

## **Bodily devices, dialectical procedures and processuality of the material in Helmut Lachenmann's *Salut für Caudwell* for two guitarists**

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**Abstract.** This work proposes an analysis of the piece *Salut für Caudwell*, for two guitarists, and aims to understand the piece from two pillars: the bodily devices for the production and modulation of sound and the way they relate to the form, as well as the processuality of the materials and the dialectical procedures that affect the discourse. The analysis revealed a kind of music impregnated with relations of opposition, in which contradiction is realized in several ways, as well as the operation of constant actualization of bodily devices that realize modes of production and modulation of sound. These features affect the form of a work that refuses habits of European musical tradition, displacing the typical sonorities of the instruments, meanwhile, communicating and incorporating elements of this tradition in its discourse.

**Keywords.** *Salut für Caudwell*, Contemporary music, Helmut Lachenmann, Guitar repertoire

### **Dispositivos corporais, dialética e processualidade do material em *Salut für Caudwell* para dois violonistas de Helmut Lachenmann**

**Resumo.** Este trabalho propõe uma análise da obra *Salut für Caudwell*, para dois violonistas, e tem como objetivo compreender a peça a partir de dois pilares: os dispositivos corporais para a produção/modulação do som e a maneira como eles se relacionam com a forma, bem como a processualidade dos materiais e os procedimentos dialéticos que afetam o discurso. A análise revelou uma música impregnada por relações de oposição, na qual a contradição é realizada de diversas maneiras, bem como a operação de atualização constante dos dispositivos corporais que realizam modos de produção/modulação do som. Essas características afetam a forma de uma obra que recusa os hábitos da tradição musical europeia, deslocando as sonoridades típicas dos instrumentos e, ao mesmo tempo, comunicando e incorporando elementos dessa tradição em seu discurso.

**Palavras-chave.** *Salut für Caudwell*, Música contemporânea, Helmut Lachenmann, Repertório de violão

## Introduction

The music of Helmut Lachenmann (ENGEL, 2005; HEATLICOTE, 2003; LACHENMANN, 2015) is permeated by the reflection on the concrete physical gesture for the production of sound, bringing to the forefront what has long been relegated as secondary or even undesired elements in the European concert tradition. Considering the displacement of the material towards a more embodied form of composition, one could think that the processuality of bodily devices<sup>1</sup> reflects and materializes the formal dramaturgy. However, it would perhaps be simplistic not to consider other essential components of the work. The way Lachenmann articulates the forms of production and modulation of sound also plays a central role in the formal perception of *Salut für Caudwell* (LACHENMANN, 1985). Therefore, it is relevant to understand not only what type of sound is operated, but also the way the materials are treated throughout the formal dramaturgy.

Two contrasting major categories of sound production can be perceived from a macroformal perspective - a dialectical structure typical of Helmut Lachenmann's conceptions "often expressed through the conflict of binary tensions between differing forms of acoustic phenomena" (LESSER, 2004, p. 111): a first one, in which the sonority of muted sounds or harmonics modulated<sup>2</sup> by the left hand in barre position predominates and a second one, which reveals a predominance of the use of the slide which begins to dominate from the end of section two (see Fig. 1), modulating the sound and freeing the strings from the tempered scale. However, this relationship becomes more complex when considering the microstructure and a form emerges that fragments this dialectical relationship into smaller components and explores it not only in the large formal narrative but also at local levels.

Understanding dialectics as the organized spirit of contradiction it is possible to conceive two ways of its manifestation in *Salut für Caudwell*. The first of these is the creation through the use of materials deduced from the refusal of the western musical tradition, establishing a space tensioned by the movement of contradiction, in which the work's conditions of existence are enabled by the operation of negativity. The second, perhaps more closely related to dialectics as a rhetorical resource, is the opposition of materials or sonorities, whether in macroform or in local level, leading to the confrontation between thesis

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<sup>1</sup> Here, we refer to bodily devices as the set of actions that the body engages in regarding the forms of sound production/modulation.

<sup>2</sup> The term modulation in this context is not related to the harmonic process of changing tonality, but rather to the process of modifying a produced sound.

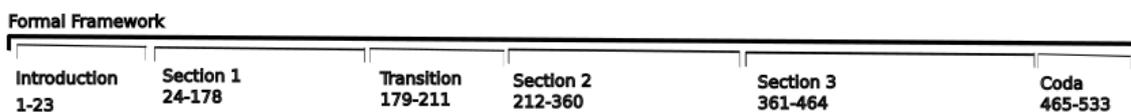
and antithesis, establishing zones of contradiction (which in the context being worked here, is related to the contrast of sounds) with possible formal synthesis.

The proposed analysis, with a certain descriptive nature, is therefore based on two pillars of *Salut für Caudwell* for two guitarists: (1) the alteration of bodily devices and sonorities as a way to embody the form, (2) the processuality of materials and their dialectical relations that operate in the discourse.

## Regarding bodily devices, dialectical procedures and material processuality

It can be suggested that *Salut für Caudwell* consists of six formal unities (Fig. 1). Instead of abrupt exposition of material or formal articulations, they are often introduced gradually, establishing a formal becoming that provokes a strong sense of direction. However, the spirit of contradiction is organized and manifested not only in the macroform but also in local levels realized by bodily devices that reflects the formal subdivisions.

Figure 1 – Formal Framework of *Salut für Caudwell*



Lachenmann introduces contradiction in the microstructure by articulating contrasting materials. Once certain stability is achieved, it is set in motion by contradiction with another material articulating a continuous reorganisation of the constituent elements of the discourse.

In the first section of *Salut für Caudwell* (measures 1-23), forms of sound production and materials that will be predominant in the work are introduced. From the perspective of bodily actions, this moment is defined by left arm over strings (*linker Arm über Saiten*) to control resonances when the actions of the left hand operate (see figure 2); barre with the finger damping all strings or producing harmonics (see figure 3); use of *slide*; use of a plectrum; and the plucking with fingers.

Figure 2 – Position of the left arm



Source: Performance of *Salut für Caudwell* (2022) - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4srzcTt-ysg&t=701s>

Figure 3 – First measures of *Salut für Caudwell*



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 1, m. 1-3<sup>3</sup>

The above elements organize the bodily devices (or are organized by them) and constitute some of the essential materials throughout the work. The first of these elements (see figure 3), which will be referred to as *a*, involves plectrum plucking (depicted as black triangles) muted by the left arm on the strings and the barre position (depicted as a vertical line with transparent rhombus at the edges). The characteristic rhythm of material *a* is fast and pulsating, but with displaced accents.

In m. 11, the slide (represented by a vertical rectangle in the staff) is introduced (Fig. 4) on the first guitar and presents a *glissando* gesture (material *c*).

<sup>3</sup> The upper hexagram represents the six strings of the guitar, with the sixth string represented by the first space, the fifth string by the second space, and so on. In the lower staff, the pitch values are indicated.

Figure 4 – Exposition of material *c*



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 1, mm.11

The second guitar continues with the material *a* and realizes a metric modulation: the distance of five demisemi-quavers in 100 bpm (quaver) anticipate the 80 bpm (crotchet) tempo that begins in m. 14, articulating a subdivision with the exposition of a material characterized by a mechanical pulse that will be referred to as *b* (see Fig. 5). It's worth noting that, in addition to the materials already mentioned, two new ones are exposed, fast ascending arpeggio-like figurations in bars 7 and 8 (*d*) and overtone figurations (*e*) represented by circular note heads in bars 22 and 23 (Fig. 6).

Figure 5 – Metric modulation and exposition of material *b*



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 1, m. 14

It could be mentioned that the introductory section provides an example of the issues discussed above, such as the groupings of actions performed by bodily devices that materialize the form and the local contradictions evidenced by the antitheses of muted sound and resonant sound, perceived tone and noise, stable tone and *glissando*, or fast tempo and slow tempo.

Figure 6 – Exposition of materials *d* and *e*



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 1, mm. 7-8 and 22-23

The first section (mm. 24-178) is characterized by the predominance of material *b*. In the first formal subdivision of this unity (mm. 24-54), the bodily devices perform the same set of actions. However, starting from m. 55 until m. 178, in the second part of the first major section, these bodily devices are actualized. A first new form of performing the bodies involves the use of human voice. Lachenmann selected a text fragment from the book *Illusion and Reality*, by Christopher Caudwell (1946), which calls for an art conscious of its materiality in relation to social contradictions. The content of Caudwell's text echoes a central aesthetic discussion in Lachenmann's music, that is, reflection with musical means that produces a critique of tradition based on the refusal of habits, highlighting social contradictions, and making music capable of experiencing an artistic freedom communicated as material reality.<sup>4</sup>

In this section performers recite the text rhythmically, articulating the phonetic material in a way that consonants are emphasized. Moreover the material *b* is predominant

<sup>44</sup> See. LACHENMANN, 1980

and appears also in a timbral transformation of the high plucked note to a percussive sound (see Fig. 9) on the instrument's soundboard (from m. 139).

Figure 7 – Use of the voice and first intervention



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 3, mm. 55-60

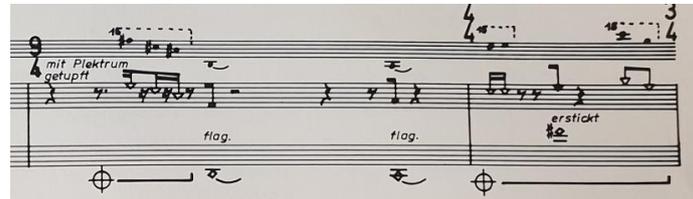
An important intervention by the second guitar occurs between bars 72-74 (see Fig. 7). This type of intervention will occur three more times in different manners during the piece. The first is characterized by the left hand moving upwards in barre position while the right hand plays accented gestures with the plectrum. The resulting sound is a mixture of muted and harmonic sounds (depending on where the left hand is in the displacement process) with an ascending profile. The second and third have a rhythmic configuration that escapes the regularity of the slide movement performed by the left hand and contrasts two distinct forms of sound modulation (see Fig. 22). The fourth is performed by playing between the saddle and stopping hand in the area of articulation to 3c (see Fig. 24).

There is another material that can be confused with a sound production form (though introduced earlier, it becomes more prominent from m. 139). This involves scraping the fingernails on the lower strings. It blurs with the form of sound production, as there is no special characteristic that defines it as a material other than its sonority. This sound could also be approximated to an “s” sound presented earlier by the voice in the recitation.

Additionally, the use of fingers to produce harmonics is added to this group, starting from m. 153, reminiscent of material *e*. Furthermore, as seen in the image below (Fig. 8),

there is also a percussive action of the plectrum on the string, producing a perceivable pitch (depicted by transparent triangles – m. 176), evoking rhythmic figurations of material *a*.

Figure 8 – Percussive use of the plectrum



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 11 mm. 176-177

Lachenmann makes extensive use of confronting contrasting elements when articulating formal sections. These elements begin to appear progressively in the texture, contrasting with the materials already established and creating destabilization. In the image below (Fig. 9) it is possible to see the end of the first formal unity, where a heterogeneity of actions and sonorities can be observe: rubbing the fingernail on the strings (black rectangle), percussive gestures with a plectrum (white triangle) and with the finger (round head figure with “C” and black rectangle on the stem), overtones, use of the voice, and the plucking the strings with the fingers.

Figure 9 – Heterogeneity of materials



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 10, mm. 152-154

The transitive section between 1 and 2 (mm. 179-211) is radically contrasting – a rarefied, delicate texture, without a clear pulse – and, therefore, is a movement of negativity in relation to the previous section and the one that follows.

Figure 10 – Fragment of transitive section



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 11, mm. 178-188

The bodily devices actualize a new grouping of actions for this section, consisting of plucking with fingers, use of plectrum, scraping the strings, use of slide, arm on the strings and *pizz. Bartók*. In addition there is a variation of material *d*, which consists of figurations in ascending arpeggio dabbled with the slide, represented by the white squares.

Figure 11 – Arpeggios with the slide

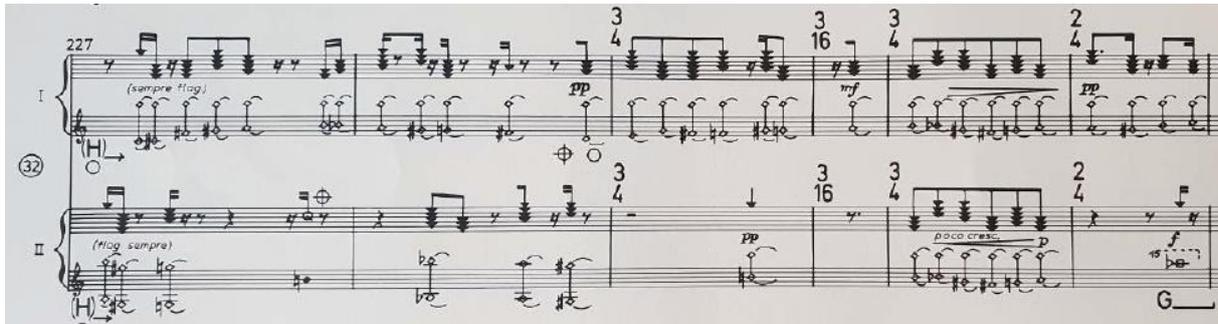


Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 12, mm, 195-196

The second formal unity presents a variety of bodily devices as well as the formal divisions in many subsections. According to our analysis this unity is divided into three moments, with the first 2a (m. 212-282) – having three clear subdivisions (2a' m. 212-222, 2a'' m. 223-249, and 2a''' m. 250-272) –; the second 2b (m. 272-318) – having two clear subdivisions (2b' m. 272-284 and 2b'' 285-318) –; and the last 2c (m. 319-361).

The second unity explores and develops material *a*, especially after the brief first subdivision of an introductory nature. The Figure 12 shows the material clearly derived from *a*.

Figure 12 – Development of material *a*



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 13, m. 227-232

We point out two expansions of material *d* that not only resume and amplify a hitherto auxiliary material, but also delineate the opposition between finger-modulated sonority and slide-modulated sonority. The first expansion of this material occurs in m. 240 in 2a". The sonority starts modulated by the finger, is transformed with the use of the slide, and returns to the use of the finger.

Figure 13 – First expansion of *d*



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 13, m. 240

The second expansion of this material, a continuous movement with a hallucinatory texture, occurs at 2b' and this time it is all operated with a slide.

Figure 14 – Second expansion of *d*



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 15, m. 240

Regarding the bodily devices, an intense activity in their transformations directly related to the great density of formal subdivisions in section 2 can be perceived. In 2a', there is an actualization of plucking and scraping of the fingernail on the strings, *pizz.* *Bartók*, plectrum, barre and a new form of sound modulation that is also confused with a material: the wah-wah effect, which “is created by repeated and extremely careful damping and releasing of the strings near the bridge” (LACHENMANN, 1985). The wah-wah is represented in the score using the blank circle that Lachenmann also chosen to represent the dampening of the strings. In the case of the wah-wah, some of these circles are juxtaposed, as can be seen in the image below:

Figure 15 – Representation of wah-wah effect in the score



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, p. 13. m. 223

In unity 2a" Lachenmann brings to surface the plectrum, arm on strings, barre, *pizz.* *Bartók* and slide. In 2a'" the slide becomes a very present element – defining a new sound domain – and the bodies operate also with plectrum, barre, percussion and plucking with the finger. From 2b' there is already an effective predominance of the slide as an instrument of sound production and modulation, intensifying a movement of contradictory tension between the two general types of sound in *Salut für Caduwell*.

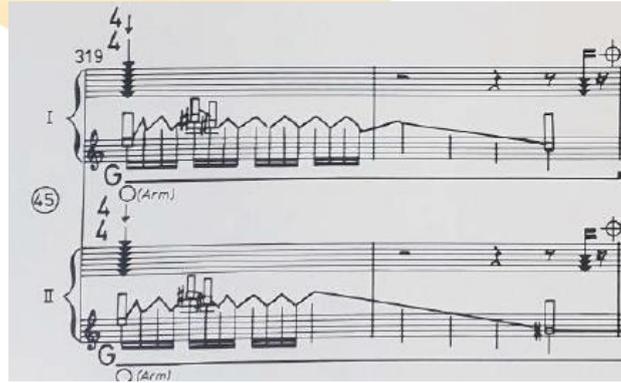
**Figure 16 – plucking between saddle and stopping hand**



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 16, m. 285

In 2b" the plectrum, slide (also as a percussive attack on the string), barre, plucking between saddle and stopping hand, arm on the strings and plucking with the fingers are actualized. Finally, in 2c, the forms of production and modulation of sounds decrease, characterized by the plectrum, arm on the strings, slide and wah-wah effect. It is curious that this filtering operates in reverse from the point of view of the materials. From the beginning of section 2 there is a very strong emphasis on material *a*, and throughout 2a there is *b* and *e*. There are expansions of *d* and the manifestation, albeit punctual, of wah-wah sonorities and the sound of the playing between saddle and stopping hand (sometimes articulating a material, sometimes only the sonority being the material itself). In 2c there is also a new material consisting of a zigzag movement in mm. 219-220, which will be referred to as *f*.

**Figure 17 – Zigzag material**



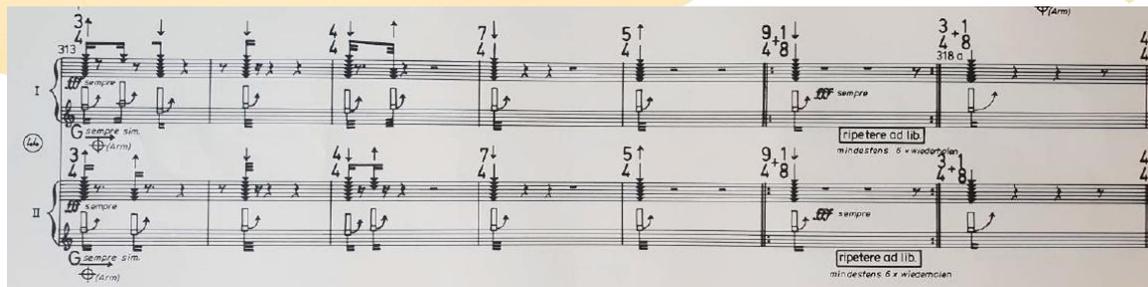
Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 17, m. 319-320

Between the subsections of 2 these materials are grouped as follows (we reaffirm here the absolute predominance of *a*): 2a': *a*, *b* and wah-wah; 2a'': *a* and first expansion of *d*; 2a''': here there is an increase in density in the variety of materials, with *a*, *b*, *c* and *e* occurring. In 2b'' such density continues with *a*, *c*, expansion of *d* and *e*, and then decreases in 2b'' to *a*, *c*, and *e*. However, in 2c there is an increase in this density, representing a vector of opposition to the filtering of the forms of sound production and modulation, consisting of *a'* (derived from *a* but spatialized, in texture), *f*, wah-wah effect, *d* and *c*.

At the end of 2b'' a gesture mobilizes a cadential area. From measure 313 the events are abruptly filtered, and the violent attacks alternate with long pauses, until all the dynamism of the section ends and is replaced by a static redundancy where the same gesture is repeated many times, bringing to the surface another contradiction of the Lachenmannian discourse, movement and staticity, causing tension and contributing to greater variety in the formal course.

Although there is a cadential force operated from measure 313, some elements of the previous moments are still maintained: the violent attacks of the plectrum and the rhythmic figures (although much more fragmented and spatialized). This section, 2c, is characterized as a space of becoming but stable enough not to be characterized as a transitive function, already anticipating the next section, and containing enough characteristics of 2 to be coupled in this section as 2c.

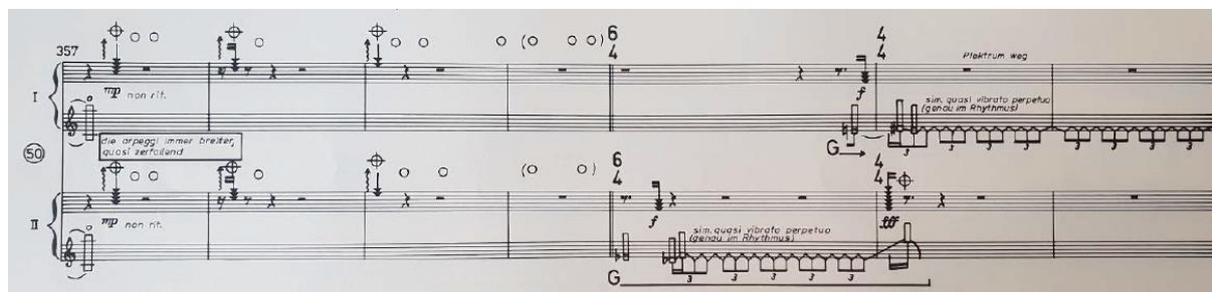
Figure 18 – Filtering and redundancy of material



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 17, m. 313-318

It will be in mm. 357-360 that a new cadential gesture occurs, marked by the insistence on the redundancy of a material based on the arpeggio followed by a wah-wah modulation that becomes progressively broader (see Fig. 19). The piece is articulated in measure 361 bringing to the surface different characteristics from previous formal subdivisions: preponderance of the slide, exposition of material  $f'$  - which is an expanded derivation of the zigzag gesture in bars 319-320 – actualization of a much more emptied texture and the exploration of the *glisando* movement with the slide.

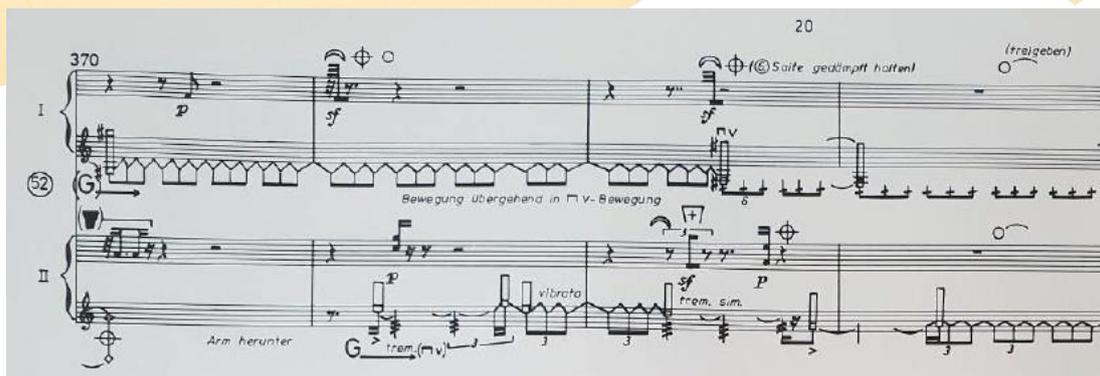
Figure 19 – Cadential gesture to section 3



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 19, mm. 357-360

The music is radically transformed. Almost everything here is new. In the first subdivision, 3a (mm. 361-409), the material  $f'$  is preponderant, which is divided into two variations, the first as a horizontal displacement in relation to the strings (in triplets) and the second, a vertical zigzag movement in relation to the strings (in sextuplets). The plucked sounds superimposed are changed with a tremolo effect.

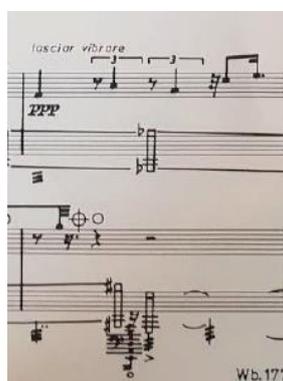
Figure 20 – Predominance of material  $f'$  and its variables



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 20, mm. 370-373

New materials are also exposed in 3a. One of them (g) is characterized by the resonant sound of the open strings, which are activated by lifting the slide that was already in contact with them. The action is followed by an attack of the slide on the strings (In Fig. 21 it is possible to see a supplementary pentagram in which the notes of the open strings are notated).

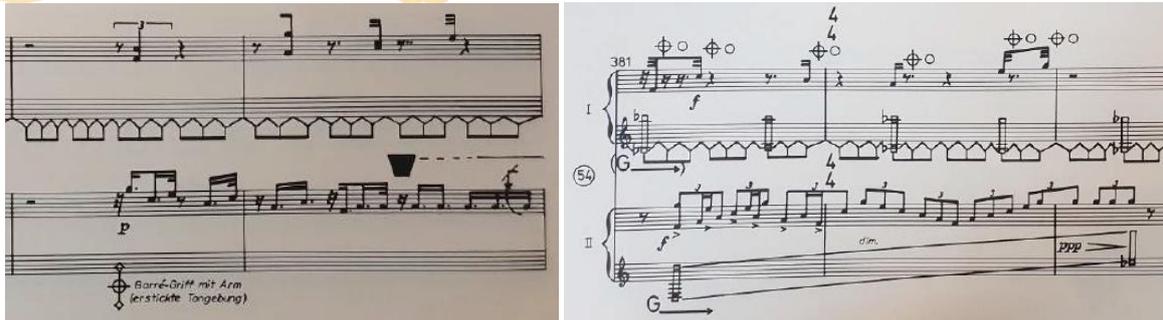
Figure 21 – Material g



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 21, m. 403

There are also two of four interventions operated by the second guitar. The first, a downward movement followed by a stagnation of the pitches is realized with the fingers by plucking the muted strings. The second intervention inverts the melodic profile, making an upward gesture that is played with the fingers of the right hand, but has the sound modulated by the slide. Another contrasting manifestation by opposition of the material.

Figure 22 – Interventions of the second guitar

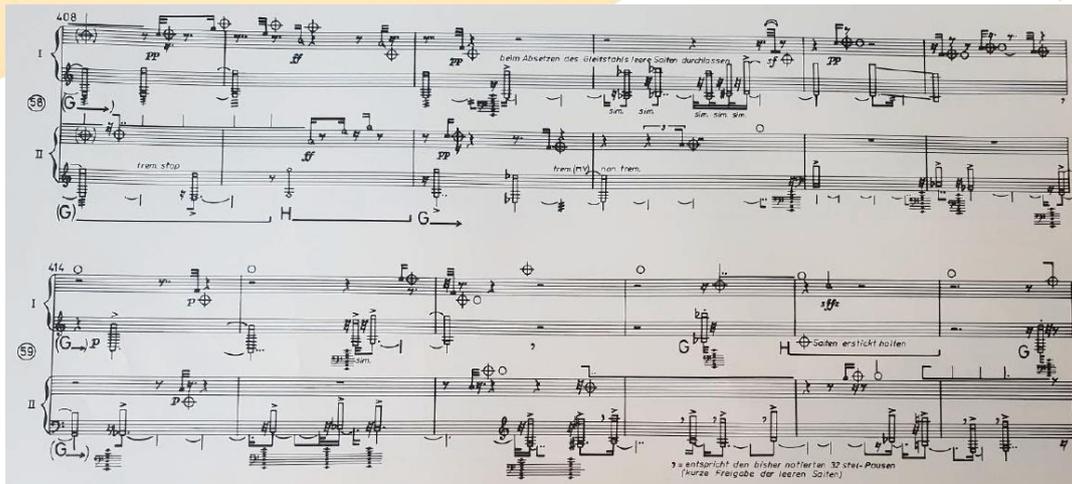


Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 19-20, mm. 368-329 and 381-383

Here the bodily device actualizes a set of actions with hitherto unprecedented characteristics which materialize the second major sound category of the work. The slide remains an essential element. The plectrum, after its short manifestation at the beginning of the section, is completely excluded and will not return in the work, giving way to the sound of plucking the strings with the fingers. The opposite pair, muted/resonance gains more structural importance and the following forms appear less frequently: plucking between saddle and stopping hand, wipping with the nail and *pizz. Bartók*.

The formal articulation between 3a and 3b (c. 409-430) consists once again in progressively destabilizing an already established element through formal dialectical movement. It is possible to see the last two measures of 3a in figure 26, with a remnant of the material *f'* and the beginning of 3b in measure 410, where the predominance of *g* begins. It is also possible to see that the material *f'* does not cease abruptly, but is gradually resolved.

Figure 23 –Liquidation of material *f'* and establishment of the preponderance of *g*



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 22, mm. 408-425

There is in 3b a filtering of the forms of sound production and modulation that actualize a simpler bodily device, mobilizing the use of the slide, plucking with the finger, whipping with the nail and plucking between saddle and stopping hand by the second guitar which realizes the last of four interventions (Fig. 24).

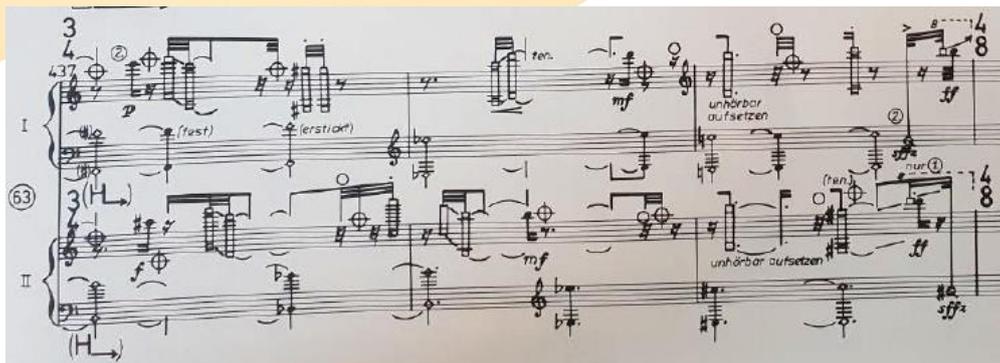
Figure 24 – Fourth intervention



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 23, mm. 431-433

3c (435-465), although it presents similar materials, is different from the previous sections, much more chaotic, with aggressive gestures. It is characterized by the materials *g* and *c*. However, these materials appear very different and with new figurations, as can be seen in the image below.

Figure 25 – Texture and material of 3c

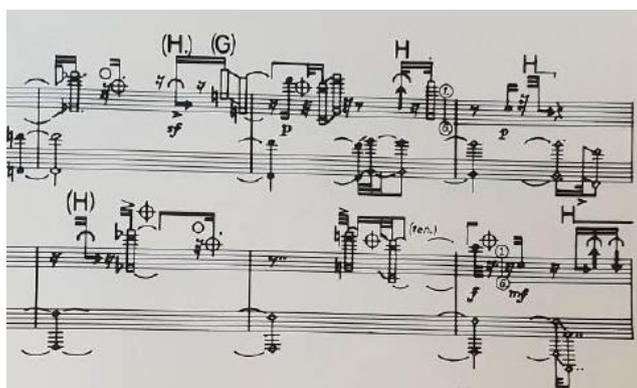


Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 23, mm. 437-439

The forms of sound production and modulation are almost the same as in 3b, adding to them the barre position with the finger.

It is possible to see a progressive insertion of a material and a way of producing sound that will become the main and practically only material of the last section. This involves rubbing the strings with the palm and corner of the hand. Lachenmann indicates the direction of the gesture to be performed with arrows. This process creates a destabilization in the passage that will be resolved as a dialectical synthesis in the coda. The figure below shows the progressive insertion of the new material in 3c.

Figure 26 –New materials in 3c



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 23, mm. 447-449

At measure 465 a violent gesture of two *pizz.* Bartók announces the beginning of a last formal unity. The material that had been enunciated in section 3c completely takes over the space of a coda (mm. 465-533). The two guitarists rub their hands over the strings in short, sharp gestures, outlining geometric figures in a rhythmic structure that striates the space

in semiquavers, articulating sounds over some, and silence over others. The hand action falls into two categories, with the palm and with the side of the hand (opposite the thumb). The performers allow resonances to escape, evoking a memory of tradition. *O alter Duft!* These are chords of E major and a minor. However, they manifest themselves as a kind of musical ruin, as a mere resonance at the end of a work that seems to refuse any kind of habit. Not only that, the second guitar is altered from the beginning of the piece with a scordatura half tone lower, tensing the harmonic space.

From the perspective of the bodies, it can be seen an operation of four groups of actions, i.e., the rubbing of the strings with the hands and the eventual release of resonance, *pizz.* *Bartók*, wiping with the nail and plucking with the finger. The latter three occurring punctually.

The pauses gradually take more space, making a last movement of contradiction, opposing sound and silence and operating what Schönberg called liquidation of the material, a typical compositional process “which consists in gradually eliminating the characteristic elements (...)” (SCHOENBERG, 2008, p. 59), ending a work that refuses, but also, as evidenced in the last gestures and throughout the formal dramaturgy, dialogues with the historical apparatus of the western concert music.

Figure 27 – Last measures of *Salut für Caudwell*



Source: LACHENMANN 1985, 27, mm. 523-533

## Conclusion

Our analysis sought to approach the work from two pillars: (1) the alteration of bodily devices as an embodied reflection of the form, (2) the processuality of materials and their dialectical relations that operate in the discourse.

Regarding bodily devices, they change their logic according to the formal articulations. This occurs not only in Lachenmann's music but the composer operates consciously with the concrete gesture of sound production as a compositional vector, deducing formal hierarchies of both sonorities and the ways of producing them. Through the analysis, it was possible to understand how bodies change during the dramaturgy of *Salut für Caudwell* and that such change can be seen as an embodied reflection of the form.

The music is not limited, however, to the mere exploration of sonorities, which could fall into a fetishized use of sound. There is a kaleidoscopic treatment of materials, producing intense variation that dialogues with a tradition that Lachenmann proposes in many other ways to refuse. It has been seen how Lachenmann exposes his materials and proliferates them in different forms, creating tension and relaxation in the musical flow. In this context, the very idea of musical material begins to encompass the different ways of producing sonorities, going beyond the other aspects usually considered, such as rhythms, pitches, dynamics, textures, densities, etc.

The dialectical question seems to dominate *Salut für Caudwell* in very different perspectives. On the one hand, it establishes a contradiction between Lachenmann's compositions and the historical apparatus of the western concert music by incorporating some elements of this tradition but also negating them, building a musical structure from the refusal of habit and categories of musical making so stratified in bourgeois liberal society. There is also contradiction within the internal logic of the materials. It was clear with the analysis that the composer consequently plays with contrasting elements, whose relationship permeates and affects the music, either from a great arc that opposes two types of general sonorities or inserting these relations in the microform, opposing materials at the local level, or even establishing zones of contradiction resulting in a formal synthesis.

The analysis was therefore an effective instrument to comprehend the operational logic of *Salut für Caudwell*, revealing a music that embraces tradition, but at the same time refuses it, which demands from the performers new ways of operating the bodies and actualizing them over the formal dramaturgy. A process that takes place in a complex structure, which has at its core a network of contradictions, resulting in a music that operates a whole recontextualization of the procedures of reflecting, seeing, hearing, and playing.

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