

Anestis Logothetis: *Dynapolis* (1963)

Note contributed by Jellal Koay (BMus1, Composition) and Ng Xin Ci (BMus3, Composition)

Anestis Logothetis (1921-1994) was a Greek composer who specialized in exploring graphic notation in music. Although he initially studied engineering at the Vienna Polytechnic Institute, he turned to study composition at the Vienna Academy of Music and graduated with distinction in 1951. He participated in the Darmstadt Summer Course and was influenced by composers like Earle Brown and John Cage. In the late 1950s, he started experimenting with electronic music in composer Gottfried Michael Koenig's studio, as well as developing his approach to graphic notation.

*Dynapolis* is a graphically notated piece written for an undetermined number of instruments.

The notation focuses on the realization of “sound-characters” through the combination of “action signals” – gestures or sounds to be performed, “association signs” or the dynamic and timbral fluctuations, as well as pitch symbols. These components are drawn across a clockwise dimension corresponding to time, surrounding the center of the page, which is to be interpreted with various densities of instrumentation. The musicians may stray away from the “action signals” in the center of the page at times to realize the structural components prescribed to the time axis, which causes the change of instrumental density.

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György Kurtág: **Wind Quintet, Op. 2** (2003)

Note contributed by Rachel Aow (BMus2,  
Composition)

György Kurtág, born in Lugoj, Romania, on 19 February 1926, was a composer and pianist. Prior to moving to Budapest in 1946 and subsequently becoming a Hungarian citizen two years later, he studied piano from Magda Kardos and composition with Max Eisikovits. After which he enrolled in the Franz Liszt Academy of Music, where he met his wife, Márta Kinsker and composer György Ligeti, who would become his close friend.

There, he continued his composition studies, with Sándor Veress and Ferenc Farkas, took piano lessons from Pál Kadosa as well as chamber music lessons from Leó Weiner. He graduated in piano and chamber music in 1951 before earning his degree in composition four years later. After the Hungarian uprising in 1956, he moved to Paris from 1957 to 1958 where he studied with Max Deutsch, Olivier Messiaen, and Darius Milhaud. He received

therapy from art psychologist Marianne Stein, who helped revive his artistic development, and wrote a string quartet upon his return to Budapest in 1959, naming it his 'opus 1' to indicate a fresh start from his previous works, dedicating it to Stein.

Kurtág worked at the Bartók Music School and the National Philharmonia in Budapest from 1958-1963 and 1960-1968, respectively. He was then appointed professor of piano and chamber music at the Franz Liszt Academy, his alma mater, in 1967 and taught there until 1993.

Since the 1990s, Kurtág has had many opportunities outside of Hungary, such as being the composer in residence at the Berlin Philharmonic (1993-1995) and the Vienna Konzerthaus Society (1995). He was also invited to several events including Ensemble

InterContemporain, Cité de la Musique and Festival d'Automne in Paris (1999-2001).

Wind Quintet, op. 2 represents the second stage of Kurtág's fresh start, a crucial turning point for him with regards to his compositional style, which led to his String Quartet, op. 1. It consists of 8 short, uninterrupted movements, each of which contains very contrasting material differentiated by articulations, intervals, and rhythms. For instance, the first movement works on the interval of a 7th with a generally low rhythmic density. The expressions evoked in this piece are novel and complex, requiring high technical knowledge and skills on the part of the performer to successfully convey these expressions and emotions to the audience.

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Wolfgang Rihm: *Epilog* (2012-13)

Note contributed by Chua Zi Tao (BMus3,  
Composition)

Wolfgang Rihm is considered one of the most influential composers of the 21st century. He is a prolific composer, with a current output of around 400 works. On top of that, he has published numerous volumes of articles and interviews and is currently a professor of composition at Karlsruhe Music Academy. Apart from his wealth of knowledge in composition, Rihm also actively pursues inspirations from other disciplines, such as literature, painting, and philosophy. Born in 1952, in Karlsruhe, Germany, a city near the French and Swiss border, Rihm was already composing at the young age of 11. While in secondary school, Rihm was concurrently studying composition at Karlsruhe Music Academy under Eugen Werner Velte. From

there, he progressed through his studies and came under the tutelage of other teachers such as Karlheinz Stockhausen and Klaus Huber. At 25, his chamber opera *Jakob Lenz* proved to be a huge success, winning the Beethoven Prize of the city of Bonn in 1980. This opera also became one of the most often programmed contemporary music theatre works in Germany.

Rihm's music often combines contemporary compositional techniques with a focus on emotion, similar to Romantic composers. This neo-romanticism is a response to the avant-garde techniques of Boulez and Stockhausen. While this quality is more apparent in his early works, it still lingers, even after influences from contemporaries such as Luigi Nono and Helmut Lachenmann on his style.

*Epilog* for string quintet was written in 2013 for Hans-Peter Jahn, who in turn paid tribute to Rihm: “He helped to further music history.” The piece takes inspiration from Schubert’s late works. Despite the association with romanticism, *Epilog* is written in a contemporary style, as demonstrated by the advanced playing techniques.

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Gerard Grisey: *Périodes* (1974)

Note contributed by Alicia Diva Chancra  
(BMus2, Composition)

Gérard Grisey (1946-1998) was a French composer known for developing music that now falls into the category termed “spectral music”.

He was born in Belfort, France and embarked on his journey as a composer in his youth,



studying at the Staatlich Hochschule für Musik Trossingen in Germany (1963-1965) and then at the Paris Conservatory (1965-1972). Grisey won several prizes for composition under the tutelage of Olivier Messiaen during his time at the Paris Conservatory. Simultaneously, Grisey was very involved in composition outside of the conservatory, constantly refining his scientific approach to sound and the way he thought about harmony in music.

He worked with Henri Dutilleux at École normale de musique (1968), studied electroacoustics with Jean-Étienne Marie (1969), studied composition with Karlheinz Stockhausen, Iannis Xenakis and György Ligeti at the Darmstädter Ferienkurse (1972) as well as acoustics with Émile Leipp at the Paris VI University in 1974. In addition, Grisey took up other studies at the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, Italy (1969).

In 1973, Grisey's involvement in studying composition, acoustics and electroacoustics led him to form the Ensemble l'Itinéraire with Tristan Murail, Michaël Lévinas, Hugues Dufourt and Roger Tessier in 1973. It was an ensemble that focused on the performance of contemporary works, specifically "spectral" works. By then, Gérard Grisey was well-recognised for composing "spectral music".

In 1980, Grisey pursued computer music as a trainee at the IRCAM (Institut de recherche et coordination acoustique/musique), and simultaneously attended the D.A.A.D. (Berliner Künstlerprogramm des DAAD) Artists-in-Berlin residential program as a guest. He furthered his compositional journey by working as a professor of theory and composition at the University of California in Berkeley (1982-1986). Subsequently, he

returned to Europe and taught orchestration and composition at the Paris Conservatory (1987-1998), and he held numerous composition seminars in Europe, America, Spain, UK, etc. before his death in 1998.

Written for flute, clarinet, trombone, and string quartet, *Périodes* (1974) uses the harmonic spectrum of a low D played by the viola to define the temporal structure of the piece. Grisey orchestrates this spectrum for large instrumental ensemble, each instrument playing an overtone of the harmonic spectrum. Grisey named this technique “instrumental synthesis”.

The piece consists of 3 kinds of music material: dynamic with increasing tension, dynamic with progressive relaxation, and a period where the music is static. These 3 types of material were meant to parallel the characteristics of human respiration, and the work cycles through them

throughout the piece, not at a regular pace but rather with fluctuations, representing the natural behavior of human respiration.

Grisey develops the harmonic material by distancing the overtones away from their original frequencies, creating complexes of sounds more distant from the initial spectrum. He also experiments with reversing this, transforming a differentiated harmonic complex to an extremely simple coloration of the fundamental. In terms of rhythm, the ensemble echoes the one instrument playing the fundamental in smaller irregular rhythms, imitating human respiration as well as the human heartbeat.

*Périodes* was the first work that Grisey created which rewired his harmonic thinking, leading him to create a collection of works titled *Les Espaces Acoustiques* (1974-1985), in which he

focused on developing “spectral music” as a compositional style.