

UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF MARC BLITZSTEIN: EXAMINING LEONARD J.

LEHRMAN'S USES OF SERIAL TECHNIQUES FOR DRAMATIC

PURPOSES IN *KARLA*

Jeremy B. Blackwood, B.M.E., M.M.

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APPROVED:

Stephen Austin, Major Professor and Chair of
the Department of Vocal Studies

Elvia Puccinelli, Committee Member

Jeffrey Snider, Committee Member

Benjamin Brand, Director of Graduate Studies

James Scott, Dean of the College of Music

Mark Wardell, Dean of the Toulouse Graduate
School

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American composer, author and conductor Leonard J. Lehrman (b. 1949) has spent a majority of his lifetime devoted to the scholarship on the music of Marc Blitzstein (1905-1964). Lehrman completed Blitzstein's *Idiots First* in 1973, and finished his own one-act opera *Karla* in 1974. In an effort to honor Blitzstein, Lehrman included *Karla* along with *Idiots First* to begin the set of one-act operas to be titled *Tales of Malamud*. Lehrman coined the term "selective serialism" in reference to Blitzstein's use of serial techniques representing something associated with death or something diabolical. Lehrman applies a similar technique in that he uses serialism to reference the presence of handwritten notes that are tied to the dramatic context of the opera. This study examines Lehrman's use of serialism in *Karla* as it was directly influenced by Blitzstein's use of serialism in *Idiots First*.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

American composer, author and conductor Leonard J. Lehrman (b. 1949) has spent the majority of his lifetime devoted to scholarship on the music of Marc Blitzstein (1905-1964). Lehrman has published three edited volumes of the *Marc Blitzstein Songbook* (1999, 2001, 2003) in an effort to stimulate renewed interest in the older composer's works. These volumes include many selections from Blitzstein's one-act operas and full-length operas, as well as individual songs. Among the works featured in these publications are Blitzstein's final one-act compositions *Idiots First* (1964) and *The Magic Barrel* (1964), neither of which was completed before Blitzstein's untimely death. Blitzstein's one-act opera compositions previously included *Triple Sec* (1928), *Parabola and Circula* (1929), *The Harpies* (1931), *The Condemned* (1932), and *I've Got a Tune* (1937).¹

Blitzstein conceived *Idiots First* and *The Magic Barrel*, both based on texts of Bernard Malamud (1914-1986), to be published as a set under the title, *Tales of Malamud*. Blitzstein's list of Malamud's short stories that were of interest to him that he considered for *Tales of Malamud* included "Angel Levine," "Magic Barrel," "Idiots First," "The Loan," "The Mourners," "The Death of Me," "The Cost of Living," and "A Fool Grows Without Rain,"...as shown in Figure 1.² "He decided that *Idiots First* and *The Magic Barrel* could provide 'a full evening.'"³ At the time of his death, the majority of the score for *Idiots First* had been completed, and only a few portions of *The Magic Barrel* survived.⁴

¹ Leonard J. Lehrman, *Marc Blitzstein: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2005), 68.

² Marc Blitzstein, *Tales of Malamud*, Marc Blitzstein Papers, 1918-1989, Correspondence Reel 48/Frame 606, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI, Microfilm.

³ Howard Pollack, *Marc Blitzstein: His Life, His Work, His World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 487.

⁴ Pollack, 491.

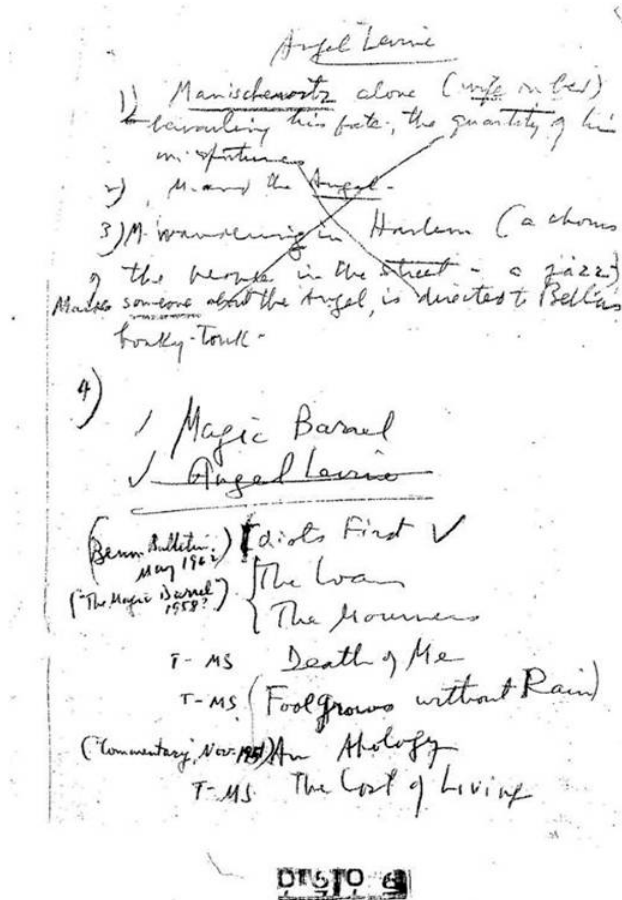


Figure 1: List of Malamud stories of interest to Marc Blitzstein⁵

Lehrman requested the opportunity to complete *Idiot's First* from Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) after the Blitzstein Estate asked Lehrman to consider completing the work in July 1970.⁶ Lehrman neither met nor knew Marc Blitzstein personally, but he "admired, emulated, and studied Blitzstein's works."⁷ He completed Blitzstein's *Idiot's First* in December 1973, and he composed his own one-act opera *Karla* (1974) between "January and July, 1974."⁸ In an effort to

⁵ Marc Blitzstein, *Tales of Malamud*, Marc Blitzstein Papers, 1918-1989, Correspondence Reel 48/Frame 606. Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI. Microfilm.

⁶ Leonard J. Lehrman, e-mail message to the author, October 7, 2014.

⁷ Leonard J. Lehrman, e-mail message to the author, July 21, 2013.

⁸ Leonard Lehrman, "Part I: *Karla* - a One-Act Opera in Three Scenes Based on Bernard Malamud's 'Notes From a Lady at a Dinner Part.'" [Original Composition]. DMA diss., Cornell University, 1977, ii.

honor Blitzstein, Lehrman included *Karla* along with *Idiots First* to begin the set of one-act operas to be titled *Tales of Malamud*.

This study examines the effects of serialism in *Karla* as it was influenced by Blitzstein's *Idiots First*. In *Idiots First*, Blitzstein uses serialism sparingly in the accompaniment to represent one character, Ginzberg, who is the representation of death and time. In a similar way, Lehrman uses serial techniques to underscore dramatic elements, revealing the influence of Blitzstein's *Idiots First* in *Karla*. Lehrman limits his use of serialism: it only appears in reference to handwritten notes central to the dramatic unfolding of the opera. Every time the handwritten notes appear, the presence of serialism occurs either in the vocal line, the accompaniment or both.

CHAPTER 2

TALES OF MALAMUD

Completion of a deceased composer's work is not uncommon especially when finished by a student or someone who is closely related to the composer. Even given the size and scope of operatic compositions, there are occasions where there are enough details left by a composer to warrant a completion. This is seen in the completion of Giacomo Puccini's (1858-1924) *Turandot* (1926) by Franco Alfano (1875-1954) and the three-act version of Alban Berg's (1885-1935) *Lulu* (1937) by Friedrich Cerha (b. 1926).⁹ Interestingly, neither of these composers was a student of their respective composer nor had they prior working relationships concerning the unfinished operatic compositions.¹⁰ Leonard J. Lehrman assumed a similar responsibility to complete *Idiot's First* by Marc Blitzstein.

For the most part, many of Marc Blitzstein's works are not well known. Notable exceptions are his opera *Regina* (1949), his musical theatre work *The Cradle Will Rock* (1937), and his English adaptation of *The Threepenny Opera* (1954) by Kurt Weill (1900-1950). The classification of Blitzstein's works as compositions classed as "opera" versus "musical theatre" has often been a subject of debate. Blitzstein in a lecture for the New England Conservatory in 1956 shared his interpretation of opera.

I would call any work an opera which contains a theatre-composite, and a musical-composite; and which maintains a primary and continuous relations between the two...The music composite has to do with the stage too, in that the characters sometimes dance; but also it includes an instrumental group...These two amalgams are in constant byplay with each other; sometimes the music accompanies; sometimes it reveals qualities or moods unsuspected in the stage-performance itself; sometimes the music takes over completely...The fact that opera has changed over the years doesn't bother me at all. You

⁹ Linda B. Fairtile, "'Duetto a tre': Franco Alfano's Completion of 'Turandot,'" *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16, no.2 (July 2004): 163.

¹⁰ Janet Maguire, "Puccini's Version of the Duet and Final Scene of 'Turandot,'" *The Musical Quarterly*, 74, no.3 (1990): 320.

see, I feel the form to be a living form, which shifts emphasis, adapts itself, and sometimes makes innovations, according to time [and] place.¹¹

Indeed, Blitzstein was not concerned about a specific label for his compositions. He focused on the elements within his compositions that would serve the dramatic purpose that would align with his ideology with texts that served a specific time and place.

Blitzstein's Philosophical Ideology

Blitzstein's philosophical ideology served as the basis for the subject matter concerning his compositions: his choice of texts reflected the social and political issues of his day. His voice was infused with directness and his choice of controversial topics eventually led to him being included on a blacklist published in 1950 in *Red Channels*, a pamphlet that exposed persons having some interest or supposed interest in the Communist Party.¹² Blitzstein's goal was to give insight into the human experience of the poor and the marginalized, the ones who had no voice at all. Blitzstein's theatrical writing may have been influenced by his contemporaries, but his focus was to challenge his performers and his listeners with texts that stir the human emotional experience in order to create a singular voice. Marc Blitzstein, in his credo, states

My field is musico-dramatic, musico-lyrical, and just plain music. If I find myself tending in composition largely towards writing music for voices, for the theater, for films, for radio and television, it is because I am a product of my time - and my time is one of urgency and direct communication in the arts. If it be argued that such a formulation of mine might destroy my chances for "immortality" (and as a serious composer I assure you that I too have that bee in my bonnet), then I can only say that greater artists than I have faced their moment squarely in their work, and have not lost their prestige with posterity on that account. Subject-matter, as such, can never make or break a work of art. Its lasting qualities depend on the artist's personality, on the equation of content-and-form, and on a lot of other intangibles. I am content to have my work undergo the test of repeated hearings, of Time, and of Tarnish.¹³

¹¹ Marc Blitzstein, *Marc Blitzstein Writings*, Marc Blitzstein Papers, 1918-1989, Correspondence Reel 8/Frame 6. Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI. Microfilm.

¹² Ellen Schnecker, *The Age of McCarthyism: A Brief history with Documents* (New York: St. Martin Press, 1994), 244-245.

¹³ The Marc Blitzstein Website, "Archive: Credo" <http://www.marcblitzstein.com> (Accessed March 22, 2012).

In 1962, Marc Blitzstein became a faculty member at Bennington College (Bennington, Vermont). According to Eric Gordon in his book *Mark the Music: The Life and Work of Marc Blitzstein*, Blitzstein became intrigued with the idea of composing music based on the text of Bernard Malamud (1914-1986), who also served on the faculty.¹⁴ Bernard Malamud, "writing in the last third of the twentieth century... was aware of social problems: rootlessness, infidelity, abuse, divorce, and more, but he [believed] in love as redemptive and sacrifice as uplifting."¹⁵ Additionally, "the Jewish milieu of Malamud's stories no doubt intrigued Blitzstein," who was of Jewish ancestry.¹⁶ Blitzstein decided to begin with *Idiots First* as the first of two one-act operas based on Malamud's texts to be titled *Tales of Malamud*.

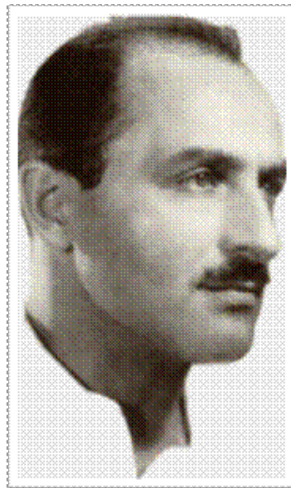


Figure 2: Marc Blitzstein (1905-1964)¹⁷

¹⁴ Eric Gordon, *Mark the Music: The Life and Work of Marc Blitzstein* (San Jose: iUniverse.com, 2000), 513.

¹⁵ Avery, Evelyn, "Bernard Malamud (1914-1986)," <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/bassr/heath/syllabuild/iguide/Malamud.html> (accessed May 6, 2012).

¹⁶ Pollack, 487.

¹⁷ The Marc Blitzstein Website, <http://www.marcblitzstein.com/> (accessed March 22, 2012).



Figure 3: Bernard Malamud (1914-1986)¹⁸

Blitzstein's Composition Studies

Blitzstein began studying composition at the Curtis Institute of Music at the age of nineteen with Rosario Scalero (1870-1954) who also taught Samuel Barber (1910-1981).¹⁹ Within two years, Blitzstein left the Curtis Institute of Music to spend a short four months (October 1926-January 1927) studying composition with Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979) in Paris.²⁰ Immediately following his time with Boulanger, Blitzstein studied composition with Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) for three months, an experience that he described as "tension [that] had become unbearable."²¹ Blitzstein turned away from the twelve-tone compositional technique that he learned under Schoenberg.²² He had his "own commitment to melody, harmony, and the music setting of words [that] were in direct conflict with the new sound and techniques."²³ His "new sound and technique" was a vehicle to connect with the common

¹⁸ Mervyn Rothstein, "Bernard Malamud Dies at 71; Chronicled Human Struggle," *New York Times*, March 19, 1986. Photo by Joyce Dopkeen.

¹⁹ Pollack, 25

²⁰ Pollack, 28.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 30-31. Pollack references that Blitzstein's composition lessons began shortly after February 10, 1927.

²² Joan Peyser, "The Troubled Time of Marc Blitzstein." *Columbia University Forum* 9 (Winter 1966), 33.

²³ *Ibid.*

listener, as he was not interested in only catering to the upper echelon of society. Blitzstein's biographer Howard Pollack states, "Commentators have surmised that this music signaled a new phase for the composer that reflected a deepening artistic vision...encompassing innovative forms, novel sounds, and unusual stagecraft as well as some development in terms of dramatic content."²⁴ *Idiots First* resonates with Blitzstein's belief that "communication in the arts" be guided by text through music.

Tales of Malamud

Marc Blitzstein never saw *Idiots First* performed, as he was beaten to death in Martinique in January 1964. "'It's discouraging to realize that Marc's best work was his last, *Idiots First*, which he played me just weeks ago,' Ned Rorem wrote in his diary on January 27, 1964, a few days after his friend's death."²⁵ *Idiots First* was nearly complete at the time of his death, with the exception of "a short scene to be written here and there, ten bars of accompaniment missing here, twelve bars there."²⁶ Leonard Bernstein, a good friend of Blitzstein, was originally charged with completing the work and had made promises to do so but did not follow through.²⁷

Approximately six years following Blitzstein's death, after having great success directing a production of Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock*, Lehrman was encouraged by his teacher, Elie Siegmeister (1909-1991), to contact the Blitzstein Estate in an effort to explore other "long-unperformed and in some cases unfinished works."²⁸

In our email exchange, Lehrman told me, "Bernstein heard about my November 1969 production of *Cradle [Will Rock]* at Harvard. He did not attend it. He did attend my production

²⁴ Pollack, 494.

²⁵ Gordon, 543.

²⁶ Gordon, 532.

²⁷ Pollack, 492.

²⁸ Leonard Lehrman, review of *Mark the Music: The Life and Work of Marc Blitzstein*, Eric A. Gordon, *Jewish Affairs* 20, no. 2 (March/April 1990): 18.

there of *I've Got the Tune*, *The Harpies*, and *Trouble in Tahiti*, on December 5, 1970. That's where I requested and received his permission to complete *Idiots First*. He took me in his arms with the words: 'God bless you!'"²⁹ Lehrman completed *Idiots First* as part of his master's thesis at Cornell University in 1973, providing the finished opera and a complete analysis with publication in 1974. Leonard Bernstein once stated that Lehrman was "Marc Blitzstein's dybbuk" - a Jewish term referring to the spirit of one who is deceased embodying a living being to finish something left incomplete.³⁰ Lehrman subsequently added two of his own works to the *Tales of Malamud* - *Karla* and *Suppose a Wedding*, both of which are published by Theodore Presser Company.



*Figure 4: Leonard Lehrman (b. 1949)*³¹

²⁹ Leonard J. Lehrman, e-mail message to the author, July 21, 2013.

³⁰ Leonard J. Lehrman, "Biography," <http://www.ljlehrman.artists-in-residence.com> (accessed January 28, 2012). Information on the website states "Elie Siegmeister called Leonard 'my continuator,' while Leonard Bernstein dubbed him 'Marc Blitzstein's *dybbuk*.' Blake Eskin interviewed him on that subject, for nextbook.org. A dybbuk in Jewish folklore is a soul of one who is deceased who is thought to enter and control a living being until a certain task is complete or until exorcised by a religious rite.

³¹ Leonard J. Lehrman, <http://ljlehrman.artists-in-residence.com> (accessed July 28, 2014).

CHAPTER 3

BLITZSTEIN'S *IDIOTS FIRST* AND SELECTIVE SERIALISM

Mid-twentieth century operatic compositions in America reflected a multitude of changes and ideas as seen in the characteristics of American composers who were experimenting with form, voicing, and style as they sought an American "musical idiom." Very often, the results of experimentation were dramatic works based upon events and struggles of everyday life. Blitzstein's composition *The Cradle Will Rock* (1937) provided an outlet for the subject of pro-unionized work, *Street Scene* (1946) by Kurt Weill (1900-1950) portrayed struggles of romance and scandal, *Regina* (1949) (based on Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes*) highlighted the issue of money and greed, *The Tender Land* (1954) by Aaron Copland (1900-1990) depicts life during the Depression, Leonard Bernstein exposed a "postwar American materialism" in his *Trouble in Tahiti* (1951), an opera which Bernstein dedicated to Blitzstein,³² and Blitzstein's *Reuben, Reuben* (1955) showed the struggle of life in society.

Elise Kirk states that composers "understood music's powerful role in defining character and propelling the drama forwards."³³ Marc Blitzstein was no stranger to this ideology in his dramatic works, which typically elaborate on "political and proletarian" themes.³⁴ Aaron Copland stated, "his purpose was not merely to write the words and music of effective theatre pieces; he wanted to shape them for his own ends, to shape it for human ends. He took a certain pleasure in needling his audiences, in telling unpleasant truths straight to their faces."³⁵ In

³² Leonard Bernstein, "Trouble in Tahiti," http://www.leonardbernstein.com/works_trouble_in_tahiti.htm (accessed September 14, 2014).

³³ Elise K. Kirk, "American opera: innovation and tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 197.

³⁴ Caroline Harvey, "Words and actions," in *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Opera*, ed. Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 197.

³⁵ Aaron Copland, "In memory of Marc Blitzstein (1905-1964)" (ca. March 1964), The Aaron Copland Collection, ca. 1900-1990, The Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

memory of Marc Blitzstein, Aaron Copland stated,

Blitzstein's life exemplified a truism that needs to be re-emphasized today, namely, that "every artist has the right to make his art out of an emotion that really moves him." Those of our composers who are attracted by the immense terrain of new techniques now available to them would do well to consider that humanity's struggle for a fuller life may be equally valid as a moving force in the future history of our music. It was the basic motivation for Marc Blitzstein's art, and resulted in a contribution to American music that is yet to be fully evaluated.³⁶

Marc Blitzstein was crafting his own unique style in twentieth century American music. His contemporaries may have influenced his theatrical writing, but his focus was to challenge his performers and his listeners with text and to move them. Blitzstein's dramatic subject matter fused with his approach to melodic and harmonic construction served to express his dramatic works that in turn influenced Leonard J. Lehrman.

Blitzstein was a household name to Lehrman during his childhood from his "parents' copy of the 1948 *People's Song Book*, for which he [Blitzstein] had arranged 'On Top of Old Smoky.'" ³⁷ Lehrman's admiration for Blitzstein increased after he discovered Blitzstein's approach to twelve-tone writing, which supported his own explorations of the technique at that time.³⁸ It was Lehrman's teacher, Siegmeister, who encouraged further study of Blitzstein's work.

Blitzstein's Final Opera: *Idiots First*

Idiots First is Marc Blitzstein's final one-act opera based upon a short story of the same title by Bernard Malamud that delivers a human-themed text portrays the life of Jewish characters, Mendel and his mentally disabled son, Itzak. Mendel is in his last days and wants to send his son Itzak to his Uncle Leo in California. In order to do so, Mendel needs to raise money

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Leonard Lehrman, "Completing Marc Blitzstein's Incomplete Works: In Honor of the Composer's 50th Yortsayt, January 22, 2014 and the First Performance of His Work in Yiddish, March 6, 2014." *Jewish Currents* (February 18, 2014), <http://jewishcurrents.org/marc-blitzstein-yiddish-25466> (accessed September 5, 2014).

³⁸ Ibid.

in order to pay for a train ticket. The story follows their journey as they meet a series of individuals in hopes to raise enough money to send Itzak to California. The two meet the pawnbroker (to whom Mendel tries to sell a watch), Mr. Fishbein (whom Mendel begs for money), a rabbi (who gives Mendel his wife's coat to pawn), and a mysterious man, Ginzberg, whose presence stirs fear in both Mendel and Itzak. Mendel does finally meet the financial obligation after facing various struggles through his journey in order to send his son Itzak away.

Eric Gordon states that "embedded in the tale lies acute commentary on selfishness and on the chaotic distribution of human resources in our atomized society."³⁹ Blitzstein's interpretation of Malamud's text exemplifies his ideology in using the fusion of drama and music to expose realities of the human condition. Composer Joshua Schmidt states, "He wrote bravely about things he cared about the most, not locked into any pat or predictable convention. Nor was he afraid to represent the extraordinary aspects of what many of his peers failed to see in ordinary individuals and lives."⁴⁰ This is seen in *Idiots First* in the compositional features that Blitzstein uses to highlight human experiences of Mendel and Itzak.

Compositional Features in *Idiots First*

The treatment of melody and harmony that Blitzstein employed characterized his ability to combine text and music to provoke a heightened response from its listeners. Blitzstein employed rhythmic features, pitch arrangement, and pitch repetition in his melodic construction coupled with harmonic construction found in the accompaniment to define character, to accent text painting, or to create an atmosphere that helped support meaning. Blitzstein's melodic construction relies on the level of anxiety that his characters are experiencing. Example 1

³⁹ Gordon, 514.

⁴⁰ "Blitzstein Lives On," *The Kurt Weill Newsletter*, Spring 2012, 9-12.

illustrates the opening melodic statement as Mendel is pleading with Fishbein in the aria "Who Will Close the Door?" The repetitive note values and limited range in the melodic line seeks to represent Mendel and his pleading with Fishbein.

Example 1: Scene 3 (mm.121-124) from *Idiots First*



Similarly, the repetition of notes occurs along with a series of pitches that move chromatically in the aria "How I Met My New Grandfather" found in Example 2 to highlight the expressive nature of story-telling. Blitzstein combines representative note values to insinuate animation and speech inflection by approximation of syllabic stress. These features communicate the dramatic nature of the story that Mendel is telling his son, Itzak, in the park one evening. Mendel and Itzak are immediately terrified by the presence of Ginzberg, who appears to them following the aria, "How I Met My New Grandfather." Blitzstein uses extension of range in order to portray a heightened sense of anxiety as shown in Example 3 to illustrate their level of anxiety in addition to the vocalises that Itzak interjects throughout the opera.

Example 2: Scene 4 (mm. 4-11) from *Idiots First*



Example 3: Scene 4 (mm. 80-82) from *Idiots First*

The musical score for Example 3 is in 3/2 time. It consists of two staves: I (Treble) and M (Bass). The vocal line (I) includes lyrics: "Veh is mir!", "Ah yai!", "Ah Yai! (He waves his arms.)", and "Help!". The accompaniment (M) includes lyrics: "Veh is mir!", "Veh is mir!", and "Help!". The score shows a vocal line with various melodic intervals and a bass line with a strong downbeat followed by short rhythmic values.

Example 4 illustrates the accompaniment figure that supports the vocal line shown in Example 2. Marc Blitzstein constructs chord-like structures that progress non-functionally with tritone sonorities as shown in measures 4-8 and split-third constructions as shown in measure 4 and measure 6. These features combined with the vocal line create more dissonance throughout as very few of the pitches in the vocal line are found in the accompaniment figure. The rhythmic structure of the accompaniment beginning in m. 6 characterizes the influence of Jewish heritage that supports both the story and the influences on Blitzstein's composition. The strong downbeat followed by short rhythmic values favors that of qualities of Yiddish dance. Qualities such as these had found their way into compositions of composers in the early decades of the twentieth century as a means to recognize their heritage.⁴¹

⁴¹ Abigail Wood, "Yiddish Song After the Holocaust," Music and the Holocaust, <http://holocaustmusic.org/memory/yiddish0/> (accessed September 19, 2014.)

Example 4: Scene 4 (mm. 4-11) with accompaniment from *Idiots First*

4 5 6 7

I was may-be nine years old That my al-te Bob-ba got

8 9 10 11

mar-ried a-gain. Came one day she sent for me. I should meet him.

Split 3rd

Serialism in *Idiots First*

Howard Pollack, in *Marc Blitzstein: His Life, His Work, His World*, provides four instances where Blitzstein considered the use of serial techniques or influences of serialism that would serve as the basis for a limited number of his compositions. In 1933, Blitzstein's details for *Discourse* (unfinished), a work for clarinet, cello and piano, incorporate four themes along with their inversions and retrogrades.⁴² Pollack points out his sketches themselves do not represent serialism, but Blitzstein's plan employed a process that showed an influence of Schoenberg. Pollack goes on to mention that Blitzstein considered using serialism in *From Marion's Book* (1960) and in *Sacco and Vanzetti* (unfinished), where he "sketched several twelve-tone rows and their standard permutations in conjunction with the opera."⁴³ Moments of

⁴² Pollack, 141.

⁴³ Pollack, 483.

his serial techniques appeared within the first draft of the opera, but "the surviving music shows little evidence of strict twelve-tone writing."⁴⁴ Blitzstein stated,

although I studied with Schönberg, I certainly don't belong with the serial composers - cooked or raw. Not that I don't admire them enormously. In a curious way, I go to school to them - with my ear, that is, not my brain. I am a tonal composer and am more interested, for my own music, in the freshness of disclosure than I am in the novelty of ingredients.⁴⁵

Blitzstein attempted to explore the "novelty" of serialism for his compositions, but it was not until he began writing *Idiots First* that he began to find a way to use serialism to suit his compositional aims. Two years prior, Blitzstein stated, "for my kind of theatre, serialism does not yet seem flexible enough."⁴⁶

Lehrman discovered that Blitzstein used serialism in *Idiots First*, but that the composition was not based upon serialism in its entirety, but tone rows and fragments were used to indicate the presence of a specific character, namely Ginzberg. Lehrman indicates that "Ginzberg's First Theme is a constant reminder to Mendel that his time is running out...it is a theme which Blitzstein apparently considered to be primarily instrumental rather than vocal in character, for it never appears in any of his vocal lines, only in orchestra."⁴⁷ Blitzstein uses the tone row A Eb Ab D C# G F# C F B Bb E as the basis for Ginzberg's First Theme. Example 5 illustrates the full statement of the tone row that occurs in the opera to indicate the presence of Ginzberg. Lehrman provides an extensive list indicating every statement and permutation of Ginzberg's First Theme in his Master's thesis.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Pollack, 483.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Leonard J. Lehrman, "A Musical Analysis of *Idiots First*" (Master's thesis, Cornell University, 1975), 11.

⁴⁸ Lehrman, Master's thesis, 11-13.

Example 5: Ginzberg's First Theme from *Idiots First*

Lehrman shows that Ginzberg's Second Theme occurs soon after Mendel has finished telling Itzak a story, ("How I Met My New Grandfather"). In the distance stands Ginzberg who calls out a Yiddish greeting, "Gut Yuntif," which is translated as "good holiday." Mendel immediately stares directly at Ginzberg and exclaims, "Veh is mir!" followed by immediate cries for help.⁴⁹ A policeman enters, however, and sees no one. Example 6 illustrates the theme in its entirety. The accompaniment, constructed of "a broken heptachord in the treble...against a broken pentachord in the bass," symbolizes Ginzberg as Death.⁵⁰ Blitzstein uses the prime row as the bass line with the retrograde and fragments of the prime row in the treble in measures 83 through 86. In his realization of incomplete sections of *Idiots First*, Lehrman uses the same music found in the accompaniment of Example 6 in Blitzstein's unfinished Scene 11 during which there is struggle between Ginzberg and Mendel. Mendel fights with Ginzberg knowing that his death is near, but Ginzberg ultimately relents so that Mendel may help Itzak get to the train station. This is shown in Example 7.

⁴⁹ Veh is mir!" is a Yiddish expression that may be translated as "woe is me."

⁵⁰ Lehrman, Master's thesis, 35.

Example 6: Scene 4 (mm.80-86) from *Idiots First*

The musical score for Example 6, Scene 4 (mm.80-86) from *Idiots First*, is presented in a multi-staff format. The staves are labeled I, M, Chimes, and Piano.

Staff I: Contains vocal lines with lyrics: "Ah yai! Ah Yai! (He waves his arms.)".

Staff M: Contains vocal lines with lyrics: "Veh is mir! Veh is mir! Help!".

Staff Chimes: Contains chime patterns with lyrics: "Veh is mir! Veh is mir! Help!".

Staff Piano: Contains piano accompaniment. It includes markings for *mp* (mezzo-piano), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *cresc.* (crescendo). Specific chord markings include *P₀* (Heptachord) and *Pentachord*.

The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 84 and 85 indicated. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/8.

Example 7: Scene 11(mm. 143-147) from *Idiots First*

Allegro Feroce

I 8 Ah! yai!

M (They struggle, yai!

Chimes *ff* (*sempre*)

Piano *f*

I 146 yai!

M nose to nose.) (Ginzberg begins to laugh.)

Chm. 146

Piano 146 *cresc.* 3

Selective Serialism in *Idiots First* and *Karla*

Blitzstein's unique symbolic approach to using serialism in *Idiots First* prompted Lehrman to coin the term "selective serialism," defined as the occasional use of serialism in a composition "depicting mystery or something diabolical or death-associated."⁵¹ Lehrman

⁵¹ Leonard J. Lehrman, e-mail message to author, July 21, 2013.

discovered this technique in Blitzstein's use of tone rows and fragments of tone rows to represent the element of time and the character symbolic of death, Ginzberg.⁵²

Blitzstein's use of serialism only appears as a reference to Ginzberg as shown in the aforementioned excerpts. Using serialism as a symbolic gesture within compositions was a device that was used by some of Blitzstein's contemporaries. In 1951, Leonard Bernstein corresponded with Aaron Copland concerning Copland's *Piano Quartet* stating, "I feel rather close to the tonal way in which you are handling tone-rows (I've done it too, here and there)."⁵³ Lehrman states, "[Leonard Bernstein] is referring to, among other things, the 12-tone jazz riff which is treated thematically in *Trouble in Tahiti*... which was of course dedicated to Blitzstein and was an important influence on me and my work."⁵⁴

Lehrman adapted Blitzstein's style and approach in his one-act opera titled, *Karla*. Whereas Blitzstein used "selective serialism" only in the harmonic construction of *Idiots First*, Lehrman uses serialism in both the harmonic and melodic construction to highlight dramatic context within the plot of the opera. Lehrman's use of serialism is associated with a series of individual handwritten notes and their transference between two characters, Karla and Max. Every time a handwritten note appears, is referenced, or is read, serialism occurs. This treatment acts as a "musical signature" that functions in a similar way to Wagner's use of leitmotifs in his operas.

⁵² Lehrman, Master's thesis, 10.

⁵³ Nigel Simone, ed., *The Leonard Bernstein Letters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 293.

⁵⁴ Leonard J. Lehrman, e-mail message to the author, March 17, 2014.

CHAPTER 4

SERIALISM IN *KARLA*

Biography: Lehrman

Leonard J. Lehrman has spent much of his life and work in the state of New York. Lehrman's attraction to classical music began at an early age and was cultivated throughout his youth through his study of piano. Lehrman began studying with American-Jewish composer, Elie Siegmeister at the age of 11.⁵⁵ His aptitude and talents in composition afforded him the opportunity to further his studies at Harvard and at Cornell.⁵⁶ Toward the end of his university studies, Lehrman's composition, *Sima* (1976), was premiered by the Ithaca Opera Association which included a television broadcast of the production.⁵⁷ *The Birthday of the Bank* (1988) was commissioned for Opera America for the Lake George Opera Festival and *New World: An Opera about What Columbus did to the "Indians"* (1991) was later commissioned by The Puffin Foundation.⁵⁸ As of this writing, Lehrman has composed ten operas and six musicals which contribute to his large body of works that are 215 in total. His works have been performed in Europe, North America, in Israel, South America, and in Australia, as well as at the United Nations.⁵⁹

In addition to his composition career, Lehrman has devoted his time to scholarship on Marc Blitzstein. In 2005, Lehrman published *Marc Blitzstein: A Bio-Bibliography*, a comprehensive annotated bibliographic guide to writings of and about Blitzstein, his musical

⁵⁵ Leonard J. Lehrman, "Biography," <http://llehrman.artists-in-residence.com> (accessed July 28, 2014).

⁵⁶ Leonard Lehrman, "Part I: *Karla* - a One-Act Opera in Three Scenes Based on Bernard Malamud's 'Notes From a Lady at a Dinner Part.'" [Original Composition]. DMA diss., Cornell University, 1977, ii. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, <https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2069/login?url=http://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2055/docview/302837598?accountid=7113> (accessed April 8, 2013).

⁵⁷ Leonard J. Lehrman, "Biography," <http://llehrman.artists-in-residence.com> (accessed July 28, 2014).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

compositions, and stage productions. Additionally, Lehrman published many articles, presented lectures, edited three volumes of the *Marc Blitzstein Songbook*, produced CD recordings such as *The Marc Blitzstein Centennial Concert*, and oversaw many stage productions of Blitzstein's operas. He composed his one-act opera, *Karla*, based on Bernard Malamud's "Notes from a Lady at a Dinner Party" immediately following his completion of *Idiots First*.

In his article "Leonard Lehrman: Malamud and Music," Lehrman discusses the amount of focus that has been given to Malamud texts set by operatic composers affirming that "among American Jewish writers of fiction, none have had their work musicalized and staged as frequently as Malamud has."⁶⁰ Lehrman attributes this to Malamud's well-crafted writing, as he mentions in regards to Philip Davis' book, *Bernard Malamud: A Writer's Life* where Davis provides a "window on how much of the suffering endured by Malamud's characters was the product of real experience (his impoverished father, suicidal mother, and deranged brother, for starters), and how the writer painfully honed his craft, creating characters and vignettes that are polished jewels."⁶¹

Karla is a one-act opera for six singers, one spoken role, and piano or orchestra. The three scenes depict the unfolding of events during a dinner party which proves to be scandalous for the hostess and one guest. This story was apparently somewhat autobiographical, referring to Malamud's affair with his student, Arlene Heyman: "this was clearly the real person, whom Malamud evoked in characters like Karla Harris (in his short story, "Notes from a Lady at a Dinner Party")."⁶²

⁶⁰ Leonard Lehrman, "Jewish Currents," Jewishcurrents.org, May 23, 2012, under "Leonard Lehrman: Malamud and Music," <http://jewishcurrents.org/leonard-lehrman-malamud-and-music-10331> (accessed July 22, 2014).

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Lehrman's "own real-life model for the role of Karla was Karen Shaw Campbell, an undergraduate music student at Cornell whom he fell in love with in October 1972."⁶³ Lehrman shared with me that "she was 4 years younger than him, not forty years like Clem and Karla. They began living together the month he started writing *Karla*, and he eventually dedicated the opera to Karen. Lehrman and Karen married in July 1978, but she divorced him 7 years later."

Synopsis of *Karla*

Scene I, Part I

The opera begins at the home of university professor, Clem Harris, and his young wife Karla who has invited Clem's colleague, Ralph Harris, and his wife, Ada, over for dinner. The couples share in conversation awaiting one of their former students, Max Adler. In the meantime, Clem's secretary Shirley Fisher arrives. Max eventually arrives and Clem begins to introduce him to the other guests and then to Karla. Max discovers that Karla is much younger than Clem. Clem steps away to take care of his guests and Max and Karla have a private conversation. Karla begins to question Max and discovers that he is only 32 and in the prime of his life. She showers him with accolades until she is interrupted by Stephanie who is taking care of her children.

Scene I, Part II

The dinner guests enter the dining room. Shirley talks to Clem about his informality that she never sees at the office. The scene immediately shifts to Karla who encourages Max with a whisper to check his pocket and then steps out of the room. She has slipped a note into Max's pocket, and he takes out the note and begins to read it. Karla has written asking Max about the meaning of happiness.

⁶³ Leonard J. Lehrman, e-mail message to the author, October 7, 2014.

Scene I, Part III

Max delivers his first aria in the opera. He discloses his inner-struggle where he cannot determine why Karla would not simply speak to him face-to-face; concluding that it is her way of communication, he writes a quick response.

Scene I, Part IV

Max returns to the dining room where he sits and quietly passes the note to Karla. Realizing he has responded to her, she takes it away to read it in private.

Scene II, Part I

Scene two begins with the dinner guests sitting in the living quarters having after dinner drinks when Clem and Max strike up a conversation. Clem begins to talk about how much older he is than Karla and that while it makes him feel younger, he seems to think that he could be holding her back from people who are closely-related to her age. Karla emerges, having changed into a more provocative dress, which surprises Clem. Karla eventually finds Max and begins to ask him if he finds that her dress is too short. Karla whispers to Max that she has now left a note in between the pillows on the sofa. Shirley is aware of what is going on and makes her way to Max as he inconspicuously tries to get the note. He picks up the note and Shirley tries to distract him by trying to gauge his interest in older women like her. Karla then pulls Max away from Shirley so that she can show him the children sleeping in the other room.

Scene II, Part II

The second part of scene two begins with Max admiring the children. Karla and Max begin to converse about marriage. Karla discloses her uneasiness about having married Clem and that she was somewhat confused by the whole process. Karla and Max embrace one another and passionately kiss. The two realize that they need to go back downstairs but instead begin to

discuss their options for meeting one another at a motel later in the evening. Max tells Karla not to write any more notes for fear of being caught.

Scene III, Part I

The third scene of *Karla* begins with Max examining photographs along with Ralph and Clem while the other guests share in conversation. Karla pens another message and attempts to deliver it to Max by dropping it on the floor at his feet and exiting the room.

Scene III, Part II

Max is alone reading the dropped note confirming that they will be able to meet later in the evening. Though Max contemplates Karla's anxiety and thinks that it would be simpler to call it off, he feels that she will be eventually be fine once she is with a younger man in bed.

Scene III, Part III

Karla leaves to check on the children and tries to put another note into Max's pocket at the beginning of part three of scene three. The note falls onto the floor, and Shirley picks up the note and hands it to Clem thinking that this will be a way to reveal what is going on between Karla and Max. He looks at it and does not open it. He then hands the note to Max, who says it is an address that he had written down. Max steps away to read the note where Karla is informing him that she will not be able to meet with him after all, as she has just discovered that she is six months pregnant. He closes the note and goes to the door to leave. He and Clem share their goodbyes and Max calls up the stairs expressing his gratitude toward Karla. She responds simply, "love, marriage, happiness!"

Analysis of Karla

Much like Blitzstein had done in *Idiots First*, Lehrman uses serial composition techniques not as the basis for his entire opera, but rather as a compositional device to highlight

dramatic events within the story line. Through his use of serialism, Lehrman attaches an association of heightened drama with the transference of the letter between Max and Karla.

Table 1: *Matrix for Karla.*

	I ₀	I ₂	I ₁	I ₅	I ₃	I ₄	I ₇	I ₆	I ₁₁	I ₉	I ₁₀	I ₈	
P ₀	G	A	Ab	C	Bb	B	D	C#	F#	E	F	Eb	R ₀
P ₁₀	F	G	F#	Bb	Ab	A	C	B	E	D	Eb	C#	R ₁₀
P ₁₁	F#	Ab	G	B	A	Bb	C#	C	F	Eb	E	D	R ₁₁
P ₇	D	E	Eb	G	F	F#	A	Ab	C#	B	C	Bb	R ₇
P ₉	E	F#	F	A	G	Ab	B	Bb	Eb	C#	D	C	R ₉
P ₈	Eb	F	E	Ab	F#	G	Bb	A	D	C	C#	B	R ₈
P ₅	C	D	C#	F	Eb	E	G	F#	B	A	Bb	Ab	R ₅
P ₆	C#	Eb	D	F#	E	F	Ab	G	C	Bb	B	A	R ₆
P ₁	Ab	Bb	A	C#	B	C	Eb	D	G	F	F#	E	R ₁
P ₃	Bb	C	B	Eb	C#	D	F	E	A	G	Ab	F#	R ₃
P ₂	A	B	Bb	D	C	C#	E	Eb	Ab	F#	G	F	R ₂
P ₄	B	C#	C	E	D	Eb	F#	F	Bb	Ab	A	G	R ₄
	RI ₀	RI ₂	RI ₁	RI ₅	RI ₃	RI ₄	RI ₇	RI ₆	RI ₁₁	RI ₉	RI ₁₀	RI ₈	

G A Ab C Bb B D C# F# E F Eb is the prime row used as the basis for the serial sections throughout the opera and is included in the matrix found in Table 1. Lehrman uses full statements of tone rows as well as fragments to indicate the elevated dramatic emphasis. Twenty-four instances of serialism occur in *Karla* as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: *Uses of Serialism in Karla.*

Row Form	Location	Scene	Character	Instrumentation
R ₁ (Complete)	mm. 30-33	Scene One, Part II	Karla	Flute
P ₀ (Complete)	mm. 38-41	Scene One, Part II	Max	Viola
R ₀ (Complete)	mm. 42-44	Scene One, Part II	Max	Viola
I ₂ (Hexachord)	mm. 27-28	Scene One, Part III	Max	Viola
R ₁₁	mm. 37-39	Scene One, Part III	Max	Viola
I ₁₀ (Fragment)	mm. 10	Scene One, Part IV		Cello
I ₁₀ (Fragment)	mm. 11	Scene One, Part IV		Viola
I ₁₁ (Fragment)	mm. 11-12	Scene One, Part IV		Viola
P ₁₁ (Fragment)	mm. 12	Scene One, Part IV		Viola
R ₁ (Fragment)	mm. 16-18	Scene One, Part IV		Oboe
R ₆ (Fragment)	mm. 18-20	Scene One, Part IV		Bass
P ₁₀ (Fragment)	mm. 19	Scene One, Part IV		Flute, Piccolo
I ₃ (Fragment)	mm. 19-20	Scene One, Part IV		Flute, Piccolo
R ₃ (Fragment)	mm. 20-21	Scene One, Part IV		Trombone
R ₁₁ (Fragment built by layered tones from multiple instruments)	mm. 21-23	Scene One, Part IV		Oboe, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet
P ₁₁ (First five pitches of complete row)	mm. 113-114	Scene Two, Part I	Karla	Flute
RI ₇ (Hexachord)	mm. 113-115	Scene Two, Part I		Bass Clarinet
I ₇ (Hexachord)	mm. 113-115	Scene Two, Part I		English Horn
P ₁₁ (completion of row begun by Karla in mm. 113)	mm. 119-122	Scene Two, Part I	Max	
R ₃ (Fragment built by layered tones from multiple instruments)	mm. 123	Scene Two, Part I		Strings
P ₇ (Fragment built by layered tones from multiple instruments)	mm. 124-125	Scene Two, Part I		Reeds
I ₃	mm. 3-6	Scene Three, Part II	Max	Horn

R ₄ (Fragment)	mm. 5	Scene Three, Part II		Flute
R ₁ (Complete statement by multiple instruments cascading downward)	mm. 6-7	Scene Three, Part III		Instrumental

Serialism in Vocal Lines

The first indication of a tone row occurs in mm. 30-33 of Scene One, Part II in Karla's line where she informs Max of a letter that she has placed in his pocket as illustrated in Example 8. This row is the retrograde of the tone row.

Example 8: Scene I, Part II (mm. 30-33) from *Karla*

Example 8 shows a vocal line in 4/4 time. The melody is marked with a box labeled R_1 and 'x' above several notes, indicating a retrograde tone row. The lyrics are: "If you like sur-pri - ses, feel ___ in your left poc-ket when you can..."

Example 9 illustrates the prime row and its retrograde that immediately follows Karla's line, as Max reads the contents of the letter. This aria is supported by a polytonal accompaniment that creates an element of unease and unrest, surrounding "letter" (Example 10).

Example 9: Scene I, Part II (mm. 38-45) from *Karla*

Example 9 shows two vocal lines in 4/4 time. The top line is marked with a box labeled P_0 and *mp*. The bottom line is marked with a box labeled R_0 and '5'. The lyrics are: "Why do we all think ___ that we all should be hap - py, ___ that it's a ne - ces - sa - ry con - di - tion of life?"

Example 10: Scene I, Part II (mm. 38-45) with Accompaniment from *Karla*

Pochissimo meno energico

Max

38 *mp* 39 40 41

"Why do we all think _____ that we all should be hap-py, _____

Violin I

38 *P₀* 39 40 41 *mp*

Solo Violin I

Violin II

38 *P₀* 39 40 41 *mp*

Solo Viola I

p Solo pizz.

Viola II

Cello I

p

Cello II

D Major⁷

Double Bass

Example 11 is a musical score snippet showing measures 42 through 45. The score is for a chamber ensemble with the following parts: Max, Vln. I, Solo Vln., Vln. II, Solo Vla., Vla. II, Vc. I, Vc. II, and D.B. (Double Bass). The time signature changes from 4/4 to 3/4 and back to 4/4. The key signature changes from one flat (Bb) to two flats (Bb, Eb) and back to one flat (Bb). The score includes various annotations: 'R₀' in measures 42 and 43; 'that it's a ne-ces - sa-ry con - di - tien of life?' in measure 43; 'con sord.' (con sordina) in measures 42, 43, 44, and 45; 'p' (piano) in measures 44 and 45; 'C# half-diminished7 (no third)' in measure 42; 'F minor' in measure 44; 'Bb minor' in measure 45; 'altri con sord.' in measure 44; 'E minor' in measure 42; 'Solo' in measure 44; and '(arco)' in measure 44. The score also includes a 'Solo' marking for the D.B. in measure 44.

Example 11 shows a statement of the tone row that occurs while Max is inscribing a message that he will later pass onto Karla. This retrograde form of the prime row is in its full statement in measure 38 minus the repeated C that is labeled with X.

R₁₁

"Why not? It's a short hard life if you don't out - fox it."

Serialism in Orchestra

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back to her. Fragments of P_{11} , I_{10} and I_{11} as shown in Example 12 occur at the exact moment when Karla realizes the presence of the note and smiles.

Example 12: Part I, Scene IV (mm. 10-12) from *Karla*

The musical score for Example 12 consists of four staves: Oboe, Clarinet, Viola, and Cello. The time signature is 4/4. The Oboe staff has a whole rest in the first two measures and a half note in the third. The Clarinet staff has a half note in the first measure, followed by a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes in the second and third measures, with a circled fragment labeled I_{10} . The Viola staff has a whole rest in the first two measures and a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes in the third measure, with a circled fragment labeled I_{11} and another circled fragment labeled P_{11} . The Cello staff has a sequence of eighth and sixteenth notes in the first measure, with a circled fragment labeled I_{10} , followed by a whole rest in the second and third measures.

Lehrman incorporates a similar approach when Shirley witnesses the transaction between Karla and Max. The orchestra layers I_7 and RI_7 while Karla outlines the beginning of P_{11} as shown in Example 13. As Max reads the contents of the letter, he finishes the row that Karla has begun. Lehrman's approach to the serial tone rows and fragments are primarily presented horizontally in the vocal and instrumental lines. The fragments typically are not ordered from the beginning of their respective rows and are a collection of pitches from within. There are a few occasions where Lehrman aborts the horizontal construction of the tone rows and instead layers them vertically in the instrumentation at cadential points such as in mm. 21-23 (Example 14).

Example 13: Scene II, Part I (mm. 113-122) from *Karla*

113 *Allegro ma miseroso* 114 115

Fl I *3 *pp* *I₇*

EH *2 *colla voce* *pp* *RI₇*

BCI *4 *pp*

Karla *P₁₁* Be - tween the pil - lows

(Max does a bit of a double-take, then looks over by the pillows. Karla eases to the sofa to sit by Ada. Max sees the note, reaches for it as inconspicuously as possible. This is all seen by Shirley, who wanders over pretending, however, not to have noticed.)
(Max glances at the note and reads it as Shirley wanders over.)

116 117 118

EH *2 *f* *poco*

BCI *4 *p* *poco*

119 120 121 122

Fl I *3

Ob I *1

EH *2

Bb Cl.

BCI *4

Max *P₁₁* "Don't pa - nic but I like you a lot."

Example 14: Scene I, Part IV (mm. 16-23) from *Karla*

The musical score is for a full orchestra and includes the following instruments and parts:

- Picc #3
- Fl I *2
- Ob I *1
- Ob II
- Cl I *4
- Cl II
- Ba I *5
- Ba II
- Hr I
- Hr II
- Tpt I
- Tpt II
- Tb I
- Tb II **
- Tuba
- Timp
- Vibr
- Vn I
- Vn II
- Vla
- Vc
- Cb

The score is in 4/4 time and features several dynamic markings and structural annotations:

- Dynamic markings:** *mf*, *fz*, *cresc.*, *ff*.
- Structural annotations:** R_1 , P_{10} , I_3 , R_{11} , R_6 , R_3 .

The score is divided into measures 16 through 23, with a key signature change from 4/4 to 5/4 at measure 21. The instrumentation includes Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Trumpet, Trombone, Tuba, Timpani, Vibraphone, Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Contrabass.

He uses the same approach to literally depict the moment when the note accidentally falls to the floor in the presence of the other guests by cascading pitches of R_1 distributed amongst various instruments (Example 15).

Example 15: Scene III, Part II (mm. 6) from *Karla*

The image shows a musical score for Example 15, Scene III, Part II (mm. 6) from *Karla*. The score is written for seven instruments: Picc #2, Fl I #1, Ob I #3, EH, A CII #4, A CI II, and Bn I, Bn II #5. The music is in 4/4 time. A diagonal line is drawn across the staves, and a box labeled R_1 is placed above the Picc #2 staff. The notes are cascading pitches of R_1 distributed amongst various instruments.

The notes and their exchanges between Karla and Max are the central dramatic component to *Karla*. Lehrman's use of serialism brings an element of drama in itself by pairing the use of tone rows or fragments of tone rows only with the presence of "the notes." Lehrman's approach to using serialism in this way was a choice based upon his experience and study of the music of Marc Blitzstein. This use of serialism heightens the dramatic tension one witnesses on the stage as the fusion of music and texts affects the listener as the lust, infidelity, and betrayal is exposed. Table 2 indicates the location of the tone rows and fragments within the score.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Blitzstein's dramatic compositions were meant to expose and highlight real situations of the human condition and social concerns. Blitzstein's choice of Bernard Malamud's texts as subjects for operas exemplified his ideology and clearly formed the basis of his projected *Tales of Malamud*. Blitzstein's compositional style for *Idiots First* included a selective use of serialism as a component that would ultimately influence future scholars like Lehrman. Selective use of statements of tone rows and fragments of tone rows caused Lehrman to coin the term "selective serialism." This became a feature used to highlight context within dramatic works by defining characters, immoral and ruthless situations, or flawed human conditions.

Through the study and completion of Marc Blitzstein's composition, *Idiots First*, Leonard J. Lehrman adopted characteristic aspects of Blitzstein's writings. Among the characteristics that were influential, Lehrman adopted Blitzstein's approach to serialism that ultimately served his own composition, *Karla*, by using serialism within vocal lines and in instrumentation. Lehrman used horizontal and vertical construction of tone rows to reference the central "character" of a notes passed between would-be lovers.

Lehrman stated, "in Blitzstein...I found my own voice, and the opportunity to do something both Siegmeyer and Bernstein thought should be done but couldn't do themselves: to pick up where Blitzstein left off, to complete the work of the voice that had been stilled when he was robbed and killed before reaching his full potential as a composer."⁶⁴ Lehrman subscribed to the ideology of Blitzstein that in turn caused him to utilize the texts of Malamud that would highlight situations of the human condition. This prompted Lehrman to include *Karla* as a

⁶⁴ Leonard Lehrman, "What inspires you to compose/perform music that has political overtones?" newmusicbox.org, November 1, 2003, <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles> (accessed August 28, 2012).

companion piece to *Idiots First* to serve *Tales of Malamud*. Nearly twenty-one years following the completion of both *Idiots First* and *Karla*, Lehrman added an additional one-act opera also based on a story by Malamud, *Suppose a Wedding*.

The music of both Blitzstein and Lehrman has been left, for the most part unanalyzed in scholarly writing. While there are biographies of Blitzstein, critical investigations into his compositional techniques have not been published. The exposure to Blitzstein's music has increased with Lehrman's *Marc Blitzstein Songbook* editions that are readily available to performers. Access to Blitzstein and Lehrman's one-act operas mentioned in this study, however, are available by rental only from the Theodore Presser Company. Perhaps future scholars could explore and consider editions of these works that will in turn add to the lexicon of one-act opera repertoire for university opera workshop programs. This study only discusses one aspect of Blitzstein and Lehrman's compositional practice, but opens the door for further investigation and performances of works by these two significant American composers.

APPENDIX
CORRESPONDENCE WITH LEONARD J. LEHRMAN

Saturday, July 20, 2013 (Message to Blackwood from Lehrman)

Hi, Jeremy.

Here are my initial reactions.

1. I wouldn't say that Blitzstein's vocal music has been ignored; your statement would be more accurate if you were to say "Much of his vocal music has been ignored..."
2. You misspelled Blitzstein as Blitzstein in your first footnote. You should also date the Credo you are quoting: Jan. 1948. I'm not quite sure of the context in which it was written; you should probably ask Gordon, Pollock, or Jansson, if you can.
3. Eric Gordon's book was published in 1989; your phrase "last decade" should really therefore be "last decades"
4. Don't repeat Gordon's mistakes with regard to Bernstein, me, and IDIOTS FIRST. (I believe I corrected them in my review of his book, for JEWISH AFFAIRS, which is posted on my website.) Bernstein promised to complete the work - this is documented in two NY Times articles in 1964. (One of them actually says "complete and orchestrate.") But later that year he wrote a tribute to Marc for the National Institute of Arts & Letters, which he later published in his book FINDINGS, asking rhetorically how he or anyone could actually finish the work - "With what notes?" Bernstein heard about my Nov. 1969 production of CRADLE at Harvard. He did not attend it. He did attend my production there of I'VE GOT THE TUNE, THE HARPIES, and TROUBLE IN TAHITI, on Dec. 5, 1970. That's where I requested and received his permission to complete IDIOTS FIRST: He took me in his arms with the words: "God bless you!" I completed the vocal score in Dec. 1973 and then played it for Siegmeyer, Malamud, Jo & Kit Davis, David Diamond & Richard Flusser, and finally Leonard Bernstein on Jan. 17, 1974. KARLA was completed in July 1974, just in time for the first performances of the 2 operas in Ithaca, NY in August, 1974.
5. You have misread my setting of the word "necessary." The two D's are not tied; the B's are. The prosody reflects exactly the normal spoken stress pattern: NE-ces-sa-ry con-Di-tion.
6. You've shown how serialism is used in one example of KARLA, but you'll need to analyze all its uses there - every time a note is passed between Karla and Max. And you have not given any examples of serialism in IDIOTS FIRST. They are not found in any published segment from the opera. You'll have to find them in the rental score; use my thesis as a guide to where they are. There are 2 tone rows, both associated with the Angel of Death.
7. In the KARLA Sextet you will find a line in Ralph Lewin's part that is a direct quote from Itzak's vocalise in IDIOTS FIRST. That's because I was originally thinking the same singer might do both parts - which, however, never happened in any of the 4 productions, so far.
8. Selective serialism, depicting mystery or something diabolical or death-associated, is what links IDIOTS FIRST and KARLA stylistically. It's also a device to be found in works like

Britten's TURN OF THE SCREW and Leonard Bernstein's A QUIET PLACE. The only thing that links SUPPOSE A WEDDING to IDIOTS FIRST is the use of modes, not rows.
Good luck! - Leonard J. Lehrman

Sunday, July 21, 2013 (Message to Lehrman from Blackwood)
Good Morning, Dr. Lehrman!

Thank you so much for your words of advice and encouragement. I will most definitely make the changes as you have recommended. I am currently bound by a page limit (15) for the proposal thus only one sample per item that I mentioned. I will most definitely add more material in the actual DMA Dissertation, and I will send you a copy of it for your feedback once I have a rough draft ready to go.

I appreciate you more than you know.

Take care,

Jeremy

Sunday, July 21, 2013 (Message to Blackwood from Lehrman)
Given your limits, and that you want to emphasize the connections between the operas, I think you should correct the example from KARLA and choose a different example from IDIOTS FIRST - one which actually uses one of the 12-tone rows.
Best - LJJ

Sunday, July 21, 2013 (Message to Blackwood from Lehrman)
I just verified my recollection of having corrected Gordon's erroneous statement re Bernstein having recommended me rather than having endorsed my proposal. You can find it at <http://www.ljlehrman.artists-in-residence.com/articles/jewishaffairs1.html>
LJJ

Sunday, February 23, 2014 (Message to Blackwood from Lehrman)
Hi, Jeremy. Thinking about your question re Blitzstein's influence on me,
I'd recommend you watch our Blitzstein Cabaret playlist:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmhHI8m9j-XuPyTVv1VqcS-1ALntXTUcm>
A number of these songs are actually my completions of his work, including:
Lovely Song (filled in words), Send for the Militia (created piano score),
A Quiet Girl (new verse), Expatriate (completed music), Few Little English (cobbled together from different versions), War Song (accompaniment).
And of course about 20% of IDIOTS FIRST and over 50% of SACCO AND VANZETTI are mine.

We talked about how "The Nickel Under the Foot," from THE CRADLE WILL ROCK, inspired my Homage to Blitzstein in "Introductory," the first song of my 1970 song cycle on poetry of Karl Shapiro: THE BOURGEOIS POET.

Helene Williams sings that number (and #2-5 from the cycle) here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJ6H4REBlrg>

"A Quiet Girl" is also quoted in one of my most recent compositions:

"The Bond Girls," from The New Improved SUPERSPY!: The S-e-c-r-e-t Musical. You can watch that number at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txQIm63aUac>

or

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYV528k4zRA>

The last of 3 performances of the show is happening tomorrow.

The first two are already on YouTube. I'll send you the urls.

The phrase "a nice big cradle" from the title song of THE CRADLE WILL ROCK is also quoted (both words and music) in my "Fathers and Sons," from my 1984 E.G: A Musical Portrait of Emma Goldman.

There are 4 performances of it posted:

5/86:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIzT3e5JVKM>

4/87

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBKXXed5LWs>

12/87

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t7-vQl9sqUs>

and 5/04

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilcjgZfzzDw>

And finally, of course, his translations from the Russian (Prokofiev), German (Brecht), and French (Bizet) inspired mine (Brecht, Chabrier, Brel, Brassens, and many Russians). This past month I co-translated a song of his (from IDIOTS FIRST) into Yiddish for the first time; the premiere is Mar. 6 in Boca Raton, FL. An article on it will appear on the Jewish Currents website shortly.

All best - Leonard J. Lehrman

Monday, March 17, 2014 (Message to Blackwood from Lehrman)

Hi, Jeremy. I don't think I ever heard the term "selective serialism"

used before, but googling it produces this interesting result you might want to follow up:

<http://www.authenticforum.com/general-discussion/82497-most-flattering-denim-label-men-2.html>

There's also a very interesting passage in The Leonard Bernstein Letters, p. 293, a letter from LB to Aaron Copland, 11/14/1951, on the latter's Piano Quartet (1950): "i feel rather close to the tonal way in which you are handling tone-rows (I've done it too, here and there)." LB is referring to, among other things, the 12-tone jazz riff which is treated thematically in TROUBLE IN TAHITI, which was of course dedicated to Blitzstein and was an important influence on me and my work.

All best! - Leonard J. Lehrman

Tuesday, October 7, 2014

- The Blitzstein Estate showed me and asked me to consider completing IDIOTS FIRST in July 1970, and I requested and received permission from Bernstein Dec. 5, 1970 - both while I was an undergraduate at Harvard. Cornell only entered the picture much later; I began graduate studies there in the fall of 1972.
- I completed the vocal score of IDIOTS FIRST Dec. 21, 1973; not 1974. The orchestral score was not completed until many years later (Jan. 1991).
- You've left out of the list of Malamud stories Blitzstein considered: "[A] Fool Grows Without Rain." This is a very beautiful story which Malamud never published; I found a copy of it in Blitzstein's papers.
See <http://artists-in-residence.com/ljlehrman/articles/aufbau42.html>
- In my message to you of Feb. 23, 2014 I mention a forthcoming performance and a forthcoming article. The former is here:
<http://youtu.be/XDie-3AQm3k>
The latter is here:
<http://jewishcurrents.org/marc-blitzstein-yiddish-25466>
I'd recommend your including them, for thoroughness.

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