

Peter McKenzie Armstrong

[CTT-95]

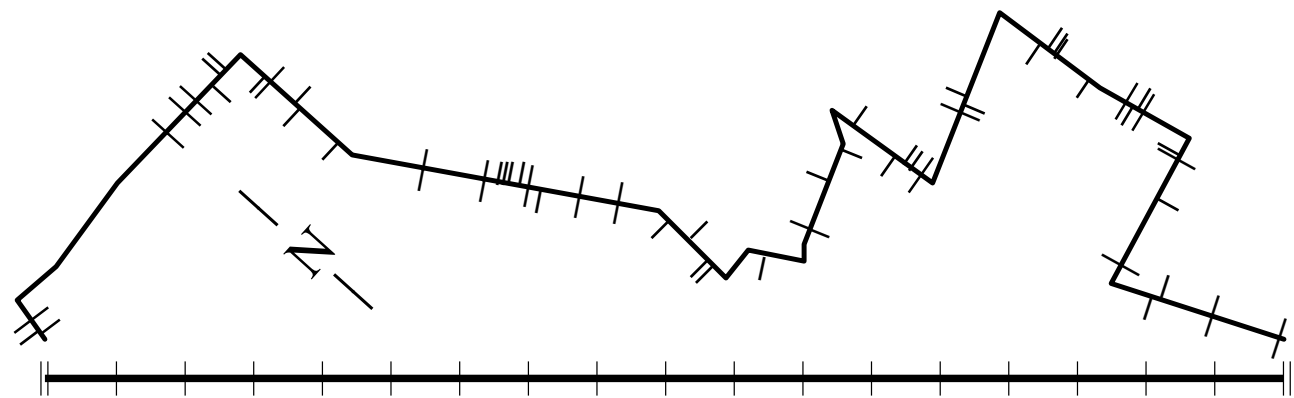
Bus Ride over a Bach Bass

for mixed digital quartet

2012

Edition Ottaviano Petrucci

NOTES



Circumstances obliged me recently to take a bus — the CTTransit local from Hartford’s Constitution Plaza, across the Connecticut River and south to Glastonbury. The ride would have gone unremarkably, had not something just before made me unusually vulnerable to distraction. A conversation, calling to mind the Air from Sebastian Bach’s D–major Orchestral Suite, had sparked an irresistible urge to run this sublime music through my head. Soon more irresistible, however, was the lurching bus’s cacophony of whines, rumbles and squeaks. My urge went down in defeat, and I vowed revenge: to concoct a musical busride powerless against JSB’s Air. Back home, after a frenzy measuring Rand McNally and tinkering with Merriam Webster syllabifications, a strategy emerged, which I summarize here to describe the outcome.

Taking as point of departure the Air’s 4–part layout: replace main melody (Violin I) with a rattletrap engine (steel drums); preserve fully the original bass line (Continuo); move inner–voice ranges (Violin II, Viola) to the outside instead (two xylophones, one too low to exist) for squeaks & rumbles respectively.

Derive content entirely from the names of streets, taken in two groups: those driven on (18, coincidentally the number of bars in the Air), and those intersected (~70 total, on L or R only or on both). Map these names to the chromatic scale by spelling and to meter by their relative syllabic stresses. Set each Group–1 (drums) phrase as a single voice iterating perpetually once per beat, each time parrot–whipped by its inversion. Set each Group–2 (xylophone) phrase as a voice pair, sounding once only, painfully augmented.

Apply global controls as follows. Move the engine’s tessitura to parallel the bus’s north–easterly height (see map). Vary tempo, slightly but often, with the relative stop–to–stop distances. Scale with complementary fractions to make the engine’s "perpetual" beats seldom in fact quite equal. As its tessitura attempts dangerous heights, down–shift the stressed engine via transposing canon. And through all, ensure that the Air’s bass line, while not unaffected by tempo instability, proceeds unperturbed to completion.

The score, while not humanly playable or performance–speed readable, has served to auto–sequence for MIDI and to discipline my efforts. Its dedicatee, please note, I made up, with an extra character honoring August Emil Daniel Ferdinand Wilhelmj, the nineteenth–century violinist who commandeered this Air to immortalize his G string.

Challenge to the Listener: Can you imagine, perhaps hum, the Air melody — from memory, of course, and in sync with its sounding bass here — without losing track?

to Nikola Gharzumj

[CTT-95]

Bus Ride over a Bach Bass

For Mixed Digital Quartet

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[Temple St.] [Talcott St.]

Xylophone I. $\text{♩} = 159$

Steel Drums. [Market St. at Constitution Plaza]

Celli Pizzicato.

Xylophone II. [Kinsley St.] [Talcott St.]

[Chapel St.]

[Morgan St.]

[Morgan St.]

2
5

[Bulkeley Bridge]

Measures 2-5 of the Bulkeley Bridge section. The melody in the treble clef consists of eighth and sixteenth notes with various triplet and sixteenth-note groupings. The bass clef has a single note in measure 4.

7

Measures 7-10 of the Bulkeley Bridge section. The melody continues with complex rhythmic patterns. The bass clef has a single note in measure 8.

9

♩ = 148

[Blacksmith Ln.]

[Connecticut Blvd.]

[East River Dr.]

Measures 9-12 of the score. Measure 9 is the end of the Bulkeley Bridge section. Measures 10-12 introduce new sections: Blacksmith Ln. (treble), Connecticut Blvd. (treble), and East River Dr. (bass). The tempo is marked as ♩ = 148.

11

System 11: Treble clef, key of D major. The first staff contains a series of eighth-note patterns with triplets and slurs, including measures 14:13, 14:15, 13:12, and 13:14. The second staff is mostly empty with a few notes. The third staff is empty.

[Thomas St.]

19

System 19: Treble clef, key of D major. The first staff contains a series of eighth-note patterns with triplets and slurs, including measures 11:12, 12:11, 11:10, and 12:13. The second staff is mostly empty with a few notes. The third staff is empty.

[Ash St.]

Continuation of System 19: Treble clef, key of D major. The first staff contains a series of eighth-note patterns with triplets and slurs, including measures 3:2, 1:2, and 6. The second staff is mostly empty with a few notes. The third staff is empty.

[Governor St.]

19

Continuation of System 19: Treble clef, key of D major. The first staff contains a series of eighth-note patterns with triplets and slurs, including measures 3:2, 10:9, 9:8, 9:10, and 10:11. The second staff is mostly empty with a few notes. The third staff is empty.

[Governor St.]

Continuation of System 19: Treble clef, key of D major. The first staff contains a series of eighth-note patterns with triplets and slurs, including measures 3:2, 3:2, 1:2, and 6. The second staff is mostly empty with a few notes. The third staff is empty.

4

[Prospect St.]

Measures 14-15. The score is in 4/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The top staff (treble clef) contains the main melody for [Prospect St.] with various ornaments and slurs. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains the bass line for [South Prospect St.].

Measures 15-16. The score is in 4/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The top staff (treble clef) contains the main melody for [Harrison Place] and [Lynn St.]. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains the bass line for [Ward St.].

Measures 17-18. The score is in 4/4 time. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The top staff (treble clef) contains the main melody for [Main St.], [Central Av.], [Chapel St.], and [Garvan St.]. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains the bass line for [Main St.].

[Saunders St.]

18

♩ = 149

[Carroll Rd.]

[Blinn St.]

[State Highway 517]

20

[Pitkin St.]

[Silver Ln.]

21

[East River Dr. Ext.]

6

23

$\text{♩} = 134$

[Brown St.]

[Judson Av.]

[Lilac St.]

25

The musical score is for 'The Streets of New York' by George Gershwin, featuring piano and voice parts. The score is divided into four systems, each corresponding to a different street: Sisson St., Risley St., Willow St., and Crosby St. The piano part is written in treble and bass staves, and the voice part is written in a single staff. The tempo is marked as 136 beats per minute. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

System 1: Sisson St. / Risley St.

- Street:** Sisson St. (Piano), Risley St. (Voice)
- Tempo:** 136
- Key Signature:** One sharp (F#)
- Time Signature:** 7/8
- Measure Range:** 26-31

System 2: Willow St.

- Street:** Willow St. (Piano and Voice)
- Measure Range:** 32-41

System 3: Willow St. / Crosby St.

- Street:** Willow St. (Piano), Crosby St. (Voice)
- Tempo:** 135
- Measure Range:** 42-51

System 4: Colt St. / Crosby St.

- Street:** Colt St. (Piano), Crosby St. (Voice)
- Measure Range:** 52-61

30 $\text{♩} = 132$
[Ensign St.]

31 $\text{♩} = 131$

32 $\text{♩} = 135$

[High St.]

[High St.]

[Carriage Ct. Dr.]

34 $\text{♩} = 132$
[Brewer St.]

[Pent Rd.]

[High Ct.]

♩ = 136

[Carter St.]

[Main St.]

♩ = 134

[Main St.]

[Wadsworth St.]

♩ = 131

[Sutton Av.]

[Sutton Av.]

♩ = 134

[Cambridge Dr.]

[Millbrook Dr.]

[Cambridge Dr.]

[Oxford Dr.]

[Millbrook Dr.]

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[Maple St.]

51

[Maple St.]

[Maple St.]

53

[Clayton Rd.]

[Holly St.]

[Spaulding Cr.]

[Spaulding Cr.]

55

[illegible]

[illegible]

67

$\text{♩} = 137$
[Bantle Rd.]

1:3
6
10:11
6
10:9
6
9:8
6
9:10
6
11:10
6
12:13
6
12:11
6
11:12
6

69

$\text{♩} = 130$
[Wrights Ln.]

13:14
6
13:12
6
14:13
6
14:15
6
16:17
6
15:16
6
15:14
6
16:15
6

71

$\text{♩} = 134$
[Main St.]

$\text{♩} = 139$
[Spring St.]

[Main St.]

[Main St.]

[Pratt St.]

1:3
6
12:13
6
12:11
6
11:12
6
11:10
6
9:8
6
9:10
6
10:11
6
10:9
6
1:3
6
1:5
6
1:5

73

1:4

6:4

6

1:4

14:15

6

13:14

6

14:13

6

13:12

6

15:14

6

16:15

6

16:17

6

15:16

6

1:5

6

1:5

♩ = 120

[New London Tpk.]

3:2

1:4

17:19

6

8:9

6

17:15

6

8:7

6

[Welles St.]

1:2

6:4

1:2

6

[Naubuc Av.]

3:2

3

1:4

3

3

1:4

3

[Welles St.]

6:4

1:2

6

1:2