

VINCENT PERSICHETTI'S PARABLE FOR SOLO DOUBLE BASS:  
ITS PLACE IN HIS CATALOG OF PARABLES  
AND COMPLETE WORKS

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## ABSTRACT

Vincent Persichetti composed twenty-five pieces that he labeled parables. Most of these are for solo instruments. This paper will examine how the parable series fits into his oeuvre of work. Also considered will be what Persichetti meant by a parable in music and how that applies to his music. This paper will focus on the *Parable for Solo Double Bass* but will also compare it to his solo parables for viola, bassoon, trombone, tuba, French horn, and trumpet.

A theoretical consideration will be made on how the bass parable was composed. This includes several paradigms and examples of how they apply to the bass parable. A general consideration of composition is made here as well as how it could apply to autogenesis. Persichetti's ideas of composition include descriptions of his own music as either graceful or gritty. He also said that he composed by the method of autogenesis and this paper considers what he meant by this.

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## PARABLE AND PERSICHETTI'S CONCEPT OF A MUSICAL PARABLE

Vincent Persichetti is a well known American composer who wrote music for nearly every medium. His catalog includes over 120 published works, including, two unique series of works, 15 Serenades and 25 Parables.<sup>1</sup> This paper will focus on his Parable series. That set of 25 compositions was composed from 1965 – 1986.

Persichetti's use of diverse strands of musical thought makes characterizing his body of work difficult. His consistent use of elements in compositional style throughout his career link the succession of compositions in his catalog in ways that resist the identification of stylistic periods.

The stylistic consistency of Persichetti's compositions throughout his career has been commented on by critics; however, though some distinctions between his work in general and the compositions in his parable series have been noted, Persichetti's well documented resistance to the ebb and flow of musical fashion and his resistance to being classified as a certain type of composer, along with his reluctance to speak extensively about his music, have made identification of those stylistic differences problematic. This paper however, will show that certain reliable distinctions between those compositions he described as parables and the remainder of his work can be made and are useful in understanding what sets the parable series apart.

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<sup>1</sup> Theodore Presser Company, "Vincent Persichetti," [www.presser.com/Composers/info.cfm?Name=VINCENTPERSICHETTI](http://www.presser.com/Composers/info.cfm?Name=VINCENTPERSICHETTI) (accessed July 17, 2010).

Persichetti defined parable several times during his life. The *New Grove Dictionary of Music* notes that for his compositions parable means non-programmatic musical essays about a single germinal idea.<sup>2</sup> In 1986 Persichetti did an interview with Bruce Duffie,<sup>3</sup> where he discusses his Opera, Parable XX and says, "Its subtitle is Parable XX because my Parables are music where I'm avoiding a truth in order to make a point. Many of my Parables are music about other things I have written, or personal things that I have become involved with."<sup>4</sup> In response to a 1985 letter from Mark Nelson Persichetti writes back that, "Parables are musical essays that convey a meaning indirectly by the use of comparisons or analogies."<sup>5</sup>

In many cases Persichetti's parables are based on one of his earlier works. In the course of writing his DMA document on the brass parables, Mark Nelson learned from the composer which earlier pieces inspired each of those works.<sup>6</sup> However, Persichetti has not revealed the source for his other 21 parables except the opera, which is pulled from his *Little Piano Book*.<sup>7</sup> His statement in the Duffie interview that a parable could be based on "personal things that I have become involved with" leads us to consider that his ideas for the parables could have a variety of sources, which could be extra-musical as well as musical.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Sadie Stanley. Ed., *New Grove Dictionary of Music*, vol 14, *Persichetti Vincent*, by Sam Di Bonaventura (London: Macmillan Pub Ltd, 1980), 460.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Duffie has dozens of published interviews from his years as a producer and announcer at WNIB Chicago. He was also a music lecturer at Northwestern University.

<sup>4</sup> Vincent Persichetti, interview by Bruce Duffie, 15 November 1986. Transcript. Oral History American Music Archive of Yale University, New Haven CT

<sup>5</sup> Mark Allan Nelson, *The Brass Parables of Vincent Persichetti: (DMA paper, Arizona State University, 1985)*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Bonaventura, 460.

<sup>8</sup> Vincent Persichetti, interview by Bruce Duffie, 15 November 1986.

It is worth noting that none of the musical dictionaries have an entry for parable. The Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics as well as the New Catholic Encyclopedia both have definitions. Both of these definitions concentrate on the Bible and the gospels. The reduced definition seems to be what Persichetti meant by parable, particularly in his interview with Duffie about Parable XX, the opera based on *Chicken Little*.

A parable is a developed simile in which the story, while fictitious, is true to life. It is a type of analogy or metaphor like a fable, but differs from fables in that they use animals, plants, inanimate objects, and forces of nature as characters more often than people. The word "parable" comes from the Greek παραβολή (*parabolē*), whose root connotation involves placing things side by side for the sake of comparison.<sup>9</sup>

A parable is a short tale that illustrates universal truth, one of the simplest of narratives. It sketches a setting, describes an action, and shows the results. It often involves a character facing a moral dilemma, or making a questionable decision and then suffering the consequences. As with a fable, a parable generally relates a single, simple, consistent action, without extraneous detail or distracting circumstances. Unlike the situation with a simile, a parable's parallel meaning is unspoken and implicit, though not ordinarily secret.<sup>10</sup>

The stories of Buddha that relate morals of behavior to Buddha's previous existence as various animals are among the oldest examples of parable style stories,

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<sup>9</sup> Staff at Catholic University of America. Ed., New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol 10, *Parable*, by R. E. Brown (Washington D. C.: Catholic University of America, 1967), 984.

<sup>10</sup> James Hastings. Ed., Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, vol 9, *Parable*, by J. A. MacCulloch (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons, 1961), 631.

though they are not true parables. However, the concept of a parable seems to have developed independently in several areas including China and Europe.

In the preface to his translation of *Aesop's Fables*, George Fyler Townsend defined "parable" as "the designed use of language purposely intended to convey a hidden and secret meaning other than that contained in the words themselves, and which may or may not bear a special reference to the hearer or reader."<sup>11</sup>

As noted above parables have been in use well before the time of Christ. For example, Plato and Socrates used parables in the golden age of Greece. One example by Socrates is his comparison of philosophers to pilots of ships. The people are the crew and are either mutineers who want to steer or those who understand and let the pilot guide the ship, here the ship of state. Socrates goes on to make several other comparisons with this same parable.<sup>12</sup>

Parables are still relevant and used today from the short stories of *Mother Goose* and *Aesop's Fables* to books on business such as *Who Moved my Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson, M. D. One of the main differences in use is whether the author explains his parable, like Socrates' example above, or does not, like Christ and the parable of the prodigal son. In *Who Moved my Cheese?* there is an optional part at the end that gives multiple possible interpretations of the story and thus leaves an open-ended parable and gives explanations or interpretations at the same time.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 631.

<sup>12</sup> Henry L Drake. *The People's Plato*. New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1958, 264.

Vincent Persichetti's parables are not so obvious. The response Persichetti made to Mark Nelson's letter in which he asked Persichetti to define what he meant by a parable for the four brass parables is probably the most carefully considered response he made to this question. Persichetti responded in his letter. "Parables are musical essays that convey a meaning indirectly by the use of comparisons or analogies."<sup>13</sup>

Persichetti did not include in the score the source of each parable. For example the *Parable for Solo Tuba* is based on excerpts from Persichetti's *The Creation*. Yet while it may not be possible to know sources for all the parables, the sources for the brass parables are known. Persichetti gave this information to Nelson in a letter. In his interview with Duffie about his opera *Parable XX*, Persichetti reported that the musical parable source was his *Little Piano Book*.<sup>14</sup> Persichetti follows the open example style of telling a parable without explaining what he expects listeners to learn, not even in an appendix such as that supplied by Spencer Johnson, author of *Who Moved My Cheese?*.

Nelson's correspondence with Persichetti indicates that the *Parable for Solo Tuba* is based on Persichetti's *The Creation*. The *Parable for Solo Trombone* is from his *Serenade No. 6*. The *Parable for Solo Trumpet* is "...based upon lingering material from the Brass Quintet Parable." Material for The *Parable for Solo French Horn* comes from his *Seventh Symphony*. We only know these examples because Persichetti was willing to explain when asked. Normally Persichetti was reluctant or evasive when asked to speak about or explain his own music.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Nelson, "The Brass Parables of Vincent Persichetti," 17.

<sup>14</sup> Vincent Persichetti, interview by Bruce Duffie, 15 November 1986.

<sup>15</sup> Nelson, "The Brass Parables of Vincent Persichetti," 16.

Nelson notes, “The relationship of the material between the *Serenade* and the *Trombone Parable* is not clearly evident. Several passages appear to be related in general shape such as the first four measures of the *Song* movement in the *Serenade* and measures 8-10 of the trombone parable.” According to Nelson, the general design for the parable for trombone is the same as that of the *Serenade*. This observation is indicated in his statement, “vague similarities between these compositions imply that the composer was not interested in using specific passages of the *Serenade* in the *Trombone Parable*.” The other brass parables that Mark Nelson discussed do have very close quotes from other Persichetti compositions. The Tuba parable is notable for the amount of material borrowed from *The Creation*. The *Parable for Solo French Horn* is significant for including an exact duplicate of a theme: the opening horn section soli of Persichetti’s *Seventh Symphony*.<sup>16</sup>

As noted above, some of the brass parables have extensive and direct quotes from their “parent” works, particularly the horn and tuba parables. Yet the trombone parable has no direct quote from its source, *Serenade No. 6*. Since design features connecting the two works are broad in outline, the trombone parable could derive from some of Persichetti’s other work as well. This weak connection leads to the idea that musical source material is not the only defining characteristic, or perhaps even the most critical one for the parable series. This ambiguity is certainly increased by Persichetti’s reluctance to identify specific sources for his parables.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 18.

Having qualified the idea that a musical parable is always based on another piece, one must ask what other aspects of Persichetti's parables make them different from the remainder of his music. Why set this music apart as a distinct group?

One possible answer to this question can be found in observing the strong stylistic characteristics held in general among compositions Persichetti describes as parables, and the extent to which they tend to exhibit the following: 1) no direct repetitions; 2) different sections consistently associated with specific tempo markings, 3) numerous short sections instead of fewer traditional longer ones; 4) multiple meter changes; 5) and frequent dynamic changes. An examination of several of the solo parables, specifically the ones included in the charts at the end of this chapter, have all or most of these characteristics.

Persichetti defined autogenesis as: "Relationships among hidden motivic materials, the discovery of similarities where differences predominate, the ability to retain specific detail without losing the overarching concept – all are of great significance."<sup>17</sup>

As far as I have been able to determine, Persichetti is the only person to have used the term autogenesis in relation to music. Nonetheless with "autogenesis," Persichetti seems to have discovered an organic procedure for composing. One possible meaning of the concept will be shown in the chapter three analysis of the double bass parable where techniques of continuous variation demonstrate compositional procedures consistent with the idea of autogenesis. With this in mind it will be possible to consider how the term "parable," especially as it applies to Persichetti's parables for solo

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 19.

instruments, may describe a composition which is highly contextual and self-referential rather than one which derives at least in part, from an earlier work. This is a different concept from the common understanding in literature, that parables by definition refer to something else.

Under this concept a parable does not need to make a direct reference or quote of another piece, or even an extra musical idea, but can be its own self-contained reference. Parables then, may be a category of compositions, which incorporate procedures characteristic of those suggested by Persichetti in his use of the term “autogenesis.”

Persichetti makes this opening statement in his book on music theory, *Twentieth Century Harmony*.

Any tone can succeed any other tone, any tone can sound simultaneously with any other tone or tones, and any group of tones can be followed by any other group of tones, just as any degree of tension or nuance can occur in any medium under any kind of stress or duration. Successful projection will depend upon the contextual and formal conditions that prevail, and upon the skill and the soul of the composer.<sup>18</sup>

Persichetti describes here the extent to which the norms of tonal composition, such as those of consonance, dissonance and its resolution, and a hierarchy of triadic harmonies, had given way to practices which are defined not so much by stylistic norms shared with a body of other works, but by relationships defined contextually in each

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<sup>18</sup> Vincent Persichetti, *Twentieth-century harmony; creative aspects and practice*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1961, 13.

composition. This new level of contextuality is in evidence in the *Parable for Solo Double Bass* as fundamental relationships presented in the beginning of the work evolve and are transformed from section to section in ways which are specific to this composition. Examples of this from the *Parable for Solo Double Bass* are given in Chapter III. These examples will provide one way of understanding how Persichetti's autogenesis techniques may be identified and how they are used in this composition.

Persichetti uses the term autogenesis when he speaks of any or all of his compositions. However, as we understand it here autogenesis seems to have been applied most thoroughly to Persichetti's *Parables*. His other works, such as *Divertimento for Band* have more traditional compositional techniques that include literal and near repeats, consistent tempos for entire movements, stable dynamic levels for longer periods, and fewer meter and tempo changes.

By contrast, in his compositions which are not described as parables, more traditional design features and formal relationships predominate. For example, in the march from the *Divertimento for Band* there is a literal repeat of 42 measures, exactly one half of the movement. In another example, Persichetti's *Symphony No. 6 for Band*, there are the traditional four movements, the first of which begins with a slow introduction followed by a fast tempo for the remainder of that movement. The other three movements maintain the same tempo throughout each movement. The only meter change occurs in the middle of the third movement as 6/8 is followed by 2/4 which in turn is followed by 6/8. Finally, in his piece *Pageant*, there is only one tempo change, slow to fast, and no meter changes. By contrast to the three examples just cited,

Persichetti's *Parable for Band* is in one continuous movement with repeated meter changes, many dynamic changes, no repeats, and many different tempos.

In his DMA document Mark Nelson includes some charts that show how many and how often things change in the brass parables. In the examples, below I have expanded these charts to show similar relationships in the parables for bass, viola, and bassoon.

Table of tempos in selected Persichetti solo parables.<sup>19</sup>

Quarter notes Per minute	Bass	Viola	Bassoon	Trombone	Horn	Trumpet	Tuba
50	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
56	0	1	0	3	1	1	1
54	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
60	1	9	0	1	2	0	2
63	4	0	4	0	5	0	10
66	1	5	4	0	0	5	1
69	7	0	0	0	0	0	3
72	0	2	1	0	3	0	7
76	0	0	1	0	0	0	5
80	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
84	1	0	0	1	1	0	0
88	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
92*	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
96	0	0	1	0	0	3	1
100	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
132	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
144	0	0	5	0	2	0	0
152-160	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
160	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
184	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
208**	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

\*92 In bass part written as eighth note = 184

\*\* Written as half note = 104

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<sup>19</sup> Mark Allan Nelson, *The Brass Parables of Vincent Persichetti*: (DMA paper, Arizona State University, 1985), 40.

## Use of Time Signatures

Times Occurring and Total Measures Used<sup>20</sup>

Type	Horn	Trumpet	Trombone	Tuba	Bassoon*	Viola	Bass
2/2	0,0	0,0	1,49	0,0		0,0	0,0
2/4	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0		0,0	2,76
¾	17,56	0,0	11,69	16,46		15,45	6,50
4/4	18,27	1,85	0,0	19,104		14,55	4,32
3/8	1,1	0,0	0,0	7,9		0,0	0,0
4/8	1,1	0,0	0,0	0,0		1,1	0,0
5/8	3,3	0,0	0,0	0,0		3,5	0,0
6/8	1,3	0,0	0,0	0,0		2,2	0,0
7/8	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0		1,4	0,0

\*The Bassoon Parable has no time signature.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 42.

Number of Dynamic Levels <sup>21</sup>

Dynamic Level	Times Occurring						
	Horn	Trumpet	Trombone	Tuba	Bassoon	Viola	Bass
Ppp	5	3	2	4	3	6	4
Pp	15	12	9	19	7	13	14
P	16	17	19	31	20	19	19
Mp	17	14	27	17	13	15	17
Mf	11	9	13	22	10	8	17
F	14	17	17	30	14	19	27
Ff	11	12	5	13	6	8	12
Fff	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Sfz	1	2	2	1	0	5	2
Sffz	2	0	3	1	0	2	2
Fp	1	0	0	0	0	1	0

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 46.

## ANALYSIS OF THE PARABLE FOR DOUBLE BASS

The *Parable for Solo Double Bass* by Vincent Persichetti has three main types of thematic material. They have been labeled 'A', 'B', and 'C'. The six basic sections and coda are differentiated by material and tempo. The tempo of the 'A' sections is quarter note = 69. There is only one 'B' and only one 'C' section. The tempo of the 'B' material is quarter note = 100. The tempo of the 'C' section is marked eighth note = 184 (quarter note = 92). The end of each major section is marked by a fermata: 1) the 'A' section in measure 35; 2) the 'B' section in measure 62; 3) the 'C' section in measure 112; 4) the end of the second return of the theme in measure 137 and; 5) the beginning of the coda in measure 142.

The form resembles that of a small classical rondo or sonata form as shown below. Transitional materials have been omitted in this example to highlight basic features of the form.

Rondo Form		Sonata Form	
Introduction:	measures 1-2	Introduction:	measures 1-2
Refrain (A material):	measures 3-35	Exposition:	measures 3-35
Episode I (B material):	measures 36-62	Development:	measures 36-112
Refrain (A material):	measures 63-80		
Episode II (C material):	measures 81-112	Recapitulation:	measures 125-142
Refrain: (A material):	measures 125-142	Coda:	measures 143-158
Coda:	measures 143-158		

I will use the term recapitulation to refer to measures 125-142 even though it is described as a "refrain" and a return of 'A' material in the description of Rondo Form. . The refrain between the 'B' and 'C' episodes, though shorter by comparison, still retains

material recognizable from measures 1-35 such as the three opening pickup notes in measure 63, the double stops in measures 73 and 74, and the tritone double stops in measures 71, 72, and 76. If we think of the ‘B’ materials (measures 36-80), the ‘C’ materials (measures 81 through 112), and the intervening ‘A’ materials or refrain (measures 63 through 80) as a single unit, the whole form exhibits a large ternary design, A B A with a Coda. The recapitulation (or last appearance of the refrain) begins with an exact statement of the initial ‘A’ melody, except that it has been transposed up a perfect fifth. Measures 1 through 3, beat one, labeled here as an introduction, does not return in the recapitulation. The low dynamic level of *pp* and the high register of the harmonics, along with an agogic accent of the sustained note G in measures 1 through 3, as well as a tempo marking of quarter note = 69 for those two measures and one beat, set them apart and support the concept that this initial passage serves as an introduction.

All sections in the formal design, including the transitions, are listed below along with the tempo marking associated with each.

Detailed Form outline of *Parable for Solo Double Bass*:

1-2	Introduction, quarter note =69
3-8	A, quarter note = 69
9-17	Transition, quarter note = 63
18-21	A', Quarter note = 69
22-25	A'' Quarter note = 69
26.29	A''' Quarter note = 69
30.35	(Codetta) transitional material ends 1 <sup>st</sup> section of work, Quarter note =69
36.62	B section, Quarter note = 100
63.67	Transition, quarter note = 63
68.75	Some A material is used, quarter note = 69
76-80	Transition, quarter note = 63
81-112	C section, quarter note = 92
113.115	Transition, quarter note = 66 to 88
125-137	(Recapitulation), A, quarter note = 69
138.142	Retransition quarter note = 66 to 184 (same tempo as 92 of C area)
143-159	(Coda), A, Quarter note = 60

Before taking a detailed look at the piece it is worth considering how Vincent Persichetti spoke and wrote about music in general and his own music in particular. With regard to his own compositions he referred to “autogenesis” more frequently than to “motivic” development.<sup>22</sup> Apparently in his mind some compositional materials embody relationships and implications that evolve spontaneously. This idea recalls Michelangelo’s statement, “In every block of marble I see a statue as plain as though it stood before me, shaped and perfect in attitude and action. I have only to hew away the rough wall that imprison the lovely apparition to reveal it to the other eyes as mine see it.”<sup>23</sup>

Another aspect of Vincent Persichetti’s compositional style that informs this analysis is his statement about never doing anything the same way twice.<sup>24</sup> In the *Parable for Solo Double Bass*, and as far as I have been able to determine, the other parables as well, he has kept to this basic principle. In the *Parable for Solo Double Bass* the recapitulation area is not a literal repetition as it has been transposed up a perfect fifth. On the other hand some of his other works, such as *Divertimento for Band*, he does repeat material, literally or very nearly literally, (see Chapter II).

Persichetti also divides the style of his music into passages that he describes as “graceful” and those that he describes as “gritty.” Although he never defines specifically what he means by the terms “graceful” or “gritty,” we can observe in the *Parable for Solo Double Bass*, the clear distinction between sections predominated by perfect fourths

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<sup>22</sup> Bonaventura, 460.

<sup>23</sup> ThinkExist.com, “Michelangelo quotes” [www.thinkexist.com/quotes/michelangelo](http://www.thinkexist.com/quotes/michelangelo) (accessed March 26, 2011.)

<sup>24</sup> Vincent Persichetti, *Twentieth-century harmony; creative aspects and practice*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1961, 13.

and perfect fifths with slower, more lyrical melodic gestures (“graceful?”). Measures 22 through 23 or 81 through 87 are more rhythmically active sections, predominated by step relationships, imperfect consonances, and dissonances (“gritty?”). Given these working definitions it is possible to think of the ‘A’ material as ”graceful” and the ‘B’ and ‘C’ materials as “gritty,” though many passages such as the transition section in measures 9-17 exhibit features of both.

Example 1, measures 1-8, introduction and opening melody, quarter note =69

VINCENT PERSICHETTI  
Op. 131

In a lyric and free manner (♩ = ca. 69)  
(Strings may be tuned up a whole-tone)

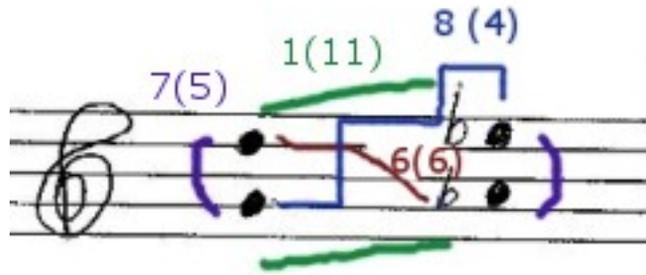
\* Harmonics sound an 8ve below written pitch.

pp *p dolce* mp pp

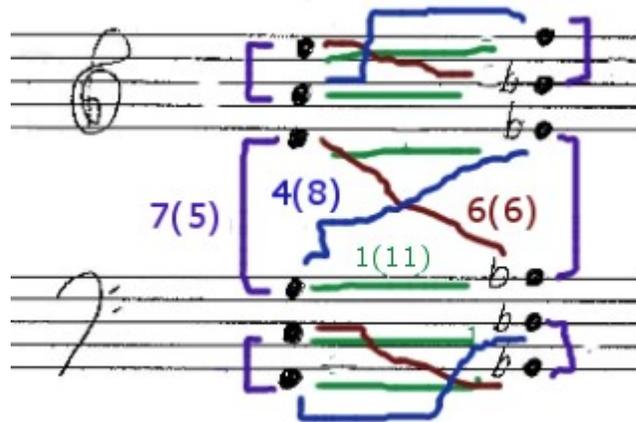
7 measures 1-8

The introduction and opening melody, which is composed of a succession of perfect fifths that are a half step from each other (G-D to Ab-Eb in measures 1-4), may be understood as bases for a paradigm for understanding many of the pitch relationships in this piece.

Example 1a.  
Paradigm 1<sup>25</sup>



Example 1b.  
Paradigm 1 expanded



These two vertical hexachords, example 1b, incorporate intervallic relationships which serve as a basis for many of those which occur throughout the piece. Note that vertical, diagonal, and linear relationships are all identified.

<sup>25</sup> Note: Pitch class intervals in this paradigm and those that follow are described according to the number of chromatic half steps each pitch class relationship encompasses, that is, a perfect fifth is described as the interval 7, its inversion, the perfect fourth, the interval 5, etc. Pitch class intervals will be counted up from the first to the second pitch class in a succession, regardless of the registral distribution of individual pitches forming the interval.

Example 1c.

The musical score for Example 1c is annotated with pitch class intervals. The score is divided into three sections: Introduction, Measures 3-5, and Measures 6-8. Colored brackets and numbers indicate intervals: blue for 8(4), green for 10(2) and 11(1), purple for 7, red for 1 and 6, and black for 5 and 5b. The notes are on a treble clef staff with flats for B-flat, E-flat, and A-flat.

Another distinct feature of the opening eight measures is the non-consecutive descending whole step relationship between E-flat and D-flat in measures 4 and 5 (pitch class interval 10). Notice as well that the inversion of that interval D-flat to E-flat, the interval 2 (minor seventh down) which occurs in measure 6 may be understood as deriving from nonconsecutive elements in the succession of fourths (pitch class intervals 5) which follows in measures 6 and 7, themselves inversions of the perfect fifth A-flat to E-flat (pitch class interval 7) in measures 3 and 4.

Before moving beyond the opening statement of this work let us reconsider the term “autogenesis.” If we reflect on this passage, measures 1-8, with Persichetti’s idea in mind we can discover and illustrate one possible interpretation of “autogenesis” as mentioned in Chapter II.

The opening succession of perfect fifths, though limited to G-D only, is followed by another perfect fifth one half step higher, A-flat - E-flat. That fifth is displaced and returned by half step motion to the fifth G-D in measure 4. Interestingly however, the A-flat to E-flat fifth is restated as progenitor of another cycle of perfect intervals, the perfect fourth, in this case E-flat, A-flat, D-flat, G-flat, or a succession which is inversionally

related to the earlier fifth, A-flat to E-flat in measures 3 and 4. The upper fourth in this cycle, D-flat to G-flat, is displaced by another perfect fourth, C-F, one half step lower and recalls thereby the half step relationship between the opening fifth and the A-flat to E-flat which displaces that interval in measures 3 and 4. The succession of fourth relationships in measures 5-8 and our ability to understand them as deriving from measures 1-4 demonstrate one possible way of understanding what Persichetti meant by the term “autogeneses.”

Example 2: Measures 9-17, quarter note =63

The image shows a musical score for measures 9-17, quarter note = 63. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, the middle staff is the bass line, and the bottom staff is the treble line. The tempo is marked 'Meno mosso (♩ = 63)'. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'poco rit.', 'FFF intimamente', 'pizz. (gul tasto)', 'arc. (ord.)', and 'p espr., chiaro'. Measure numbers 12, 15, and 17 are indicated on the left side of the staves.

Measures 9-17, quarter note = 63, like all sections of quarter note = 63 or 66, is a transition area. As might be expected in such a passage, basic pitch relationships such as those represented in Paradigm 1 are less directly represented. Nonetheless, defining features can be understood in terms of an extended version of that model.

Example 2a, measures 9-17, transition material, quarter note =63

measure 9    measure 10    measure 11    measure 12

Paradigm 1  
expanded and  
rewritten as fourths (5)

measure 13    measure 14

measure 15    measure 16    measure 17    measure 18

In example 2a (above), Paradigm 1 is restated in parentheses as a reference. If we take the second perfect fifth (A-flat, E-flat), invert it and extend the succession of fourths to produce D-flat and G-Flat, then displace those by the F and C one half step below (just as happens in the music in measures 7 and 8), we can then extend that succession of fourths downward two cycles (G to D, and A to E) to derive the perfect fourth E to A which initiates the next passage (measures 9-15). The half step motion from A to B-flat in measure 9 is easily understood as deriving from the similar motion from G to A-flat in measure 3.

The next two pitches, G and B natural are less directly related to our model although they too may be understood as extensions of the cycle of fourths initiated by the succession of E to A in measure 9, the G as an extension of that cycle, E, A, (D), G, and the B as the next fourth below E. The successions of B over D up to A-sharp in measure 10 and the ensuing succession from E up to D-sharp in measure 11 are understandable as projections of the half step relationship between B- natural and B-flat.

The succession from A-sharp to E in measures 10 and 11 is another instance of the succession of E over A up to B-flat in measure 9. The entire ascending gesture leads to a prolonged E-natural in measures 12 and 13 from which two elaborated stepwise fourth progressions descend: E to D-natural, C-sharp to B and below that B to A, G to F-sharp. The actual succession traverses descending fourths (pitch class intervals 7) E to B, D to A, C-sharp to G (the interval 6, actually another “7,” a diminished fifth functioning as a “perfect fifth,” by analogy in this context), and B to F-sharp. The succession of D, F, D, D-sharp in measure 12 that leads to the climactic E with a trill in measures 12 and 13 seems to be embellishing in function.

In measures 15-17 a renewal of the succession of perfect fourths concludes the passage as D and G are displaced by C-sharp and F-sharp respectively. An extension of this particular cycle leads smoothly to the B-natural (a perfect fourth above F-sharp, the last note in measure 17) which initializes the next section and a return of the ‘A’ material.

Example 3, measures 18-21, A' quarter note =69

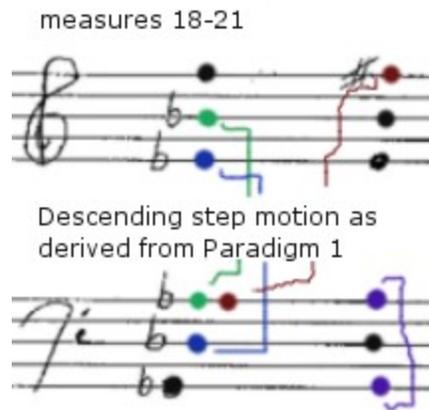
Example 3a begins with the second vertical of Paradigm 1 reset as the first vertical here (see example 1b). The second vertical then is a set of perfect fifths one half step higher than the first vertical. From this new variation of Paradigm 1, we can begin to understand the notes in measures 18-21, A'.

In the example below one possible derivation of the actual succession of notes and their melodic disposition in this passage has been circled in green, first as they appear in the paradigm and secondly, just below, as they actually occur in the music.

Example 3a, measures 18-21, A', quarter note =69

In A, measures 1-8, consecutive elements in the verticals of Paradigm 1, to within inversional equivalence, explain the succession of perfect fifths and perfect fourths in the foreground. Here in A', measures 18-21, the music skips every other note in the paradigm producing whole steps written in a descending pattern. This is shown in examples 3b and 3c. The dyad G-A in measure 20 may be understood in the same way, that is, by relating directly nonconsecutive elements along the second vertical in example 3a.

Example 3b shows the whole step associations inside of Paradigm 1 by color. Each color is a different descending value.



Example 3c is another representation of this passage which shows the descending step motions in the upper voice as well as the other intervals of 7 and 5 in the bass and in the top voice in measure 21. The skip from G to F-sharp in measure 21 can derive from the succession G-flat to G between the lowest pitches in each vertical of Paradigm one, or, much less directly, from the first and last elements in the second vertical.

Example 3c

In the second phrase section (end of measure 20 and measure 21) one note is taken from each of the whole step patterns in measures 19 and 20 to produce the descending perfect fourth A-flat, E-flat (another instance of the perfect fifth from measures 3 and 4, the interval class 7). The B in measure 18 and the F-sharp in measure 21 (another interval 7) mark the beginning and end of this section

Example 4, A'', measures 22-25, quarter note = 69

Measures 22-25, A'', exhibit relationships found in both Paradigm 1 and Paradigm 2, itself a derivation of Paradigm 1 as demonstrated in example 4a below.

Example 4a, Diagonal interval of Paradigm one (D, A-flat) as a basis for Paradigm two.<sup>26</sup>

The diagram illustrates three musical paradigms on a single staff.   
**Paradigm 1:** Shows a diagonal interval between notes D (labeled 7) and A-flat (labeled 8). A red line connects these two notes.   
**Diagonal tritone as basis for vertical:** Shows the same interval (D and A-flat) made vertical. A red line connects D (labeled 6) and A-flat (labeled 7).   
**Paradigm 2:** Shows tritone verticals (D-flat and A) linked by interval 4. Red lines and numbers 6, 4, 4, 6 are used to indicate the relationships between the notes.

In measure 22 a succession of two diminished fifths is followed by a succession of sixteenth notes on beats three and four with intervallic relationships derivable from Paradigm 1 and reminiscent of measure nine, beats 2 and 3. That is the C, B, F# is a retrogression and a transposition of the E, A, B-flat in measure nine. This particular configuration and derivations thereof recurs in Sections 'B' and 'C' as important components in the development section, measures 36-112. The two diminished fifths on beats one and two, related by one half step, are best understood as a tritone variant of Paradigm 1 (the diagonal D, A-flat made vertical), particularly as the next measure provides a literal statement of elements from Paradigm 1, the succession of two perfect intervals, a perfect fourth and a perfect fifth, related by semitone. The derivation of intervals on beats three and four in measure 22 is exemplified in Example 4b.

<sup>26</sup> Note: Paradigm 2: tritone verticals linked by the interval 4

Example 4b

Alternate version of Paradigm 1

Pitch succession of measure 22

retrogression and transposition of measure 9

embedded intervals of a perfect fifth, interval 7, the basic interval of Paradigm 1

beats 2 and 3 of measure 9

While the first two beats of measures 22 and 23 clearly derive from Paradigm 1, by analogy in measure 22 and directly in measure 23; derivation of the passage as a whole (measures 22-25) and the remainder of the passage in particular (measures 23 beats 3 and 4 through measure 25) are less obvious, although they do align favorably with Paradigm 2 in some instances as circled below. It is particularly notable that the harmony in measure 25 is aligned perfectly with the second vertical in Paradigm 2. This harmony (A, E-flat, G) with its lower diminished fifth (the interval 6), upper major third (the interval 4), and boundary interval of a minor seventh (the interval 10) recurs frequently throughout the composition and will be discussed more fully below as an important unifying element.

In example 4c Paradigm 2 is applied to A'', measures 22-25

Example 4c. A'', measures 22-25, quartet note =69

measure 22

measure 23

Paradigm 2 applied to measures 22-25

Middleground descending step between top notes of chords

measure 24

measure 25

inferred voice leading pattern at the last sixteenth of beat 1 and beats 2 and 3 of measure 25

transpose by 5

transpose by 4

transpose by 11

An important unifying chord that is discussed below

\*

Notice that the inferred voice leading pattern (C, B, F-sharp; A-flat, G, D; and D, C-sharp, G-sharp) are all retrogrades and transpositions of beats 2 and 3 of measure 9. Also that all of the verticals are transpositions of A, E-flat, G, the sonority on the downbeat.

Example 5, A''' measures 26-29

Measures 26-29

a tempo (♩ = 69)  
*mf tristamente*  
3  
28  
*poco rit.*  
*mp*  
*p*

The transposition of Paradigm 1 used for measures 26-29 is the same as that was applied in measures 18-21 (See Example 3b). Both passages have multiple descending step motions. However in measures 26-29 the idea is often projected in two voices and sometimes with a double stop. These two voices can be found literally in Paradigm 2: E-flat to D, G to F-sharp.

The application here is different from measures 18-21 where whole steps were understood as every other note in a vertical. Here the derivation is frequently between adjacent pitches across the verticals to generate a descending half step instead of a whole step.

Example 5a

Example 5a is a musical score for two staves, Treble and Bass clef, spanning measures 26 to 29. The score is annotated with green boxes and lines. In measure 26, a large green box encompasses the notes in both staves, with the label "paradigm one a" written below it. In measure 27, a green line connects the notes in both staves, with the label "descending step idea" written below it. In measures 28 and 29, green boxes highlight specific note groups in both staves. The notes in measure 26 are: Treble (A4, Bb4, C5), Bass (Bb3, C4, D4). In measure 27: Treble (Bb4, C5), Bass (C4, D4, E4). In measure 28: Treble (C5, D5), Bass (E4, F4, G4). In measure 29: Treble (D5, E5), Bass (G4, A4, Bb4).

Example 6

Example 6 is a musical score for a single staff, Treble clef, spanning measures 30 to 35. The score includes performance markings such as "a tempo (♩ = 69)", "pizz.", "mp espr.", "arco", "rit", "fp con calma", and "ffp". The notes in measure 30 are: A4, Bb4, C5, D5. In measure 31: Bb4, C5, D5, E5. In measure 32: D5, E5, F5, G5. In measure 33: G5, A5, Bb5, C6. In measure 34: Bb5, C6, D6, E6. In measure 35: D6, E6, F6, G6. The score also features triplets in measures 30, 31, and 32.

Measures 30-35 function as both a codetta to the Exposition and a transition to the Development Section. It is interesting to notice how it traverses the same intervallic distance as the harmony in measure 25, from A in measure 30 to E-flat in measure 31 and finally to G in measure 33 before a final cadence on the A natural in measure 35. This span ends with the two-note succession G to A, recalling once again the G from the

beginning and the harmony from measure 25, but terminating on A (“the supertonic”?), one whole step above G.

Example 7

The image shows a musical score for five staves, numbered 36, 41, 46, 51, and 56. The score is in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 100. The dynamics range from *f* (forte) to *ff* (fortissimo) and *brilliantemente*. The score is annotated with several colored markings: green brackets and lines highlighting descending whole and half step motives; purple boxes and lines highlighting seven-note, sixteenth-note figures and their variations; red brackets and lines highlighting semitone relationships separated by an octave; and yellow vertical bars highlighting specific notes. A '2' is written above the second staff, and a '7' is written above the eighth note in measure 42. The annotations are spread across all five staves, with the most dense markings on the second and third staves.

The ‘B’ section extends from measures 36 through measure 62. Motivic materials in this section such as the descending whole step and half step motives (green) in measures 36-37, 44-45, 46-47, 49-50, 54, and 55; the seven note, sixteenth note figure (and variations thereof, purple) in measures 38, 42-43, 46-47, 51-52, 57-58, and 58-59; the semitone relationships separated by an intervening octave in measures (red), 36, 43, 46, 53-54, 59, and 61; and the double stops emphasizing perfect intervals and tritones

(yellow) in measures 39, 41, 48, and 56; all derive clearly from previous materials such as those in measures 22 and 23. Their relationships to analytic paradigms have been discussed above. For example see Examples 4b and 4c.

Example 7a best demonstrates how the descending step of measures 36-37 along with characteristic rhythms and melodic shapes of the B section make a very clear connection between the B material previewed in measures 22-23 and the opening of the development area in measures 36-38.

Example 7a

The image displays three musical staves with handwritten annotations. The first staff, labeled '22', is in bass clef with a 7/4 time signature and tempo marking 'a tempo (♩ = 69)'. It features dynamic markings 'f ben proclamato', 'ff', and 'mp'. A red circle highlights a melodic phrase, and a purple bracket spans across it. The second staff, labeled '36', is in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature and tempo marking '(♩ = 100)'. It features dynamic markings 'f risolutamente' and 'ff'. A red circle highlights a descending melodic phrase, and purple brackets highlight other melodic elements. The third staff shows 'measures 36-38' with pink circles around notes and numbers 1, 7, 7, 11, 7, 11, 7 above them. Below this is the text 'retrograde transpositions of measure 9.' and a small staff showing 'beats 2 and 3 of measure 9' with notes on a grand staff and numbers 1 and 5 above them.

The strong relationships between the 'B' section and its role as a development section are well represented in measures 36, 37, and 38. See how the opening skip of a major seventh down, A-sharp to B (the interval 1); the nonconsecutive major second down, A-sharp to G-sharp, (the interval 10); the two successive descending perfect fourths, G-sharp to D-sharp, and G-natural to D-natural (intervals 7); and the following two three note units which are transpositions of one another (F, E, and B followed by G, F-sharp, and C-sharp), both retrogrades of the three note unit in measure 9 (E, A, B-flat); all derive from motivic constituents discussed above in connection with their original occurrences in the 'A' Section.

The section from 63-80, though more fragmented perhaps than any previous section and functioning at least in part as a transition to 'C', still retains recognizable elements consistent with its function as a return of 'A' or, in our Rondo scheme, a return of the Refrain. Chief among these are: the three-sixteenth-note motives in measures 63, 64, 72, and 76; tritone units appearing repeatedly in prominent positions such as the top voice of one double stop and the lower voice of a second in measure 68 (E-flat, A); other tritones as double stops such as C-sharp to G in measure 70; D-sharp to A in measure 71; E to B-flat in measure 72; and A to E-flat again in measure 76; perfect fourths and perfect fifths in close proximity or as double stops such as D to A in measure 68, D to G in measure 70, D to A in measure 71, A to E in measure 72, D to A in measures 76-78; and frequent semitone relationships such as B-flat to B-natural in measures 66-67, F to E in measure 69, E to D-sharp in measure 73, E, F, E, D-sharp in measures 73-74, and finally the repeated E-flat to D, motive in measures 77-80, all of these elements clearly derive from previous materials.

Example 8 from measures 81-112, 'C' area, quarter note =92

retrograde and transposition  
of measure 9

beats 2 and 3  
of measure 9

measure 95-95

inversion and  
transposition  
of measure 9  
measure 108

Thematic elements in the 'C' Section (measures 81-112), though abbreviated in some cases, clearly derive from those of the 'B' and 'A' sections. The most predominant element preserved from previous sections is the recurring seven-note, sixteenth-note pattern which occurs literally in measures 84-85, and 88-89, and in altered or truncated versions in measures 81, 83, 86-87, 90, 94 and 95. The specific interval succession and melodic shape of this motive has changed in many instances but it does retain its rhythm, much of its specific interval class succession and content, and much of its characteristic

melodic shape at key points such as those exemplified above in measures 86-87, 88-89, 90-91, 94-95, and 103-104. See example 8.

Other motivic units such as the A, D, G-sharp in the beginning of measure 88 and D, G, A-flat in measure 110 recall once again the E, A, B-flat motive of measures 9 and 23. In addition the A, E-flat, G sonority from measure 25 which occurs in measure 111 and measures 92, 96, and 104 in vestigial form or in combination with other elements, recalls previous motivic materials. Finally, stepwise and chromatic step relationships which first emerge in measures 12-14 in association there with triplet and quintuplet figures return here in measures 81 and 83 and once again in combination with triplet figures in measures 99 and 109.

The succeeding transition section in measures 113 through 124 continues to recall previous material, though fragmented in representation. See for example the succession in measures 114 (beats 3 and 4) -115 (beat 1) which derives literally from measures 26 (beat 4) and 27.

Example 9, measures 125-130 (Recapitulation) quarter note =69

Measures 125-130

Tempo primo (♩ = 69)  
sul tasto  
ff dolce p

fff

Measures 125-130 are exactly the same as measures 3-8, transposed up a perfect fifth.

Example 10, measures 146-150 (part of coda) quarter note =60

Measures 146-150, Coda area

148 *fp* *leggero*

*mp* *spr. assai* *f* *p*

As was the case in measures 22-25, Paradigm 2 is useful once again in understanding the coda, measures 143-150, a passage that also begins with the sonority A, E-flat, G. Our first reference to Paradigm 2 in measures 22-25 made use of the lower trichords in the model (A-flat, D, and F-sharp and in particular A, E-flat and G). Here the model aligns, not only with the A, E-flat and G in measure 143, but with a transposition of that sonority as well in the passage from measures 146 through 150, as demonstrated in the example below.

Example 10a, measures 146-150

Paradigm two

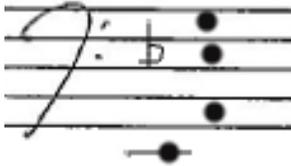
measure 146 measure 147 measure 148 measure 149 measure 150

In addition to the opening succession of fifths and the compliment of intervals in measures 1-8, there are several recurring motivic elements in the work that keep it unified, several of which were identified in the previous discussions about Sections ‘B’ and ‘C’. One such element, which is particularly important, is the very A, G, E-flat chord of measure 112-113 cited above. This harmony, which first occurs in measure 25, is sometimes associated with an E such as the one that precedes this first appearance in measure 24. This chord without the E is represented literally in the second vertical of Paradigm 2 (See Example 9a). The assimilation of E as a supporting element can be understood as deriving from the same elaboration of Paradigm 1 as that which accounts for the E, A succession in measure 9, and the cycle of fourths succession in measure 15-17.

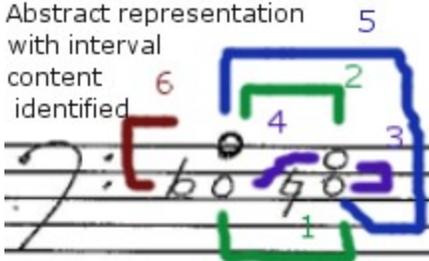
This chord with the assimilated E has one special property not shared by Paradigm 1 or Paradigm 2; that is, to within inversional equivalence, it contains an instance of every interval. The full chord of four notes has the tritone, (interval 6), minor 3<sup>rd</sup> (intervals 3 or 9) major 3<sup>rd</sup> (intervals 4 or 8), the minor 2<sup>nd</sup> (interval 1 or 11), major 2<sup>nd</sup> (intervals 2 or 10) and the perfect fourth (intervals 5 or 7).

Example 11

Typical musical distribution



Abstract representation with interval content identified



This chord without the accompanying E is reduced significantly in interval content. The interval content the A, E-flat, G sonority (without the E) contains no perfect fourth (intervals 5 or 7), no minor 2<sup>nd</sup> (the intervals 1 or 11), no minor 3<sup>rd</sup> (the intervals 3 or 9).

Although this chord does not occur prominently in the 'B' section of the work as such, it does appear implicitly as part of other successions in clearly recognizable positions. For example, across the bar line in measures 51 and 52: G, E-flat, A, similarly across the bar line in measures 57-58: A, (b-flat), (d), E-flat, G, etc. with the E-flat receiving metric emphasis on the downbeat. Note as well the imbedded succession of perfect fourths and perfect fifths in this succession (see example 11a). In measure 92 the full chord occurs as pizzicato (example 11b). In measure 111 this sonority, without the E, closes the development section (example 11c).

Example 11a

Measures 57-58, intervals

recurring unifying chord<sup>5</sup>

Example 11b

*sfz*

Example 11c



Combination of Paradigm 2 with the underpinning perfect fourth characteristic of Paradigm 1 and its variants, expand and enrich the total pitch and interval vocabulary of the work at the same time this combination, including representatives of each interval type, strengthens the sense of cadence and structural closure. One such event occurs in measure 92 with the pizzicato chord on beat 2, clearly marked *sfz*.

Example 11d

Measure 143, (example 11d) the beginning of the coda, has the chord without the E but a quiet E does sound after the chord. The chord is given twice in measure 143, once pizzicato and a second time immediately thereafter, arco. This is the last appearance of this sonority at that transpositional level; however, the tritones E, B-flat in measure 146 and F, B-natural followed by the D in measure 147, invite our perception of at least one additional transposition of that sonority (E, B-flat, D-natural). The piece ends as it opened, emphasizing fifth relationships between G, D, and A with the last four measures paralleling closely the cadence in measures 32-35, the close of the A Section or the

Exposition, although here specific adjustments assure a cadence which concludes on G and D.

Clearly the *Parable for Solo Double Bass* is not tonal in the traditional sense; however, the overall organization of pitch relationships does emphasize the note G. The introduction begins with the succession G-D in measures 1-3 and the Coda ends with that same succession in measures 156-158. The return of the Refrain (measures 63-80), after the 'B' Section ends in measure 62, ends itself in measures 76-80 with a prolongation of the very same sonority which ended the 'A' section in measures 31-35: A, D, E-flat. The primary difference here is the fact that the prominent G, which completed that motion in measure 33, is absent in measures 76-80, or at best is present by implication only. The Development or 'C' Section also ends on G in measure 112, once again in the context of the A, E-flat, G sonority from measure 22 and Paradigm 2. The establishment of G as a point of departure in the beginning, its return as part of the same fifth relationship at the end of the Coda and its service as an intermediary goal at the end of the Exposition and the Development, albeit in different harmonic contexts in those instances strengthen our perception of G as having a central role in the pitch structure.

## PERFORMANCE ASPECTS FOR THE PARABLE FOR SOLO DOUBLE BASS

It is very important to keep clear rhythmic distinctions in this piece because formal divisions are aligned consistently with changes in tempo, changes which, though moderate much of the time, highlight distinctions critical to the projection of the formal design. Thus all of the 'A' section material which is at quarter note = 69 must remain distinct from the transitional material around it that is at quarter note = 63. The coda is at quarter note = 60 and so must be noticeably slower than the earlier sections to set it apart, particularly as the coda contains elements of the 'A' section and the transitional material.

If the tempo of the coda sounds the same as the earlier material it does not come across clearly as something different. For this reason I recommend performing the coda slightly slower than quarter note = 60. One wants to be absolutely sure that the opening sixteenth notes of the coda, measure 143, are not too fast and that the fermata rest before the coda is long enough to provide a clear break from the earlier section. In practice this can be from two to three seconds of silence. The development sections, 'B' and 'C', are significantly faster at 100 and 92 for a quarter note respectively. The only minor difficulty here is to be sure they are fast enough to not be confused with the material, measures 116-134, that serves as a transition to the recap at quarter note = 88. Such clear distinctions and consistently maintained tempo relationships are vital to an effective projection of form.

Throughout this piece it is helpful to keep the idea of perfect fourths and fifths as well as moving step motions, particularly descending step motions, in mind. These are the two most common ways that Paradigm 1 is realized or developed. Bringing these out

in the work will highlight the motivic development that occurs in this work. For example in the A' and A'' (measures 18-21, and 26-29) emphasis of the descending step motion is recommended.

To assure that distinctions in rhythmic elements are maintained, a clear difference should be made between eighth note triplets and eighth notes. In addition, meticulous distinction between staccato notes and those non-staccato notes is vital. Measure 22 and 23 is a good example of this. The first tritone double stops are short and staccato. The initial double stop in the next bar is an eighth note and also marked staccato. Careful observation of the staccatos for both sets assures that the following double stops resonate freely and that they are clearly distinct from the initial double stop in each measure. The second set of double stops is perfect fifths instead of tritones. These are longer and louder (ff instead of f) for the earlier measure. The second set should sound longer being eighth notes instead sixteenth notes. The combination of the dynamics, note durations, and articulation are particularly important here as this is a preview of the development material that follows.

Dynamic distinctions are aligned with important design features in phrase structure and form. In addition to the above example (measures 22-23) the 'A' sections are made of two phrases. The first is always louder than the second, and usually longer. The initial 'A' material, measures 3-8, is P to MP for the first phrase (measures 3-5) then decrescendo to PP for the second phrase (measures 6-8).

The development material has much louder dynamics than the 'A' material. Dynamic contrasts are important factors that delineate areas of the piece. In his theory

book Persichetti devotes an entire section to the multiple uses of dynamics. The overall dynamic arch of this work is: pp-fff-ppp. In the *Parable for Solo Double Bass* dynamics are aligned closely with formal divisions, thus the importance of keeping the volume of different sections distinct. The table and graph below help to make this clear.

Form outline of bass parable showing dynamics, sections divided at fermatas:

‘A’ material

1-2	pp
3-8	p, mp
9-17	ppp, pp, p, mp, p, pp
18-21	mp, mf, mp, p, pp
22-25	f, ff, mp, f
26.30	Mf, mp, p
31-35	p, pp, ppp

‘B’ material

36.62	f, ff, mf, f, ff, mp, f, ff, mp, p mf, f, ff
-------	--

‘C’ material

63.68	pp
68.76	f, mf, ff, mf, f, mf, mp
76-80	pp, p, pp, p, f
81.112	mf, f sfz, ff, f, mf, mp, sffz, f, p, f, mf, f, mp, f, mp, mf, f, ff, fff, mp

Transitional and ‘A’ material

113.116	p, pp, p, f, sfz, mf,
116.124	f, mf, f, mf, f, mf, f, ff, mf, p
125.137	pp, p, ppp, p, mf, f, ff, mp

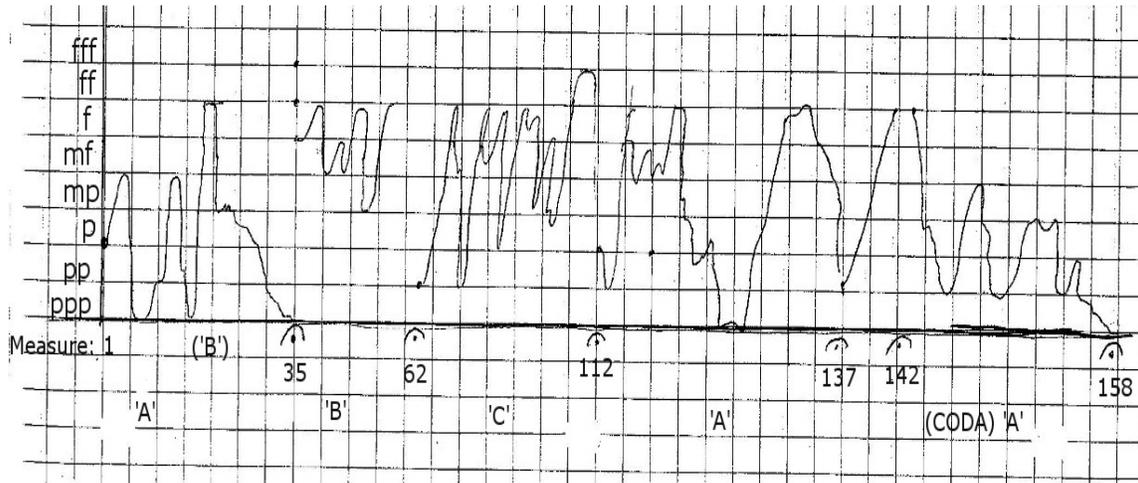
Transitional material

138.142	p, f, ff
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Coda

143-159	sffz, f, pp, mo, f, p, pp, mp, pp, ppp
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Example 11, a graphic representation of the dynamics in the work



Fermatas delineate each major section of the composition. Appropriate emphasis of pauses punctuates formal divisions, such as, for example, the fermata on the rest just before the beginning of the coda. This dynamically offsets the sFFz that begins the coda.

It is always important to give care to timbre and bowing, but here it is used as part of the form. For example “molto ponticello” is only used in the transition area after the development, measures 113-114. Therefore the very short “ponticello” area in the development should be distinct from the “molto ponticello” section. The “ponticello” in the ‘C’ area is less than two beats at quarter note = 92. The “molto ponticello” is six beats at quarter note =66. The only other use of “ponticello” appears very briefly just after the ‘B’ section (measures 63-64). I find it helpful to think of the “ponticellos” as slightly distorted and the “molto ponticello” as very distorted.

There are other important timbral distinctions. Ideally the sul tasto at the Recapitulation should not sound the same as the dolce marking of the opening. Similarly,

Persichetti's call for "white tone" at the very end, measure 155-158, should result in tones with fewer overtones than those in the measures immediately preceding, which by comparison should be rich in spectral components. One way to achieve this is to bow more closely to the fingerboard with a fast, light bow stroke.

The FFF that ends the development section is problematic. It is written as a sustained triple stop tremolo that fades down to one note. A triple stop is not physically possible on the bass. The best solution to this I have found is to play the open A string with a very full sound and let it ring. The top two notes can then be played simultaneously as a tremolo double stop over the resonating A. As the open A fades I observe the written diminuendo and move to the solo note once the open A has stopped ringing.

This score calls for a number of quick shifts from arco to pizzicato and back. I have found it necessary to take a little more time than is given in some of these spots. In addition I have found it helpful to put the bow down from measure seventy-six through the first half of the 'C' section. This precaution greatly facilitates the strumming of the chords and pizzicatos.

There are multiple places in the composition where the slur of a quiet harmonic across multiple strings is indicated. Normally this requires a very short space as you cross the intervening string with the bow. In this instance it functions better to break the slur and start the harmonics a little louder than the given dynamic. This makes it much easier to get the note to speak clearly. The best example of this is the end of the 'A' section in measures 34-35. These ppp harmonics are slurred but require a string crossing

and a shift. Doing this exactly as indicated runs the risk of the instrument not speaking properly. Breaking the slur and staying pp until the high A sounds and then making decrescendo to ppp allows for a much more secure execution.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion I have found that the compositional principles in *Parable for Solo Double Bass* are good examples of what Persichetti's refers to as "autogenesis." Virtually all ideas in the work derive directly or indirectly from the opening four measures, the basis for Paradigm I. Those materials then are expanded immediately and developed (as fourths instead of fifths) in the second "phrase," measures 6-8. As previously discussed in Chapter III, similar transformational processes continue throughout, avoiding direct repetition until measure 125. Even that passage is transposed. I find this compositional technique to be fundamentally different from more traditional approaches in that no new thematic ideas are introduced. There is no "second theme" for example, as might be expected in a sonata. Instead, everything derives from the opening material, even though relationship of succeeding sections may become less and less direct.

Persichetti's idea of parable is harder to identify. Persichetti himself gave multiple definitions over the years, some of which, such as the one given in the letter he wrote to Mark Nelson, are close to a standard definition of parable, "Parables are musical essays that convey a meaning indirectly by the use of comparisons or analogies."<sup>27</sup> At other times his definition of parable is distant from a standard definition. In an interview with Duffie and in reference to his opera, *Parable XX*, he states that a parable is, "personal things that I have become involved with."<sup>28</sup> While according to his own testimony, many

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<sup>27</sup> Nelson, "The Brass Parables of Vincent Persichetti," 17.

<sup>28</sup> Vincent Persichetti, interview by Bruce Duffie, 15 November 1986.

of Persichetti's parables derive from one of his earlier compositions, no evidence available supports the idea that the parables for solo instruments are so derived. The *Parable for Solo Bass* in particular, to the extent that the term "parable" can apply at all, seems to be self referential, as section after section is understandable, not in terms of some external source, but in terms of relationships defined in the beginning and transformed continuously throughout. Thus, the composition becomes a "parable" of itself, a musical story about its own beginning and musical evolution.

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APPENDIX

Opening melody in 2 phrases  
'Gracefull'

Parable for Solo Double Bass

(Parable XVII)

VINCENT PERSICETTI  
Op. 131

Perf. time: 6'

Intro

In a lyric and free manner (♩ = ca. 69)  
(Strings may be tuned up a whole-tone)

\* Harmonics sound an 8ve below written pitch.

7 *poco rit.* *Meno mosso* (♩ = 63)

12 *intimamente* *pizz. (sul tasto)* *arco (ord.)*

15 *poco rit.* *Tempo primo* (♩ = 69)

19 *rit. poco a poco* *sul tasto* *mp espr. 3* *mf*

22 *a tempo* (♩ = 69) *ord.* *f ben proclamato* *ff* *A/Bb* *mp* *pizz.* *arco*

25 *molto rit.* *a tempo* (♩ = 69) *mf tristamente*

28 *poco rit.* *a tempo* (♩ = 69) *pizz.* *mp espr.*

31 *arco* *rit.* *pp con calma* *ppp* *A7*

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## Complete listing of parables

- *Parable [I]* for Flute, Op. 100 (1965)
- *Parable II* for Brass Quintet, Op. 108 (1968)
- *Parable III* for Oboe, Op. 109 (1968)
- *Parable IV* for Bassoon, Op. 110 (1969)
- *Parable V* for Carillon, Op. 112 (1969)
- *Parable VI* for Organ, Op. 117 (1971)
- *Parable VII* for Harp, Op. 119 (1971)
- *Parable VIII* for Horn, Op. 120 (1972)
- *Parable IX* for Band, Op. 121 (1972)
- *String Quartet No. 4 (Parable X)*, Op. 122 (1972)
- *Parable XI* for Alto Saxophone, Op. 123 (1972)
- *Parable XII* for Piccolo, Op. 125 (1973)
- *Parable XIII* for Clarinet, Op. 126 (1973)
- *Parable XIV* for Trumpet, Op. 127 (1973)
- *Parable XV* for English Horn, Op. 128 (1973)
- *Parable XVI* for Viola, Op. 130 (1974)
- *Parable XVII* for Double Bass, Op. 131 (1974)
- *Parable XVIII* for Trombone, Op. 133 (1975)
- *Parable XIX* for Piano, Op. 134 (1975)
- *The Sibyl: A Parable of Chicken Little (Parable XX)*: An Opera in One Act, Op. 135
- *Parable XXI* for Guitar, Op. 140 (1978)
- *Parable XXII* for Tuba, Op. 147 (1981)
- *Parable XXIII* for Violin, Cello, and Piano, Op. 150 (1981)
- *Parable XXIV* for Harpsichord, Op. 153 (1982)
- *Parable XXV* for Two Trumpets, Op. 164 (1986)

## List of complete works

- Concertino for Piano, op.16, 1941
- Symphony no.1, op.18, 1942
- Symphony no.2, op.19, 1942
- Dance Overture, op.20, 1942
- Fables, op.23, 1943
- The Hollow Men, op.25, 1944
- Symphony no.3, op.30, 1946
- Serenade no.5, op.43, 1950
- Fairy Tale, op.48, 195

- Symphony no.4, op.51, 1951
- Symphony for Strings (Sym. no.5), op.61, 1953
- Symphony no.7 'Liturgical', op.80, 1958
- Piano Concerto, op.90, 1962
- Introit, op.96, 1964
- Symphony no.8, op.106, 1967
- Symphony no.9 'Sinfonia janiculum', op.113, 1970
- Night Dances, op.114, 1970
- A Lincoln Address, op.124, 1972
- Concerto for English Horn and Strings, op.137, 1977
  
- Band:
  - Divertimento, op.42, 1950
  - Psalm, op.53, 1952
  - Pageant, op.59, 1953
  - Symphony for Band (Sym. no.6), op.69, 1956
  - Serenade no.11, op.85, 1960
  - Bagatelles, op.87, 1961
  - So Pure the Star, chorale prelude, op.91, 1962
  - Masquerade, op.102, 1965
  - Turn not thy Face, chorale prelude, op.105, 1966
  - O Cool is the Valley (Poem for Band), op.118, 1971
  - Parable IX, op.121, 1972
  - A Lincoln Address, op.124a, nar, band, 1973
  - O God Unseen, chorale prelude, op.160, 1984
  
- Vocal
  - Choral:
    - Mag and Nunc, op.8, SATB, pf, 1940
    - Canons, op.31, SSAA/TTBB/SATB, 1947
    - 2 Cummings Choruses (e.e. cummings), op.33, 2vv, pf, 1948
    - Proverb, op.34, SATB, 1948
    - 2 Cummings Choruses, op.46, SSAA, 1950
    - Hymns and Responses for the Church Year (W.H. Auden and others), op.68, 1955
    - Seek the Highest (F. Adler), op.78, SAB, pf, 1957
    - Song of Peace (anon.), op.82, TTBB/SATB, pf, 1959
    - Mass, op.84, SATB, 1960
    - Spring Cantata (Cummings), op.94, SSAA, pf, 1963
    - Stabat mater, op.92, SATB, orch, 1963
    - Te Deum, op.93, SATB, orch, 1963
    - 4 Cummings Choruses, op.98, 2vv, pf, 1964
    - Winter Cantata (11 Haiku), op.97, SSAA, fl, mar, 1964
    - Celebrations (cant., W. Whitman), op.103, SATB, wind ens, 1966
    - The Pleiades (cant., Whitman), op.107, SATB, tpt, str, 1967

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    - Love (Bible: Corinthians), op.116, SSAA, 1971
    - Glad and Very (Cummings), op.129, 2vv, 1974
    - Flower Songs (Cant. no.6) (Cummings), op.157, SATB, str, 1983
    - Hymns and Responses for the Church Year, vol. 2, op.166, 1987
  - Solo:
    - 2 Chinese Songs, op.29, 1945
    - e.e. cummings Songs, op.26, 1945, unpubd
    - 3 English Songs (17th century), op.49, 1951, unpubd
    - Harmonium (W. Stevens), song cycle, op.50, S, pf, 1951
    - Carl Sandburg Songs, op.73, 1957, unpubd
    - Emily Dickinson Songs, op.77, 1957
    - Hilaire Belloc Songs, op.75, 1957
    - James Joyce Songs, op.74, 1957
    - Robert Frost Songs, op.76, 1957, unpubd
    - Sara Teasdale Songs, op.72, 1957, unpubd
    - A Net of Fireflies (Jap., trans. H. Steward), song cycle, op.115, 1970
- Chamber and Solo Instrumental
  - 3 or more instruments:
    - Serenade no.1, op.1, 10 wind, 1929
    - Str Qt no.1, op.7, 1939
    - Concertato, op.12, piano quintet, 1940
    - Serenade no.3, op.17, violin, cello, piano, 1941
    - Pastoral, op.21, woodwind quintet, 1943
    - String Quartet no.2, op.24, 1944
    - King Lear, op.35, woodwind quintet, timpani, piano, 1948
    - Serenade no.6, op.44, trombone, viola, cello, 1950
    - Piano Quintet, op.66, 1954
    - String Quartet no.3, op.81, 1959
    - Parable II, op.108, brass quintet, 1968
    - String Quartet no.4 (Parable X), op.122, 1972
    - Parable XXIII, op.150, violin, cello, piano, 1981
  - 1–2 instruments:
    - Sonata, op.10, violin, 1940
    - Suite, op.9, violin, cello, 1940, unpubd
    - Fantasy, op.15, violin, piano, 1941, unpubd
    - Serenade no.4, op.28, violin, piano, 1945
    - Vocalise, op.27, cello, piano, 1945
    - Sonata, op.54, cello, 1952
    - Little Recorder Book, op.70, 1956
    - Serenade no.9, op.71, 2 recorder, 1956
    - Serenade no.10, op.79, flute, harp, 1957
    - Infanta marina, op.83, viola, piano, 1960

- Serenade no.12, op.88, tuba, 1961
  - Serenade no.13, op.95, 2 clarinets, 1963
  - Masques, op.99, violin, piano, 1965
  - Parable [I], op.100, flute, 1965
  - Parable III, op.109, oboe, 1968
  - Parable IV, op.110, bassoon, 1969
  - Parable VII, op.119, harp, 1971
  - Parable VIII, op.120, horn, 1972
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      - Poems, vols.1–2, opp.4–5, 1939
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      - Sonata no.2, op.6, 1939
      - Sonata, op.13, 2 pianos, 1940
      - Poems, vol. 3, op.14, 1941
      - Sonata no.3, op.22, 1943
      - Variations for an Album, op.32, 1947
      - Sonata no.4, op.36, 1949
      - Sonata no.5, op.37, 1949
      - Sonata no.6, op.39, 1950
      - Sonata no.7, op.40, 1950
      - Sonata no.8, op.41, 1950
      - Sonatina no.1, op.38, 1950
      - Sonatina no.2, op.45, 1950
      - Sonatina no.3, op.47, 1950
      - Concerto, op.56, 4 hands, 1952
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      - Serenade no.7, op.55, 1952
      - Sonata no.9, op.58, 1952;
      - Little Piano Book, op.60, 1953
      - Serenade no.8, op.62, 4 hands, 1954
      - Sonatina no.4, op.63, 1954

- Sonatina no.5, op.64, 1954
- Sonatina no.6, op.65, 1954
- Sonata no.10, op.67, 1955
- Sonata no.11, op.101, 1965
- Parable XIX, op.134, 1975
- 4 Arabesques, op.141, 1978
- Little Mirror Book, op.139, 1978
- Reflective Studies, op.138, 1978
- Mirror Etudes, op.143, 1979
- 3 Toccatinas, op.142, 1979
- Sonata no.12, op.145, 1980
- Winter Solstice, op.165, 1986
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  - Sonatine, op.11, organ pedals, 1940
  - Harpsichord Sonata no.1, op.52, 1951
  - Organ Sonata, op.86, 1960
  - Shimah b'koli, op.89, organ, 1962
  - Drop, Drop Slow Tears, chorale prelude, op.104, organ, 1966
  - Parable V, op.112, carillon, 1969
  - Parable VI, op.117, organ, 1971
  - Do Not Go Gentle, op.132, organ pedals, 1974
  - Auden Variations, op.136, organ, 1977
  - Dryden Liturgical Suite, op.144, organ, 1980
  - Harpsichord Sonata no.2, op.146, 1981
  - Harpsichord Sonata no.3, op.149, 1981
  - Song of David, op.148, org, 1981
  - Harpsichord Sonata no.4, op.151, 1982
  - Harpsichord Sonata no.5, op.152, 1982
  - Harpsichord Sonata no.6, op.154, 1982
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  - Harpsichord Sonata no.7, op.156, 1983
  - Little Hpd Book, op.155, 1983
  - Harpsichord Sonata no.8, op.158, 1984
  - Serenade no.15, op.161, harpsichord, 1984
  - Give Peace, O God, chorale prelude, op.162, organ, 1985
  - Harpsichord Sonata no.9, op.163, 1985