

Thesis of a Dissertation

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Metric Modulations in Elliott Carter's
Eight Pieces for Four Timpani

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I. The Antecedents of the Research

Elliott Carter's *Eight Pieces for Four Timpani* has been an unavoidable piece of the solo percussion repertoire for decades. During the preparation of my dissertation, it was a great help that the composer is also the author of written documents: during the research I found an entire list of studies and articles written by him.

II. Sources

I have considered those publications that come directly from Carter's pen as my primary sources. Among the most important pieces of these sources, I mention the final score of the work chosen as the subject of my dissertation published in 1968, the two movements published in 1960, and Carter's manuscript and notes. The most important piece of the composer's written work in terms of my research was the publication titled *Collected essays and lectures*, which contains studies and lectures written by Carter.

The second layer of sources meant interviews and articles with the composer. Among the secondary sources, I would like to highlight Patrick Wilson's interview with Carter, which reveals a lot of important details about the circumstances of the creation of the pieces.

The third layer of sources consisted of all the documents written by others about Carter or his work. Among the tertiary sources, I would like to highlight the memoir of Jan Williams, in which the author recalls the process of revising the items together with Carter.

III. Method

When writing my dissertation, I set myself a double goal: on the one hand, I wanted to outline a complex musical historical overview, during which I mapped the history of the development of metric modulation as a phenomenon and tried to place Carter and his masterpiece within this history, and on the other hand, based on the documents written by the composer and his early pieces I also wanted to show how, in a narrower sense, within Carter's own art the thought of metrical modulation gained space.

IV. Results

The novelty of the approach of my dissertation lies in the fact that I do not examine metric modulation as a phenomenon exclusively in relation to the piece in focus or within Carter's career, but on the contrary, I try to place Carter and his masterpiece in the history of the development of metric modulation. The vision was inspired by the doctoral dissertation of István Szabó, who placed the composer and the work in question in the history of the development of the timpani as an instrument. In this way, our dissertations are actually nice additions to each other, and together they enrich the Hungarian language literature on Carter's solo timpani pieces, which has so far been rather limited.

In my dissertation, I also refer to a number of sources that previously could not be processed in Hungarian, as they were published after the completion of István Szabó's dissertation. For example, Felix Meyer and Anne C. Shreffler's book titled *Elliott Carter - A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents* published in 2008, Morris Lang's study from 2010 in the study volume *Percussion Masterclass on Works by Carter, Milhaud and Stravinsky*, two years later also by Morris Lang an article titled *Elliott Carter's Eight Pieces for Timpani - A Comparison of the Original Manuscript and the Published Version*, Matthew Dean

Altmire's dissertation from 2013 titled *Time Travel: Musical Metrics in Elliott Carter's Eight Pieces for Four Timpani*, Tegan LeBrun's thesis from 2014 titled *Elliott Carter and his Use of Metric and Temporal Modulation in his Eight Pieces for Four Timpani: An Examination into the Application of Click Tracks during the Preparation and Performance of these Works*, and Jillian Damitra Baxter's dissertation from 2015 titled *The Use of Limited Material to Achieve Expressive Quality in Elliott Carter's Eight Pieces for Four Timpani: A Pivotal Work in Establishing the Timpani as Solo Instruments*.

V. Documentation of Activities Relevant to the Topic of the Dissertation

I have been playing some of the movements of the work that is the focus of my dissertation for more than ten years, and I have had the pleasure of performing the following movements at concerts or competitions in recent years.

14th June, 2011 – Győr, János Richter Secondary School of Music – Improvisation

2nd April, 2012 – Debrecen, 35th Brass and Percussion Meeting and Competition - Canaries

27th March, 2015 – Győr, University Music Hall – March

25th and 28th June, 2019 – Győr, Ferenc Liszt Music School – Improvisation, Moto perpetuo, Canaries

