

FABIO GRASSO

**HARMONIC, FORMAL AND
RHYTHMICAL STRUCTURES
in Ligeti's Etudes for Piano**

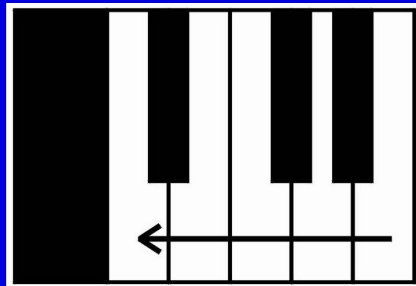
- Second Book (1988-1993)**
- Third Book (1995-2001)**

GENERAL FEATURES

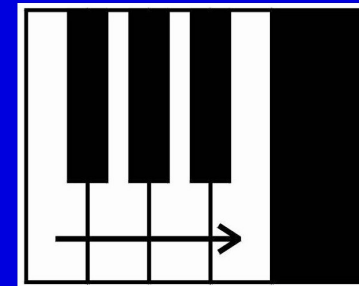
1st Book → HARMONY FORM ← 2nd Book

n. 5 Arc-en-ciel ↔ n. 11 En suspens

n. 6 Automne à Varsovie



n. 14 Columna infinita



Harmonic and formal differences in the 3° Book
Rhythmical features common to the 3 Books

**SECOND BOOK:
MAXIMUM VARIATION
IN MAXIMUM UNIFORMITY**

HARMONY: GENERAL OUTLINES

COMPLEMENTARY HARMONIC FIELDS

(POLYMODAL WRITING ← BARTÓK)

ONE FIELD PER HAND

No significant modifications during the piece

Fixed harmonic fields → horizontal uniformity

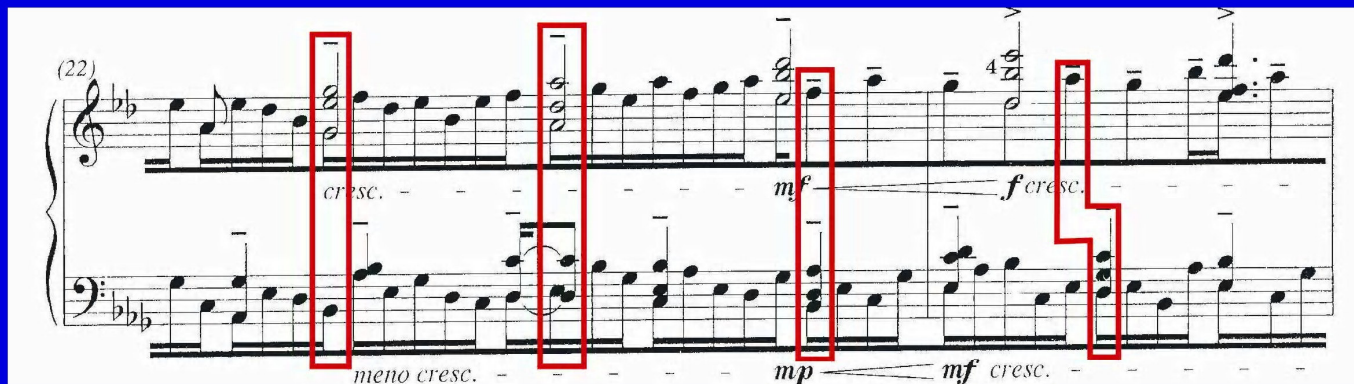
Free interactions between fields

→ vertical variety

SECOND BOOK: HARMONY - GENERAL OUTLINES

- VARIOUS COMBINATIONS OF
CONSONANCES AND DISSONANCES:
AN “HARMONIC CHEMISTRY”
- EFFECT OF GREAT HARMONIC RICHNESS

Line from n.7: pseudo-tonal chords highlighted in red

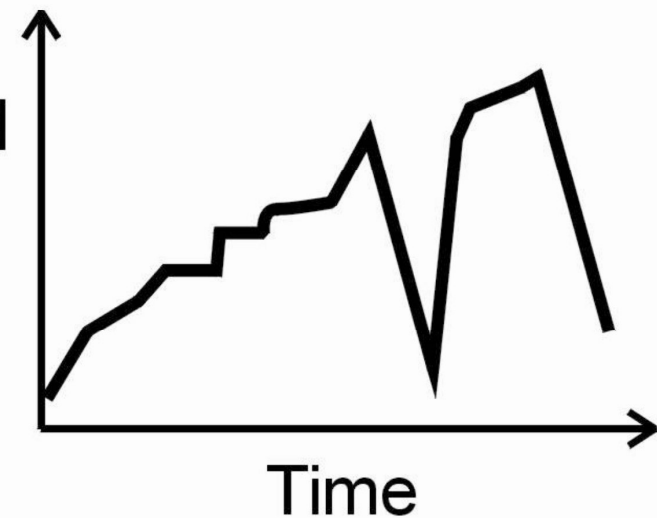


SECOND BOOK: FORMS

- **FORM 1:** Type A-B-A', or like "Rondò", with the scheme A1-X-A2-Y-A3... nn. 8, 11, 13. Each A is varied, and more and more complex

- **FORM 2:**
OPEN FORM
n. 7, 9, 12.

Polyphonic and
rhythmic
complexity

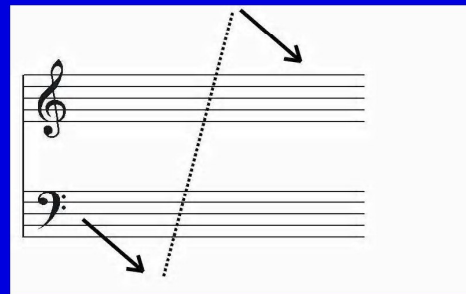


- n. 10 = mixed form
- n. 14 = open form with constant complexity

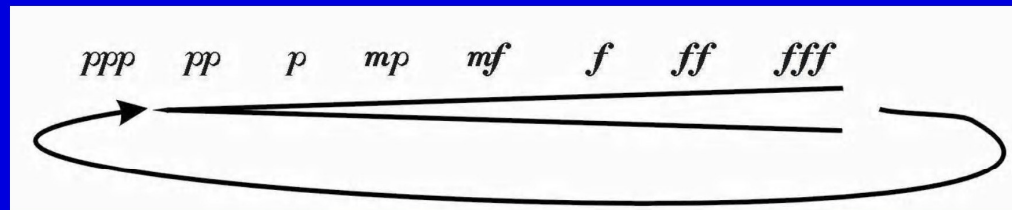
INSTRUMENTAL WRITING: VARIATION AND UNIFORMITY

- Gradualness of the movements:
 - No jumping
 - Rare use of thumb's passage

- Circularity of the keyboard's space



- Circularity of the dynamic space



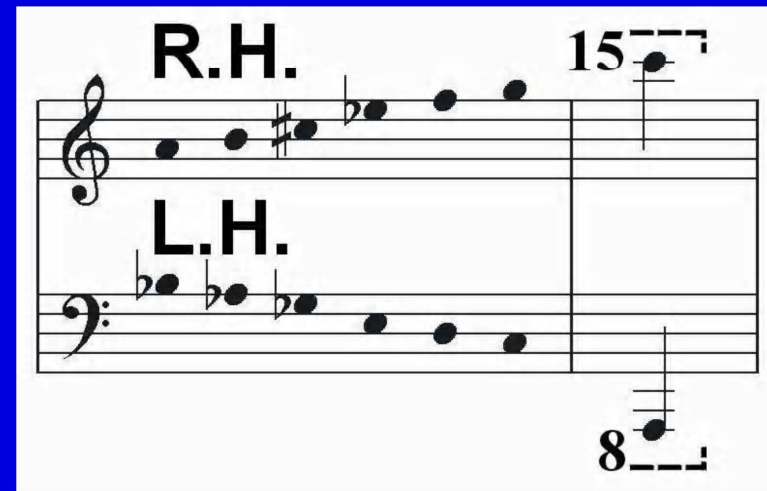
RHYTHM: GENERAL OUTLINES

- **Initial regularity of the beating**
- **Progressive asymmetricalization of the beating through added accents, but still with the hands in phase**
- **Further asymmetricalization through new added accents, now with the hands out of phase**

SECOND BOOK: EXAMPLES

n. 7: Galamb-borong

Indonesian title:
six-tones scales

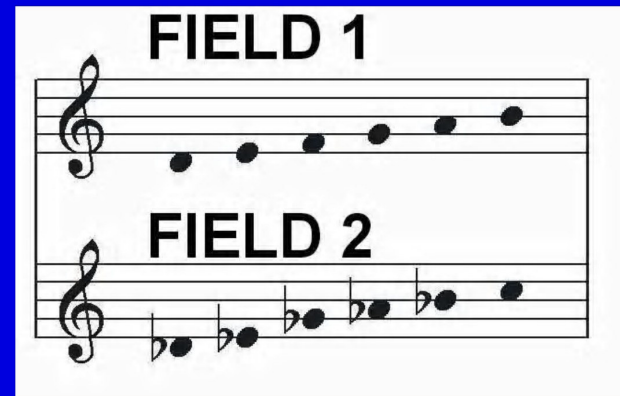


Rhythmical succession of the first bars:
6-6-6-6 - 6-6-6-6-6-6-6-6 - 6-6-5-5 - 4-3-3
 { 3-3-3-3-4 R.H.
 { 4-4-4-4 L.H

SECOND BOOK: EXAMPLES

n. 12: Entrelacs

Harmonic fields
exchanged between
the hands



RHYTHMICAL PROCESS
SIMILAR TO NUMBER 7

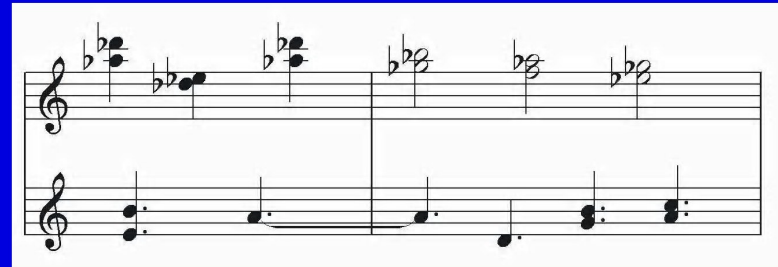
SECOND BOOK: EXAMPLES

n. 11: En suspens

Approximate Hemiolia (Galamb-borong)



Exact Hemiolia (En Suspens)



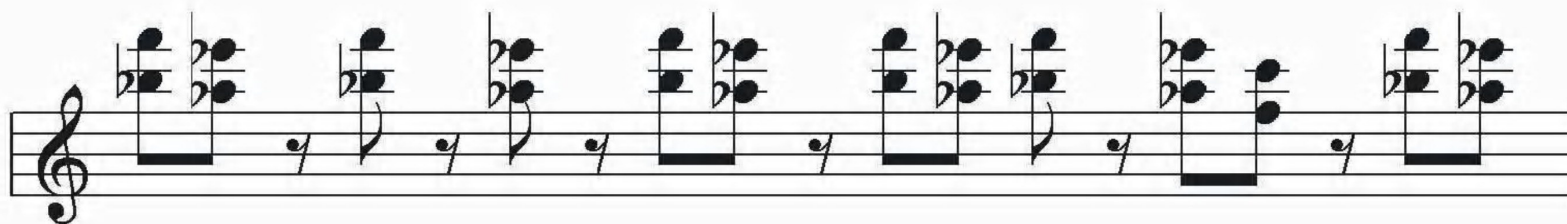
En Suspens

The little shepherd

SECOND BOOK: EXAMPLES

n. 8: Fém

Main rhythmical cell







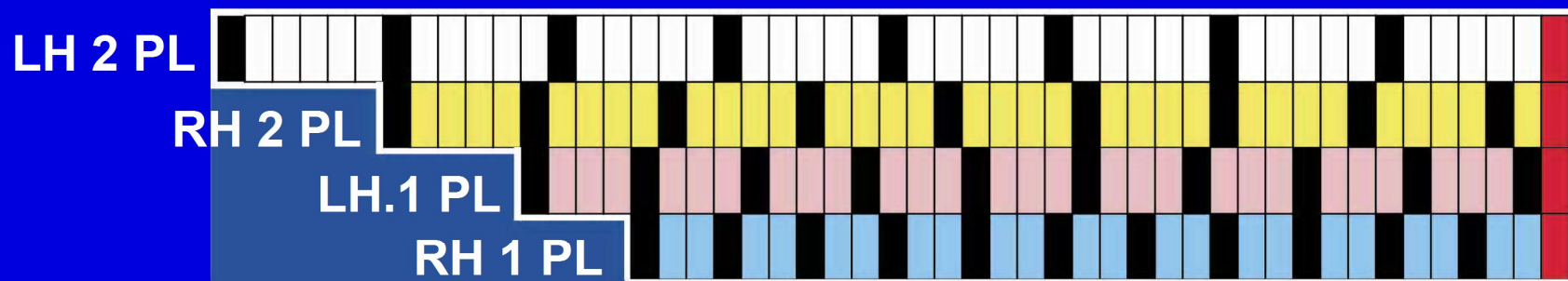
Debussy's
Golliwogg's Cakewalk



Polyphonic Etude 4 hands

- Each cell is a bar. Each group beginning by a black cell is a repeated melodic line.
- Black cells = first bars of each repetition.
- Red cells = conclusive bars

	Line of 2nd player's left hand, 6 bars, C major
	Line of 2nd player's r.h, 5 bars, F sharp major
	Line of 1st player's l.h, 4 bars, E major
	Line of 1st player's r.h, 3 bars, B flat major



SECOND BOOK: EXAMPLES
n. 10: Der Zauberlehrling
(The sorcerer's apprentice)

**ILLUSIONISTIC JOKE
OF THE FIGURATIONS**

**OPPOSITION WHITE-BLACK KEYS, WITH
ALLUSIONS TO CHOPIN'S op. 10 n. 5**

**MIXED FORM
(OPEN FORM AND RONDÒ)**

SECOND BOOK: EXAMPLES

n. 14: Columna infinita

“Human” version of «Coloana infinita»
for mechanical piano

→ PARADOXICAL INTENT

Ex.: Fortissimo until *fffffffff*

Attempt to fix one of the realizations
of an aleatory thought

SECOND BOOK: EXAMPLES

n. 13: L'escalier du diable

**VIRTUOSITY-RELATED
MEPHISTOPHELEAN SARCASM**
like in Liszt's Mephisto-Waltz
or in Paganini

**Conventional images and symbols:
Dante's circles of Hell, tritone intervals**

The signal of the “infernal bells”

SECOND BOOK: EXAMPLES

n. 13: L'escalier du diable (2)

STRICT RELATION BETWEEN RHYTHM AND HARMONY

FIRST LINE:

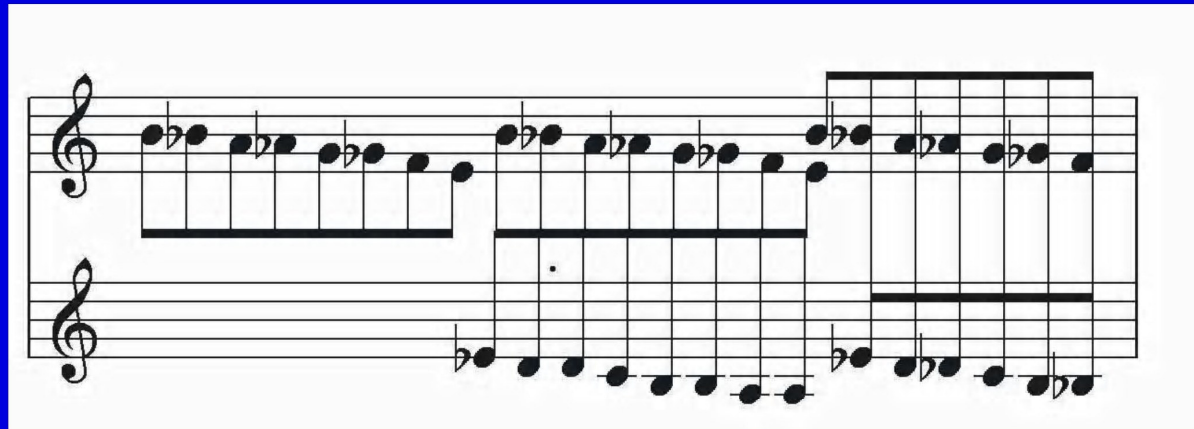
Main ictuses with chromatic field
Secondary ictuses with 6-tones field



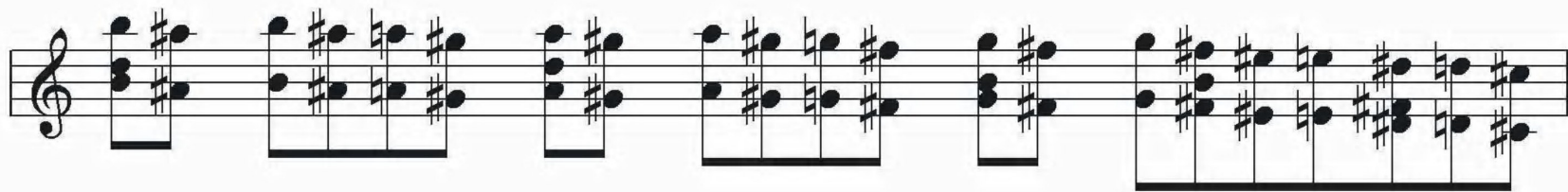
SECOND BOOK: EXAMPLES

n. 9: Vertige

Main element:
Chromatically
descending
fragments



Probable instrumental hint from Chopin's op. 25 n. 10



SECOND BOOK: EXAMPLES

n. 9: Vertige (2)

Example of irregular successions of fragments. The numbers refer to the quantity of notes per fragment, therefore to the rhythmic beating of their flow (2° page).

2-3-4 / 2-3-4 / 3-4-5-2-3-3-5-4-2-3 / 2-2-2-2-2-2-2-2

**Contrast between the vertiginous
descending chromatic movements
and the ascending lines, with consonant
pseudo-tonal harmonies**

THIRD BOOK

- **ONE HARMONIC FIELD (with subsequently added extraneous notes)**
 - **n.15 (3rd Book n.1), White on white, scale of white keys**
 - **n.16 (3rd Book n.2), Pour Irina, defective scale of B flat minor**
 - **n.17 (3rd Book n.3), A bout de souffle, scale of C minor**

THIRD BOOK:

Other elements of distinction

- COUNTERPOINT WRITING: CANONS at the octave

The image displays three musical examples of counterpoint writing, specifically canons at the octave. Each example consists of two staves. Example n. 15 (1) shows a canon in G major with a treble staff starting on G4 and a bass staff starting on G3. Example n. 17 (3) shows a canon in D minor with a treble staff starting on D4 and a bass staff starting on D3. Example n. 18 (4) shows a canon in C major with a treble staff starting on C4 and a bass staff starting on C3. The notation includes notes, rests, and bar lines, illustrating the interval of an octave between the two parts.

- TASTE FOR REMEMBRANCE
 - Slow Introductions in n. 15 (1) and 16 (2)
 - Memories of Chopin's Sonata op. 35, 4th movement, in n. 17 (3)

THIRD BOOK:

Other elements of distinction (2)

**LESS AGGRESSIVE AND
MORE INWARD STYLE**

**STRONG ENIGMATIC INTENT:
FINAL CHORDS IN SUDDEN PIANISSIMO**

SURPRISING A MINOR CHORD AS END OF 18