

The Making of *Tischgeistwalzer*

This piece for two pianos was composed on March 7th-8th 2009 for a concert planned for the celebration of Walter Zimmermann's 60th birthday on April 15th 2009.

The first step was to convert an excerpt of a photograph of the composer (Fig.1) into an "error-diffused" black and white pixelated image (Fig.2), which was then used to generate – by means of my computer program FOTOSCOR (1998) – a musical score encoded in Encapsulated Postscript of which the excerpt shown here below (Fig.3) corresponds to the left central to central portions of the photograph: every pixel in the photograph is seen as an equivalently positioned note-head in the score.



Fig.1



Fig.2

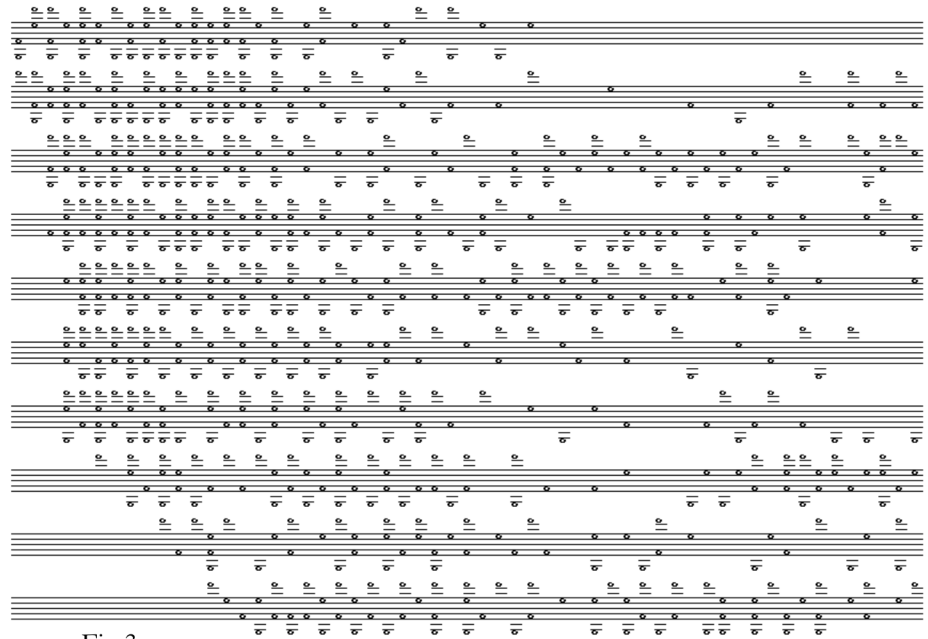


Fig.3

I have usually used this technique to generate "scores" as gifts to friends to be mounted on their walls. However – putting a treble clef at the left end of each staff – the "music" with its repeated G F E D patterns has always been extremely monotonous. This time the score was intended for performance, so I undertook further steps as outlined below.

After importing the MIDI file that FOTOSCOR also generates into a conventional notation program, every group of four staves was combined into a continuing two-piano score with alternating treble, bass, treble and bass clefs, respectively. I then moved the four notes in each staff to fit the four spaces of the staff. The staves had to be moved closer to maintain the uniformity of the vertical note-head grid.

I next reduced the contents of each staff to a monody, trying as much as possible to avoid repetitions.

Applying the key-signature of E-flat major to piano #1 converted its eight notes into A-flat, C, E-flat and G in the bass and F, A-flat, C and E-flat in the treble. Similarly applying the key-signature of A major to piano #2 converted its eight notes into A, C-sharp, E and G-sharp in the bass and F-sharp, A, C-sharp and E in the treble, making for some dissonance between the pianos.

Importing the notes as eighth-notes into a succession of 5/2 measures in the notation program, 5 bars or 25 half-note beats resulted in every line. Each of these 25 beats was accorded a different contraposition of the five dynamic levels pp, p, mf, f and ff in the two pianos. Though 25 such contrapositions are possible, the constellation at beat 21 – if the bar starting there is not empty – was maintained to the end of the line, each line manifesting a different permutation of up to 21 dynamic contrapositions.

To complete the process, accents were inserted at those notes which were in four-note chords before the above-mentioned process of monodization. The score was then printed on a strongly brightened rendition of the photographic source, as seen on the next page.

"Tischgeistwalzer", German for "table spirit waltz", is an anagram of "Walter ist sechzig", German for "Walter is sixty".

Tischgeistwalzer

für zwei Klaviere

Walter Zimmermann gewidmet

Klarenz Barlow, März 2009

The image displays a musical score for two pianos, labeled 'Klavier 1' and 'Klavier 2'. The score is written in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with a tempo marking of quarter note = 175 (♩=175). The score is divided into systems, with measures 6, 11, 16, 21, 26, and 31 marked by double bar lines. The notation includes various dynamic markings such as *p* (piano), *pp* (pianissimo), *f* (forte), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *ff* (fortissimo). The piece concludes with a fermata over the final notes of both hands.