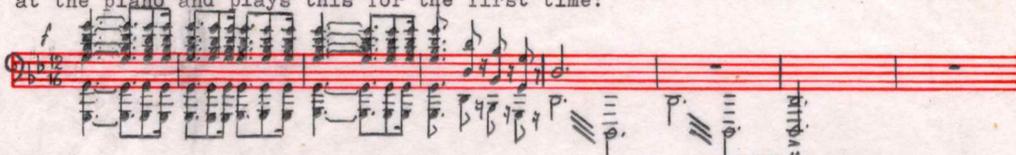


WHAT CAUSES A GIVEN PERSON AT A GIVEN TIME AND PLACE TO WRITE A PIECE LIKE THIS

Three days after his sixteenth birthday, on the 30th December 1961, he sits down at the piano and plays this for the first time:



This and what follows pleases him, and he decides to develop it into a sonata. At this time, he constantly gets to know and like music of ever-increasing harmonic complexity, and wants to reproduce it through composition, which he does simply by incorporating these harmonic 'discoveries' into the sonata as work on it goes along: stylistic discrepancies however keep getting so large, that he has to revise the piece a number of times. By mid-1964, by which time he has decided to transpose it to the 'more complex' key of F sharp, he reaches such a high degree of chromaticism, that he is faced with a dilemma: he would either have to finish the piece as it is, or give it up altogether and let himself move on to a more atonal system. Much as he would like to finish the piece, he opts for the latter, believing he would otherwise be writing in a style 'no longer his own'. Any possibility of reversing this decision is ruled out later on, in 1966, when he takes to using twelve-tone rows in his compositions: he develops a new feeling of writing music 'of our time', by which he means music containing the most original information available at the time and place, and which is - according to some unwritten law - to be commended. Total serialisation leads to composition with chance numbers in 1970. At about this time, he begins to be of the opinion that every kind of music he has written as well as his evaluation of it is the result of the chance influences he has been exposed to (thus being more a symptom than a product), and that there could thus be no question of any intrinsic everlasting values. Parallel to this development, he writes music needing fewer and fewer compositional decisions, thus allowing chance and natural laws a freer hand, and relegating the composer's traditional profusion of value-judgements to a position of relatively less importance. The idea of music being able to tell the listener more about himself than the composer appeals to him. The result: regarding all the music we experience today as music of our time, and accepting as such even classical traditions such as some melodically and rhythmically complex ones still being used for improvisation and composition in many places, he would not want to deliberately limit his methods in general to any pre-fixed principle: since originality is only a relative phenomenon, he would like to think of its relevance or importance from variable perspectives. After all, looked at from one side, which fantasy isn't under the influence of tradition almost (symbolically speaking) a sonata? he asks. On the 18th October 1973 work is resumed on the old piece (along not quite the same lines as originally) and finished on the 5th December; all the thematic material - with one notable exception - dates practically unchanged from 1961-64. The exception - Stockhausen's 'Mantra' - is used partly because of a chronic weakness for its strong harmonic implications. The score is completed the night before this is written, in other words, last night. Such is the course of events.

I would like to dedicate this piece to the people who were responsible for my musical environment in 1961 (of which the general style of the piece may be said to be fairly representative), which - without its effective exclusion of other musical directions - would otherwise not have led to my concentrating with such intensity on traditional musical values in my compositional work.

Clarence Barlow
28th December 1973