’s also clear that he is not confined by this system. He allows himself the freedom to weave together tonal, extended tonal, and atonal elements. Yet he distinctly defines sections and fragments using the language of the classical system, with tonality serving as the starting point.

One of the key features of so-called neoclassicism is the return to classical musical forms, among which the sonata-allegro form is arguably the most important. In all the

works discussed in this study, Ferreri uses sonata form as the structural foundation of his compositions. In my opinion, this trait—more than tonality or a kind of classical sonorism—points to the neoclassical nature of his music.

It should also be noted that, as an American composer, raised on musical inspirations quite different from the “classical-European” tradition, Ernesto approaches questions of form and tonality in a way that reflects elements of American music, combined with a deep fascination with European classical heritage.

List of Works

Title | Year | Instrumentation | Style

- String Quartet No. 1, Op.1 | 1976 | string quartet | American
- String Trio, Op.2 | 1977 | string trio | Expressionist |
- Aria di Concerto, Op.3 | 1978 | chamber orchestra | Neo-romantic |
- Divertimenti, Op.4 | 1978 | flute, oboe, clarinet, violin, viola | Romantic |
- Symphony in C 2000, Op.5 | 1978 | orchestra | Neoclassical |
- Keyboard Studies in Baroque Style, Op.6 | 1976 | piano/keyboard instrument | Neo-baroque |
- Symphony for String Orchestra, Op.7 | 1979 | string orchestra | Neo-baroque, Neo-romantic |
- Contrafunktus I, Op.8 | 1980 | 2 pianos | American, Ragtime |
- Contrafunktus II, Op.9a | 1981 | 4 saxophones, percussion, double bass | Fusion |
- Sonatina for Piano, Op.10 | 1981 | piano | Expressionist |
- Fantasy-Variations for String Trio, Op.11 | 1981 | string trio | Expressionist |
- String Trio, Op.12 | 1984 | string trio | Expressionist |
- Contrafunktus III | 1987 | synthesizer | Fusion |

- From the Adventures of Gil Blas, Op.13 | 1989 | orchestra | Neoclassical, Romantic, Modern |
- Young Gil Blas, Op.14 S | 1999 | orchestra | Neo-romantic |
- 2 Gil Blas Scherzos, Op.15 | 1994 | orchestra | Neo-romantic |
- 2 Blake Songs, Op.16b | 1995 | voice/orchestra | Neo-romantic |
- Blake Songs, Op.16 | 1995 | voice/orchestra | Neo-romantic |
- Stone Gil, Op.17 | 1994 | orchestra | Neo-romantic |
- Trans, Op.18 | 2000 | orchestra | Avant-garde |
- String Quartet No. 2, Op.19a | 2003 | string quartet | Expressionist |
- 2 Matz Settings, Op.19b | 2003 | voice/piano | Neo-romantic |
- —The World Keeps Turning..., Op.20 | 2002 | orchestra | Avant-garde pop |
- Mini-sonata, Op.21 | 2004 | trombone, piano | American |
- String Quartet No. 3, Op.22 | 2005 | string quartet | Neo-romantic |
- String Quartet No. 4, Op.23 | 2004 | string quartet | Neo-romantic |
- Insomniac Variations, Op.24 | 2007 | piano | Neoclassical |
- Hymnus ad cosmos, Op.25 | 2007 | string orchestra | New Age, Neo-romantic |
- String Quartet No. 5, Op.26 | 2009 | string quartet | Neo-romantic |
- Verlangen, Op.28 | 2009 | string orchestra | Neo-romantic |
- Glitzen/bangen, Op.29 | 2010 | orchestra | American |
- Eine kleine Cafémusik, Op.30 | 2012 | piano trio (violin, cello, piano) | Neoclassical, Neo-romantic |
- Das Traumcafé, Op.31 | 2013 | piano trio (violin, cello, piano) | Expressionist |
- Octet, Op.32 | 2013 | clarinet, bassoon, horn, 2 violins, viola, cello, double bass | Romantic |
- 6 Preludes | 1974 | guitar | Classical |
- Adagio and Fugue for String Quartet | 1975 | string quartet | Classical |

- Classical Quartet | 1981 | string quartet | Classical |
- New Age Folk Music | 1988 | orchestra | Post-minimal pop |
- Praying Mantis | 1991 | synthesizer | Jazz fusion |
- Lyricism | 1995 | orchestra | Symphonic fusion |
- Aria a Azzura | 2001 | voice/piano | Neo-romantic |
- Rock the House | 2015 | orchestra | Avant-garde pop |
- Little Minuet in B-flat Major | 2017 | string quartet | Neoclassical |
- Non ho paura | — | voice, piano, bongos | Neo-romantic |

As part of my work, I want to present four chamber orchestra pieces composed by Ernesto Ferreri between 1978 and 2013. These works are:

- *Symphony for Strings*, Op.7 (1979)
- *Hymnus ad Cosmos*, Op.25 for string orchestra (2007)
- *Verlangen* (“Desire”), Op.28 for string orchestra (2009)
- *Octet*, Op.32 (performed in a chamber orchestra arrangement: clarinet, bassoon, french horn, and strings)

Chapter II – Symphony for Strings, Op. 7 (1979)

*“In 1979, about 43 years ago, after completing formal composition lessons with Robert Ward, I wrote the *Symphony for Strings*. It turns out that certain works must be undertaken for personal growth. They later make everything else possible and shape future sensitivity.*

The double fugue, which references fugal techniques, also describes in its title an element of symphonic thought that gives this piece its distinctive character.”

— Ernesto Ferreri²⁷

Ernesto Ferreri completed his Symphony for Strings, Op. 7 in 1979, though he worked on the piece for over two years. As he recalls, it was a “difficult work.” The composer struggled with defining the formal structure of the piece. Initially, he intended to write the entire work in a polyphonic style, but later sought ways to merge two musical ideas: polyphonic and, as he describes it, symphonic.

Even the title presents a certain challenge. This stems from the fact that Ferreri wrote a single-movement piece that only partially adheres to sonata form. Structural elements of Baroque music are also evident.

The work begins with a polyphonic exposition in the form of a fugue — an intriguing concept that replaces the traditional sonata allegro theme exposition with a polyphonic one. In the exposition (and in several other polyphonic moments throughout the piece) Ferreri also employs the compositional technique known as an invention, thus referencing Baroque musical structures. Choosing this method of constructing polyphonic textures gives the composer freedom, but it aligns more closely with the Baroque than with classical sonata form; the musical invention is a more open-ended form than later musical structures.

The piece is built upon the framework of sonata allegro form. One can identify elements of both the first and second themes, and their contrast is evident. Ferreri treats the idea

²⁷ E. Ferreri, Conversation before the concert and recording with the Camerata Gdynia in: 2024.

of “development” as a somewhat unstable element — one that can emerge at any moment, and is therefore not confined to a specific temporal or musical space.

The Academic Character of the Symphony

Among the works presented in my study, the Symphony for Strings, Op. 7 holds a special place. It is the earliest of the pieces discussed, and at the same time, the one with the most “academic” character. It is precisely in this symphony that one can find elements pointing to the challenges Ernesto faced in his search for a personal style. Even here, the composer attempts to engage with the structure of sonata allegro form; he experiments, striving to create a form that is his own and original. To what extent this experiment succeeds, of course, depends on the listener. As the work’s premiere performer, I believe it is worth examining this piece closely in order to appreciate yet another original interpretation of the sonata allegro form.

Thematic Material

Ernesto Ferreri recalls that the thematic inspiration for the Symphony came from a motif in J. S. Bach’s Chaconne for Solo Violin (e.g., viola, Theme I, measures 1–3), and a motif from Béla Bartók’s Concerto for Orchestra (e.g., viola, Theme II, measures 12–15). These are not quotations, however, but rather inspirations, so we must accept these statements without critical scrutiny.

It is no coincidence that the Baroque theme is presented in polyphonic form, while the later theme appears in “symphonic” form. This fusion of ideas served as the inspiration for the entire work, but—as mentioned earlier—it also posed a challenge for the composer. I use here the terminology defined by the composer himself; the expressions polyphonic structure vs. symphonic structure function as opposing ideas. The entire piece is essentially built on these two thematic materials. Rarely is any other material introduced. Both themes are eventually presented in both forms and in various “versions.”

A new musical idea appears only in measure 229. This is essentially the coda of the piece. Here, the composer introduces a new idea in order to gradually obscure and

dissolve the theme, ending the work in an open, seemingly infinite way. (One might wonder whether there was once an idea for additional movements.)

Analysis of the Symphony

The piece is a single-movement work in what is known as a grand musical form. Within the 258 measures of the composition, five sections can be distinguished based on changes in character, tempo, and musical structure. These do not correspond precisely to sonata allegro form, but for the sake of clarity, I will present them in that framework:

5-Part Structure

Exposition:

- A – Beginning (A-minor) – Theme 1
- B (measure 45) – Allegro Moderato (E-flat minor) – Theme 2

Development:

- A1 (measure 84) – Letter K – stretto (modulations beginning in B-minor)

Recapitulation:

- C (measure 119) – Allegro Moderato (E-flat major) – Theme 2
- A2 (measure 229) – Adagio, return to p. 12 (A-minor) – Theme 1

The piece begins with a fugal exposition of the first theme (Bach – Chaconne) at an Adagio tempo. The second theme (Bartók) briefly appears for the first time in measure 12, played by the violas. In bar 15 a short stretto section leads to a fermata hold in measure 17.

In measure 22 the composer introduces the 2nd theme again, played by the doublebass, this time in a homophonic structure. The transition fragment leads to the second section beginning in bar 35. The tempo indication changes to *Allegro Moderato*.

The second theme is presented in a fugal form, first in violas, then cellos, and violins. This section assumes progressively more homophonic character, and culminates in bar 69 with fermata on the last of the several vertical cords.

One can clearly see the prototypical for the *Allegro Sonata*, thematic groups' relation between A & B sections. Each section is also a fugue.

The piece continues with stretto transition to section C, which starts in measure 84. Here begins the development of the sonata form. At the beginning of this section, the composer uses primarily the material of the first theme, with the 2nd theme appearing only in cellos in bar 90. In bars 111-118 we see the culmination of the development, followed by the beginning of the recapitulation indicated by the fugal exposition of the 2nd theme (Bartok). The section leads to the double fugue in bar 154.

We can clearly recognize the emotional culmination of the piece in bars 216–218. The connecting section leads to a new musical material in a last section (E) in bar 229.

We can hear the motivic material of the first theme as a counterpoint to the new theme. This section leads to a Coda, which begins in 252. The coda closes the piece, providing the final statement of both main themes of the Symphony.

Overall, the piece exhibits a wide dynamic range: from *ppp* ethereal entries to *fff* climaxes. Terraced dynamics is perhaps a nod to Baroque practice, but Ferreri uses them with modern expressive nuance. Swelling crescendos and sudden drops in volume mirror the flow of thematic tensions. Stylistically the piece represents the synthesis of Baroque style: Fugue technique, thematic borrowing from Bach (and Bartok), balanced approach to motivic work, combined with the Neo-Romantic expressiveness, occasional harmonic ambiguity and textural experimentation.

**To Adrian Sylveen
and his Connecticut Virtuosi**

Symphony for Strings
Ernesto Ferreri

Both themes from
JS Bach

Section I
Adagio

Adagio

Vin 2

Via

sordini a=

theme 1, fugal exposition

Vin 2

Via

Vlc

theme 2, homophonic interruption e-

(A)

senza sordini f

senza sordini f

theme 1, stretto a-

Bass

stretto

Div. unis.

ff mf p

Vln 1 B Div. *f*
 Vln 2 Div. *f*
 Vla Div. *f*
 Vlc *f*
 Bass *f*
 theme 2. b- homophonic

Vln 1 *f*
 Vln 2 *f*
 Vla *f*
 Vlc *f*
 Bass *f*
 theme 1 a- *un.*
p

Vln 1 *f*
 Vln 2 *f*
 Vla *f*
 Vlc *f*
 Bass *f*
 theme 1 stretto, modulating transition
 Allegro Moderato
 Section II B
 Solo: *p*
 Second theme becomes
 fugue subject
 The key here is
 Eb min
 tritone away from
 home key

Vln 1 *f*
 Vln 2 *f*
 Vla *f*
 Vlc *f*
 Bass *f*
 Solo: *p*
un.

Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello

p *Bb min* *non DIV* *Div.* *f# MIN*

Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Bass

f min *un.* *Solo:* *tr (b)*

Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Bass

tutti *f* *f* *f*

Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Bass

b min *Div.* *non DIV* *Solo:* *a min* *tr*

Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Bass

(H) Solo: tutti

Ab maj

Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Bass

marcatiss. Div. Solo: tutti

(I) 1. 2. 1,3 2,4 1,3,5 2,4,6 1,3,5,7 2,4,6,8

B maj

Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Bass

1,3,5,7 unis. Div. unis. Div.

tutti

g# min

Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, Violoncello, Bass

(J) Solo: *allarg?* tutti

(K) Meno Mosso tutti *p sordini*

section of stretti

b min theme 1 homophonic state ment

[illegible]

Grandioso

stringendo *ritardando*

Div. *unis.* *mp*

Vln 1 *mp*

Vln 2 *mp*

Vla *mp*

Vlc *mp*

Bass *mp*

a min

⊙ Broader

Div. *ff*

Vln 1 *ff*

Vln 2 *ff*

Vla *ff*

Vlc *ff*

Bass *ff*

modulating transition as before

theme 2 as fugue subject

Allegro Moderato

mp

D

Eb Maj this time

before it was eb minor

Vln 1 *mp*

Vln 2 *mp*

Vla *mp*

Vln 1 *mp*

Vln 2 *mp*

Vla *mp*

Vlc *mp*

Bass *mp*

c min

Subjects combined in the
manner of a double fugue

(S) Tempo

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vlc

Bass

f 1.

2

theme 1 stretto

A maj.

a min

Solo I

Solo II

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vlc

Bass

mp

d min

C major

Solo I

Solo II

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vlc

Bass

theme 2 normal speed

theme 2 in augmentation

Solo 1

Vln 1

Vln 2

Via

Vic

Bass

mf

mf

mf

augmented

stretto 2nd subject

normal speed

G maj

This musical score is for the song "The Rose Tree" from the opera "The Mikado". It is a full orchestral score for a 1995 recording. The score is written for a large orchestra, including strings, woodwinds, brass, and a full vocal ensemble. The music is in 2/4 time and features a variety of musical styles, including traditional Japanese music and Western orchestral music. The score is written for a 1995 recording, and the music is in 2/4 time. The score is written for a large orchestra, including strings, woodwinds, brass, and a full vocal ensemble. The music is in 2/4 time and features a variety of musical styles, including traditional Japanese music and Western orchestral music. The score is written for a 1995 recording, and the music is in 2/4 time.

C maj
flowing

Solo I

Solo II

1st subject

Vln I

Vln 2

Via

Vic

Vic

tutti

augmentation

augmentation

Solo: stretto of 2nd subject

Vln I

Vln 2

Via

Vic

(W) very direct statement of 1 & 2

Vln I

Vln 2

Via

Vic

Bass

Div.

unis.

Div.

still C maj

unis.

marcato

Div.

Broader

Vln I

Vln 2

Via

Vic

Bass

unis.

Div.

modulates

climactic retransition

allarg.

unis. Broader yet

Vln 1

Vln 2

Via

Vic

Bass

f

C# min

[illegible]

(quasi allegro) *ritardando* *molto*

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vlc

Bass

making its way back to home key of a min

Adagio

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vlc

Bass

E

ff *a min*

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vlc

Bass

unis.

e min

Vln 1

Vln 2

Vla

Vlc

Bass

Div.

unis.

Div.

Div.

e min

Violin 1: *unis.*

Violin 2: *unis.*, *Div.*

Viola: *unis.*

Violoncello: *unis.*

Bass: *a min*

Violin 1: *ff*

Violin 2: *ff*

Viola: *ff*

Violoncello: *ff*

Bass: *ff*

f# min (relative minor to parallel major)

A maj

Violin 1: *massive*, *ff*

Violin 2: *ff*

Viola: *ff*

Violoncello: *ff*

Bass: *ff*

rit. al fine

see next page

Winston-Salem, NC April 1978-July 1979
This score 2012
(with revisions in May 2022)

Chapter III – *Hymnus ad Cosmos*, Op. 25 for String Orchestra (2007)

Stylistic Development in Later Works

The next three works by Ernesto Ferreri are later compositions, separated from the *Symphony* by nearly thirty years. It is evident that these pieces are significantly more mature. They reveal a certain creative ease born of experience, a deeper understanding of his own musical craft, and a kind of expressive freedom no longer constrained by academic expectations. Signs of artistic maturity also appear in the programmatic elements conveyed through the titles, which serve as direction, purpose, and “cause” for the work.

Description of the Work

“Here, suspended contemplation is considered and explored—on the condition that we truly know nothing about reality. Perhaps questions of faith and science have caused more confusion—this is how the cello solo begins, in a monologue/question full of pain. It is answered by an affirmative kindness toward the fact of our existence, and despite the many sorrows contained within it, this existence is beautiful. There must be more joy than sadness—otherwise, we would not be here. The universe is the mother/father of all life and love. This piece contains elements of ‘New Age’ and even cosmic music. Yet it remains deeply rooted in the traditions of Western art music.” — Ernesto Ferreri²⁸

Hymnus is a contemplative piece. Across four pages of the score, we encounter a work rich in emotional reflection, nuance, colour, and musical ideas. Hymn to the Cosmos — evokes a vision of a work immersed in ritual stillness, steeped in musical contemplation where silence becomes a value and sound — a space. The composition aligns with the aesthetic of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, where spiritual minimalism intertwines with a modern sonic fabric, creating a soundscape as mystical as it is refined.

²⁸ E. Ferreri, A Conversation before the concert and the recording with Camerata Gdynia in 2024

The piece is written for string orchestra, comprising four violin parts, two viola parts, two cello parts, and a single double bass part.

It deliberately resists traditional principles of tonal progression, instead centering around a chosen sonic area or cluster. Its harmonic color emerges from intervallic relationships that shape the acoustic space.

Open intervals — predominantly fifths and octaves — lend the sound a timeless, “cosmic” hue, free from conventional tonal tensions, while dissonances do not serve as forces demanding resolution. It is the crescendi and decrescendi that act as the primary shaping forces, more significant than harmonic changes. The form arises from the spacetime of the piece rather than from any modulation.

The piece is written for string orchestra, scored for four violin parts, two viola parts, two cello parts, and a single double bass part.

Thematic Material and Structural Analyses

The structure is based on four thematic modules built around a simple eighth-note motif, developed into motivic sequences within polyphonic textures.

The first module spans measures 9–33. The composer also uses fragments of this motivic structure in inversion within the contrapuntal material.

A new musical idea appears in measure 25. Sixteenth-note passages lead to a fermata and a crescendo to fortissimo in measures 22–23. Two bursts of sudden thirty-second notes add musical tension.

The second presentation of the theme (module) begins at measure 34 in piano dynamics and is brief, lasting only six measures. Despite the tempo marked by the composer as “*Very Slow and Sustained*,” and the indication “*Poco più mosso*,” this is sufficient time to rebuild tension leading to another 10-second fermata in measure 40.

The third module begins with another pianissimo in measure 44 (the theme appears in measure 48). This time, the motif is developed into an 8-measure phrase.

In measure 56, a new motivic theme appears in the first violins, while the original motif is used as accompaniment in a polyphonic texture in the second violins and violas.

A rhythmic stretto in measures 64–71 leads to a brief cello cadenza. The coda, as the final (fourth) thematic module, begins at measure 87. It is essentially a long diminuendo leading into complete silence. The coda is built on original motivic material.

hymnus ad cosmos

Intro

Very Slow and Sustained

A

Module I

Ernesto Ferreri

rit... molto Tempo

Violin 1

Violin 1

Violin 2

Violin 2

Viola

Viola

Cello

Cello

mp *f* *pp* *cresc.* *pp* *cresc.* *f* *pp* *cresc.*

basic motive 1

1/4

B

C

motive inverted and changed rhythmically

motive 2

Vln. 1

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vla.

Vlc.

Vlc.

B.

pp *f* *subito p* *f* *pp* *cresc.* *pp* *cresc.* *f* *pp* *cresc.*

motive inverted

subito p *f* *pp* *cresc.*

2

cut off violently
5 seconds silence

10 extra seconds

Module 2

[D] Poco piu mosso

Vln.1

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vln. 2

Vla.

Vla.

Vlc.

Vlc.

B.

ff

pp

fff

p

non vib.

[illegible]

42 *rit e cresc. molto* **G** Tempo **motive 3** *rit e cresc. molto*

Vln. 1 *f* *p* *dolciss.* *f*

Vln. 1 *f* *p* *dolciss.* *f*

Vln. 2 *f* *p* *cresc.* *f*

Vln. 2 *f* *p* *cresc.* *f*

Vla. *f* *p* *cresc.* *f*

Vla. *f* *p* *cresc.* *f*

Vlc. *f* *p* *cresc.* *f*

Vlc. *f* *p* *cresc.* *f*

B. *f* *p* *cresc.* *f*

motive 1 as Contrapunto

54 **H** Tempo **I** Mesto

Vln. 1 *pp* *p* *pp*

Vln. 1 *pp* *p* *pp*

Vln. 2 *pp* *p* *pp*

Vln. 2 *pp* *p* *pp*

Vla. *pp* *p* *pp*

Vla. *pp*

Vlc. *pp* *p* *pp* Solo *mp* *espr.* *mp*

Vlc. *pp* *pp* *f*

B. *p* *pp* *f*

68

J slower still Module 4

Violins 1 and 2, Viola, Solo Violoncello, and Bass. The score shows a complex arrangement with various dynamics (p, f, pp) and articulations (accents, slurs). The Solo Vlc. part includes the instruction "gli altri".

pp Use C-string extensions where available.
All others play the higher C.

81 **K** Very Slow and Sustained

Coda

Coda

al mf

al mp *al niente...*

al mp *al niente...*

Chapter IV – *Verlangen* Op. 28 for String Orchestra (2009)

desire, yearning, longing

*“By some miracle, before I even knew what it actually meant, the word *verlangen* came to mind as a possible title—probably from a German opera libretto I was reading while following the score. Sometimes the obsessive state in which physicality envelops us can be a prison—not one we always want to escape, but one we long to return to. Exploring suspended, unreciprocated lack is one of the signs that one is still alive—more than that, one might suspect it’s the foundation of philosophy, the thing that compels us to ask ‘why?’ I’m not a philosopher, more a composer. The piece must, above all, have a musical character. At this point, the penultimate chord was the most tempting for me to end with, because the clusters in this work represent the complexity of desire—but I had to resolve that dissonance, to escape the prison and the trance, the captivity of the physical.” — Ernesto Ferreri²⁹*

Description of the Work

Verlangen is a relatively short composition. The score spans seven pages, although the slow tempo of the piece results in a performance time of approximately 15 minutes. The work is written for string orchestra, consisting of three violin sections, two viola sections, and single sections of cellos and double basses.

The tempo is marked as *Andante comodo*, and the piece is essentially maintained throughout in this tempo and character.

The key is indicated as D major, though the composer frequently employs more atonal sound structures. The meter is set in 4/4 time. While this meter remains mostly

²⁹ E. Ferreri, A Conversation before the Concert and Recording with Camerata Gdynia [in:] 2024.

consistent, there are passages, measures, and phrases that explore other metric structures.

Verlangen has a “philosophical” character. The composer’s intentions regarding musical ideas, coloristic choices, and a kind of open-ended sonic architecture—keeping the listener in a state of suspension—are quickly discernible. The title itself already suggests the goal Ferreri aimed to achieve in this piece. It is therefore worth examining the structure of the work more closely to understand the methods the composer employed.

Motivic and Formal Structure

The sources of motivic inspiration included both Ernesto Ferreri’s earlier composition *String Trio, Op. 2* (1977) and Mahler’s *Symphony No. 7*.



Ernesto Ferreri: String Trio, op. 2 (1977)

The structure of the piece is based on a sketch of sonata-allegro form, though it does not constitute a full realization of it. In order to evoke the desired atmosphere, the composer employs so-called non-functional chords and cluster-based structures. Ernesto seeks to intertwine elements of pain, beauty, and longing. As he himself notes, the work also draws inspiration from the German Sturm und Drang movement.

The exposition consists of five motivic elements:

- Introduction — measures 1–11
- Adagio — measures 8–12

- Clusters — measures 20–22
- Motif 4 — measures 23–27
- Motif 5 — from measure 35 onward

The development section, beginning at measure 47, is initially built around the second motif. From measure 70, the motivic structure becomes more complex, with the reappearance of the fifth motif and additional cluster material.

The recapitulation begins at measure 95 with the fourth motif. Notably, measures 109–123 and 148–153 serve as emotional climaxes. The presence of two such peaks invites comparison with Wagnerian dramaturgy.

The coda, starting at measure 153, offers a swift emotional resolution, concluding the piece with a cluster that gradually clarifies into a D major chord.

The composer reprises elements from the introduction in the closing section. An intriguing detail is that the final chord was added only after extended reflection. Originally, the piece was intended to end in suspension, without a clear tonal resolution.



verlangen is not in strict sonata form, but does roughly follow the sonata idea of exposition/development/recapitulation

it has an introduction and coda

verlangen

Introduction (motive 1)

Andante comodo

Ernesto Ferreri

poco rit.

③ **Tempo**

//

//

tutti sempre pp

Vln 1 *pppp non vib. con sord.* *al niente* *pp*
 Vln 2 *pppp non vib. con sord.* *al niente* *pp*
 Vln 3 *pp con sord.* *con sord.* *pp*
 Vla *con sord.* *pp*
 Vlc *con sord.* *pp*
 Bass *pizz.* *poco sf*

Vln 1 *pp*
 Vln 2 *pp* *senza sord.*
 Vln 3 *pp* *cresc.* *senza sord.*
 Vla *pp* *cresc.*
 Vlc *pp* *cresc.*
 Bass *pp* *cresc.*

E

Vln 1 *senza sord.* *rf* *dim.* *pp* *f*
 Vln 2 *rf* *dim.* *pp* *f*
 Vln 3 *rf* *dim.* *pp* *f*
 Vla *rf* *dim.* *pp* *f*
 Vlc *rf* *dim.* *pp* *f*
 Bass *rf* *dim.* *pp* *f*

F **G** motive 5 *senza sord.*

tutti cresc. e ritardando. . . Hold 10 seconds *ppp* *allora cresc. molto* **H** motive 2 *Tempo*

Vln 1 *ff* *ppp* *fff* *f*
 Vln 2 *ff* *ppp* *fff* *f*
 Vln 3 *ff* *ppp* *fff* *f*
 Vla *ff* *ppp* *fff* *f*
 Vlc *ff* *ppp* *fff* *f*
 Bass *ff* *ppp* *fff* *f*

CLUSTER 3 *fff*

motive 5

(K) Tempo

Score for Motive 5, measures 1-8. The score is for a string ensemble (Violins 1, 2, 3, Violas, Violas, Violoncello, Bass) in 4/4 time. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The music begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The first violin part (Vln 1) features a melodic line with slurs and ties. The other instruments provide harmonic support with sustained notes and moving lines. The section ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

*tutti cresc.
molto*

motive 4

(L)

Score for Motive 4, measures 9-16. The score continues for the same string ensemble. The music begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and gradually increases to fortissimo (*ff*) by measure 14. The first violin part (Vln 1) has a melodic line with slurs and ties. The other instruments provide harmonic support with sustained notes and moving lines. The section ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

(M)

Score for Motive 4, measures 17-24. The score continues for the same string ensemble. The music begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and gradually increases to fortissimo (*ff*) by measure 21. The first violin part (Vln 1) has a melodic line with slurs and ties. The other instruments provide harmonic support with sustained notes and moving lines. The section ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

CODA
motive 1

ritardando **(P)** *Andante comodo* *come sopra*

//

rit. al fine *rit. molto* **Molto Largo** *3: clusters* *(each fermata very long ca. 20 seconds)*

the last chord was debated as to whether or not I should resolve the clusters after 3-4 months I decided "of course" they should find rest

Molto misterico as if the piece is going to fade out- but then the last chord appears like an afterglow

June 6- Nov. 24, 2009 Wilmington, NC

Chapter V — Octet, Op. 32 (performed in a chamber orchestra arrangement: clarinet, bassoon, horn, and strings) (2013)

“Some 10 years ago, I tuned in midway to a wonderful piece on the radio that was unfamiliar to me. At the end, the announcer said it was the Octet by Franz Schubert, and I immediately got hold of the score and began familiarizing myself. I had been working on a compositional project and, after hearing the Octet, realized this material could benefit from being cast in the same instrumental combination; this became the “Overture”.

The second piece, “Café Serenade”, pays homage to the Viennese love of cafés, where Schubert (and other famous Viennese composers) held court.” — Ernesto Ferreri³⁰

Description of the Work

The *Octet* is a two-part composition: *Overture* and *Café Serenade*. The piece was written in 2013, and a full performance lasts approximately 20 minutes. The *Octet* was performed by us using an expanded instrumental ensemble—that is, a chamber orchestra. The ensemble consists of a standard string quintet, along with clarinet, bassoon, and horn.

The *Overture* is marked Allegro, with shifting meters including 4/4, 5/4, 3/4, and other metric structures. Unlike previous works, the *Octet* is overall more tonal; in both movements, tonal structures are clearer and serve as important compositional elements. As in earlier pieces, the key (C major) is established at the beginning of the work.

Café Serenade is an Adagio that contrasts with the *Overture*. It features dance-like and folkloric elements. The clarinet plays a prominent role in this movement, lending it a somewhat “Mahlerian” character.

³⁰ E. Ferreri, A Conversation about the Octet, Op. 32, before the concert with the Connecticut Virtuosi Chamber Orchestra [in:] 2022.

Motivic and Formal Structure Analysis

The first movement, *Overture*, is once again a modified sonata-allegro form. The exposition begins from the very first measure of the piece. The fundamental structural element is an eighth note followed by two sixteenth notes. The first theme is divided into two segments. The motif is the essential component of the first theme, appearing again in the second segment (still part of the first theme) in measure 12.

The transition to the second theme of the exposition spans measures 23–31. The second theme, in G major, enters in the horn at measure 32. Here, there is a shift in tempo, character, key, and instrumentation. The second theme also appears in the bassoon and clarinet (measures 35 and 39), and finally in the lower strings at the end of the exposition (measures 39 and 43).

The development section begins at measure 48 with material from the first theme. Over the course of 139 measures (48–187), the composer uses motivic elements from both themes and the transition to create a rich musical structure. The recapitulation begins at measure 187, though the first theme is altered and shortened. The key of the recapitulation, C major, does not appear until measure 204 with the second theme. The first theme returns in measure 215, initiating the coda in C major.

The second movement of the *Octet* is titled *Café Serenade*. The inspiration for the piece was the atmosphere of a café (though I find it difficult to specify where), and musically it is based on the coloristic language of Mahler—once again a clear reference to Viennese late Romanticism. These similarities are evident from the very beginning, and the clarinet's role in the second statement of the theme is quite prominent. However, this is not a direct quotation of Mahler's music, but rather a point of departure from which the composer builds his own work.

The form of the second movement is essentially a simple ABA structure. In this way, the composer follows neoclassical traditions, using a song or aria form for the construction of the piece, which is common in sonata form. Section A begins at the very start, section B at measure 24, and the return of A occurs at measure 89.

Once again, the middle section (B) is notably extended, containing several presentations of thematic material—measures 49 and 65, for example—forming a kind of musical development.

The piece is structured in a “polyphonic-like” manner. While not strictly polyphonic in the full sense, the voices often present independent thematic material, frequently rhythmically distinct from the other parts. The clarinet plays a particularly important part, often functioning as a solo voice. The cello part also deserves mention for its significant role in many passages.

Modified sonata form
 Exposition m.1
 Development m.48
 Recapitulation m.187

octet op.32
 Ernesto Ferreri

I. Overtura

Allegro slower Allegro slower Allegro

1st theme group

idea 1

C Maj.

7

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I

V. II

Vla.

Vlc.

B.

arco

pizz.

12

1st theme group

idea 2

derived from idea 1

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I

V. II

Vla.

Vlc.

B.

pizz.

arco

18 idea 1

Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
V. I.
V. II.
Vla.
Vlc. *pizz.*
B.

transitional idea
up 4th down 2nd

23

Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
V. I. *arco*
Vla.
Vlc.
B.

30

rit. *molto* *Maestoso* *relax tempo* 2nd theme dominant modulates

Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
V. I. *rit.* *molto* *Maestoso* *relax tempo*
V. II.
Vla.
Vlc.
B.

G maj. D Maj.

36

Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
V.I
V.II
Vla.
Vic.
B.

D maj.

42

Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
V.I
V.II
Vla.
Vic.
B.

A maj.

48 Allegro DEVELOPMENT section

Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
V.I
Vla.
Vic.

Allegro
theme 1
mp
pizz.
arco
F# minor
g# min.
A maj.
A min.

53 transitional theme

Cl.

Bsn.

Hr.

V. I.

V. II.

Vla.

Vlc.

G maj

G min.

col legno

col legno

sfz

58

Cl.

Bsn.

Hr.

V. I.

V. II.

Vla.

Vlc.

Eb maj

Eb min.

Db maj.

pizz.

arco

col legno

arco

pizz.

arco

pizz.

arco

64 new theme derived from transitional idea

Cl.

Bsn.

Hr.

V. I.

V. II.

Vla.

Vlc.

c# min

A maj

A min

F maj

rit.

molto

Meno Mosso

up 4th down 2nd

arco

rit.

molto

Meno Mosso

69 up 4th down 2nd

rit. Allegro idea 2

Bb Maj

77

Bb min *sfpp*

83

transitional idea

pizz. arco

Db maj

88 *rit.* *molto* **Maestoso** 2nd theme

Cl. *rit.* *molto* **Maestoso**

Bsn.

Hr.

V. I. *rit.* *molto* **Maestoso**

V. II.

Vla.

Vlc.

B.

c# min B maj

93

Cl.

Bsn.

Hr.

V. I.

V. II.

Vla.

Vlc.

B.

F# maj f# min

99

Cl.

Bsn.

Hr.

V. I.

V. II.

Vla.

Vlc.

B.

c# min E maj min

106

[illegible]

113

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I.

V. II.

Via.

Vlc.

B.

p

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

From beginning to here Dec. 1979

121

rallentando...

accel...

Tempo

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

rallentando...

accel...

Tempo

V.I.

arco

V.II.

arco

Vla.

arco

Vlc.

arco

B.

here to end, 1987

Db maj

p

2nd theme continued

Double Canon

128

Cl.

Bsn.

Hr.

V.I.

V.II.

Vla.

Vcl.

B.

arco

in canon

inversion canon

135

Cl.

Bsn.

Hr.

V.I.

V.II.

Vla.

Vcl.

B.

non legato

f

non legato

f

140

Cl.

Bsn.

Hr.

V.I.

V.II.

Vla.

Vcl.

B.

164

Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
V.I
V.II
Via.
Vic.
B.

176

Cl.
Hn.
V.I
V.II
Via.
Vic.
B.

186

idea 2 Recapitulation

though this is not idea 1 in C maj it still is finding its way back the recap. It is a disguised recap that continues developing

Andante

accel...

Allegro idea 1

IV iv bvii (Bb min)

Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
V.I
V.II
Via.
Vic.
B.

to C maj (m.201) and the themes are presented in a new order

194

Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
V.I
V.II
Via
Vic.

pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.

rit.
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf

201 "new" theme (up 4th down 2nd) Broad

neo Db

VI VI

rallentando... Broader still. 2nd theme

Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
V.I
V.II
Via
Vic.
B.

Broad
f
f
f
f
f
f
f

pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.
pizz.

rallentando...
Broader still.
Broader still.
Broader still.
Broader still.
Broader still.
Broader still.
Broader still.

2013 revision of 1987 ending

C maj

f C maj

207

Cl.
Bsn.
Hn.
V.I
V.II
Via
Vic.
B.

allarg.
slow accel.
allarg.
slow accel.
allarg.
slow accel.
allarg.
slow accel.

p
p
p
p
p
p
p
p

sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf
sf

II. café serenade

Adagio (♩ = ca. 44)

Clarinet in Bb

Bassoon

Horn in F

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Bass

pp

8 F maj

Cl. *ritardando* *mp* *p* Tempo

Bsn. *mp* *p* Tempo

V. I. *pizz.* *ritardando* *bright* *p* *arco* *p* Tempo

V. II. *p* *p* Tempo

Va. *rf* *mp* *p* Tempo

Vc. *arco* *mp* *p* *pizz.* *arco* Tempo

B. *mp* *p* Tempo

19 *rallentando*

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I.

V. II.

Va.

Vc.

B.

mp *pp* *pizz.*

B section

Bsn.

Hn.

Piu Mosso ($\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 76$)
5 sec. *stark, impassioned*

V. I.

V. II.

Va.

Vc.

B.

f *simile* *pizz.*

A min

29

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I.

V. II.

Va.

Vc.

B.

f *non legato*

34

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I.

V. II.

Va.

Vc.

B.

arco

pizz.

non legato

arco

non legato

pizz.

non legato

38

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I.

V. II.

Va.

Vc.

B.

46 B section part 2 *dolce, amabile*

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I.

V. II.

Va.

Vc.

B.

mp

mf

mp

pizz.

mp

53 F maj

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I.

V. II.

Va.

Vc.

B.

58 *somewhat abrupt*

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I.

V. II.

Va.

Vc.

B.

p

sf

65

variation on 1st theme... nonetheless still B section due to key and motion into B section theme (J = ca. 36)

72

CRESC. DOCO & DOCO (to hmg73)

75

in Tempo *come sopra*

82

Cl.

Bsn.

V. I.

V. II.

Va.

Vc.

B.

non-SNAP

mf

mp

p

pp

pizz.

89 return of A section
Tempo Primo (♩ = ca. 44)

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I.

V. II.

Va.

Vc.

B.

Tempo Primo (♩ = ca. 44)

p

mp

pp

ritardando

arco

pizz.

97 Tempo

Cl.

Bsn.

V. I.

V. II.

Va.

Vc.

B.

Tempo

arco

pp

pizz.

107 *rall. . . .* Tempo

Cl. *pp*

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I *pp*

V. II

Va.

Vc. *arco*

B.

108 *from 1st mvt (m.227)* *tr. bb* *rf*

Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I *rf*

V. II

Va.

Vc. *arco* *rf*

B. *arco* *rf*

112 *ritardando*

Cl. *mf*

Bsn.

Hn.

V. I *pp*

V. II

Va.

Vc. *plizz.*

B. *pp*

"hanging" note

Performance Considerations in the Works of Ernesto Ferreri

Ernesto Ferreri's compositions require thoughtful preparation of the performance practice. While they do not contain many metrically complex structures, the proportions between sections demand careful planning. The fluid transitions between polyphonic and symphonic elements (as the composer describes them) require the ensemble to be aware of these shifts and to adjust sonority, articulation, and other expressive parameters accordingly.

The way Ferreri uses fermatas—on the final note of a measure (as in the *Octet*)—serves as a connective rather than a concluding gesture. This demands clarity of gesture from the conductor. Performers must also be sensitive to stylistic differences between sections, particularly changes in sonority and harmony. The proportions between sections likewise call for deliberate consideration. Despite the creative and structural freedom in Ferreri's music, it seems important that the *Symphony* and *Overture* (the first movement of the *Octet*) maintain a reference to sonata-allegro form.

The composer frequently employs glissandi. For example, in the *Symphony*, near the end in the coda (from measure 229), he uses glissandi to “blur” the primary musical theme. This shift in color, combined with new motivic material in the first violins, continues until the end of the *Symphony*, concluding the work in an “open” manner.

In *Hymnus* and *Verlangen*, the most critical issues are tempo sensitivity and the proportions between segments. It is essential that these works are not performed too slowly, as this can obscure the melodic lines and thus the entire structure. On the other hand, too fast a tempo can render them overly simplistic or trivial.

Building tension—an essential interpretive goal—requires a sense of proportion, so as not to reach excessive forte too early in a section or the entire piece. In these scores, the composer has created a sonic world that reflects his experience or emotional perception, conveying ideas about human nature as suggested by the titles.

A frequent challenge is the conductor's expressive clarity in slow tempos. It is easy to become swept up in the music and lose the rhythmic discipline and clarity of articulation that performers need.

In preparing the *Octet*, attention should be paid in both movements to structural elements in order to make the most of thematic and tonal contrasts. A distinctive feature—and a particular challenge—is the use of fermatas on the first beat of a measure, such as in measure 32 of the *Overture*. This requires the conductor to carefully consider and clearly communicate his or her intentions to the musicians.

The dynamic and phrasing development in the extended development section also demands a conscious shaping of musical tension. It is easy to reach the climax too quickly.

In the *Serenade*, patience is needed for the details within the polyphonic-like sections. Despite the seemingly slow tempo of the piece, irregular triplets—triplets, quintuplets, and sixteenth-note groupings—require both temporal and musical space. One might say that a kind of “orchestral rubato” is required here.

Summary

These are essentially all the works written for chamber orchestra, though the composer also has several noteworthy string quartets in his catalog. Particularly deserving of attention is *Divertimenti*, Op. 4, for flute, oboe, clarinet, violin, and viola, along with several other compositions for smaller, though irregular, chamber ensembles.

The works described above form a compelling group within Ernesto Ferreri's oeuvre. They reflect his genuine fascination with Viennese music and, over the span of thirty years, reveal his artistic development and the freedom with which he now employs his own unique musical language—one that blends formally neoclassical structures, harmonically neo-Romantic elements, and a rich palette of musical colors cultivated through years of creative work. Ferreri's music possesses a clarity of sonority.

In the context of scores that are not always easy to interpret, this clarity is a testament to his artistic maturity and stylistic coherence. He does not yield to external influences and creates music that remains true to his own aesthetic. It reflects personal qualities—warmth and optimism—that characterize the artist himself.

I hope that my work will encourage others to explore more deeply the life and music of Ernesto Ferreri.

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