



NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

**Charles Valentin Alkan: Interpreting the Composer's use of
Rhythm as Identified in the Dominant Motifs present in the
Music for Organ, Pedal-piano and Harmonium**

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**Thesis submitted to the National University of Ireland Maynooth in
fulfilment for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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2014

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Acknowledgements

There are a number of people who deserve acknowledgement for their help and assistance throughout the course of my research. Firstly, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Alison Hood whose patience, encouragement and enthusiasm for this project proved to be invaluable for its completion. I owe her a debt of gratitude. I would also like to thank Dr Lorraine Byrne-Bodley who supervised years two and three of this thesis and pointed it in the right direction and to Prof. Fiona M. Palmer for her support throughout.

Thanks is also due to Dr Jacqueline Waeber, formerly of Trinity College Dublin, who supervised the first year of this thesis and was very generous in lending scores, books and articles from which a large collection has now sprung. Much appreciation also to the generosity of Kevin Bowyer, Organist to the University of Glasgow, who was very forthcoming with information on Alkan's scores and indeed sending me copies of them.

Gratitude is also owed to Dr Patrick Devine, Dr John O'Keeffe, Dr Kerry Houston, Rev. Prof. Liam Tracey and Marie Breen for endless encouragement which was, and remains to be, very much appreciated.

No project, be it big or small, could be completed without the help of good friends. In this respect I wish to express sincerest gratitude to Michael Casey whose patience, it would seem, has no end and without whose support and

encouragement this thesis would never have reached its end. Paul Farrell, Paul Clear, Keith Barrett, Ciara Nolan-Furey, Dr Adèle Commins, Dr J. Haydn Gurmin, Dr Jennifer O'Connor, Pdraig O'Connor and Sr. Cora Hayes have all played their part in giving support and lending a hand when needed most.

Thanks to my former colleagues in the Fees and Grants Office, NUI Maynooth for their constant support and to my present colleagues in the Payments Office, NUI Maynooth for their positive encouragement. Thanks also to Anne Pemberton for solving more than one print/copy crisis!

To my mother Breda and twin-brother John, who sacrificed so much to help me get to where I am today, no thanks is big enough. I am eternally grateful and indebted to you.

And finally to my late father, Teddy, who remained interested in my work (despite the lengthy duration from inception to completion!) and always encouraged me, in his own way, to keep going.

I dedicate this thesis to his memory:

Edward (Teddy) Holden

31st October 1948 – 21st June 2010

Preface

The music of Charles Valentin Alkan has long been viewed as being somewhat unapproachable by virtue of its virtuosic nature. While there are a number of people who have, by their writings and instrumental recordings, made the name of Alkan less obscure¹, there is still a significant omission of his works in analytical literature.

This thesis presents a preliminary analysis, regarding the interpretation of rhythm, of three significant sets of works. The works chosen are from Alkan's last creative period and are written for organ/pedal-piano/piano three-hands: with the exception of the Op. 66 *Pièces*, which are scored for harmonium. These works help to illustrate Alkan's ability to look beyond the conventional pianoforte as being the only viable keyboard instrument on which to perform 'serious' keyboard music.

Chapter 1 aims to contextualise Alkan's work against the backdrop of mid nineteenth-century Romanticism. To this end, the experiences, both musically

¹William A. Eddie, Hugh MacDonald and Ronald Smith, among others, have championed the case of Alkan over the last few decades with various articles and books. The organist Kevin Bowyer has recorded the three cycles of works that form the basis of this thesis' analysis, while Nicholas King, one of the first organists to record Alkan's music, released an album of selected organ works in 1988. Ronald Smith, in the 1970s and 80s recorded a variety of Alkan's piano music and Jack Gibbons, in the mid 1990s, made an invaluable recording of the Op. 39 Etudes and other pieces. All these recordings are documented in the discography.

and socially, of native and non-native composers are discussed.² This helps to create a balanced picture of ‘musical’ Paris in the mid nineteenth-century. The experiences of these composers, and their popularity both socially and musically, helps to illuminate Alkan’s music within a broader context; that of musical style. Chopin’s music proved popular with the Parisian public, yet Alkan does not imitate his musical style. The same is true for all the composers that are mentioned in this thesis: they all have an individual musical and compositional style, yet it is Alkan’s music that remains the most obscure and, as a result of this, the least popular.

The idea of instrumental ambiguity and the emergence of the pedal-piano are also addressed in this chapter. While this section is short, it remains important to bring attention to Alkan’s preoccupation with the instrument. The instrument’s genesis, popularity and functionality are also discussed.

Chapter 2 outlines the analytical paradigm that is to be applied to the works of Alkan that are central to this thesis. In this chapter, acknowledging the existing analytical literature, criticisms and terminology becomes important and the contextualisation of these within the analytical paradigm used in this thesis is paramount.

² I look, primarily, at Chopin and Liszt’s time in Paris, using their letters to gain a more personal insight in to their activities in the city. Mendelssohn’s visit to Paris is also briefly mentioned. I have, in Chapter 1, used an early edition of Mendelssohn’s letters that dates from 1881. I feel it is an important fact that his correspondences were published in the same century of his death. This testifies to the interest in the composer personally and to his popularity.

The primary focus of the analysis is to present an interpretation of the composer's use of rhythm. The chapter highlights and discusses the various difficulties that present themselves when making rhythm, in particular, the central focus of an analysis. In order to formulate an analytical model the chapter will continue by outlining the components that are imperative, as this present researcher sees it, to analysis. From this, the analytical model to be used will be constructed; drawing on the experience of other analysts through terminology, structure and method. The chapter ends by clearly defining analytical terms as they apply to this analysis.³

Chapter 3 is the first of three analytical chapters presented in this thesis. It employs the analytical paradigm, as set out in chapter 2, to analyse Alkan's Op. 64 *13 Prières*. Each individual piece is examined, highlighting the dominant rhythmic motifs, assessing their tonal quality and functioning role within the context of the piece. As the analysis continues, certain rhythmic patterns and organisations become more dominant.

In chapter 4 it is Alkan's Op. 66 *11 Grands Préludes et 1 transcription de Messie de Hændel* that is examined. In this chapter it is just the original works that form part of the analysis. From the opening composition of this set of works, and having the benefit of the findings from the previous analytical chapter, it can be seen that repetition is one of the motivating features in Alkan's compositional

³ The analytical meaning of a word may, at times, differ from the literal meaning of the same word. In these instances the word is defined or explained within the context of the analytical paradigm.

style. Strict motivic development emerges as a common trait and the influence of other composers' works is also discussed.

In chapter 5 it is Alkan's Op. 72 *Onze Pièces dans le Style Religieux et 1 Transcription du Messie de Hændel* that is analysed (again, it is just the original works that are examined here and not the Handel transcription). There is some instrumental ambiguity regarding the *Pièces*. The title page of the work lists the instrumentation as *Piano ou harmonium* but other sources⁴ also include the organ as one of the possible instruments upon which these pieces can be played. The influence of other composers' compositions is also evident in this set of works and this is highlighted and discussed as the chapter develops.

The final chapter, chapter 6, outlines the findings from the three previous analytical chapters and it is here that these findings will be discussed in greater detail. Also discussed in this chapter are the problems of instrumental ambiguity and — through exploration of the score for range, dynamic levels, phrasing etc — the practicalities that should dictate to the player which of these instruments best expresses the sentiment and style of these compositions.

It is in this chapter also that the idea of an *Alkan Idiom*, with regard to a specific rhythmic configuration, will be explored founded on the basis of the evidence unearthed by the analysis. The concept of *Tonal Expression* will be re-evaluated

⁴ The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians in its list of works for Alkan quotes the possible instrumentation as organ/harmonium/pf. This list of works can be viewed on line at: <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/subscriber/article_works/grove/music/00579#S00579.4>

in light of all three analytical chapters and the distinction between *rhythmically static/dynamic* and *tonally static/dynamic* will be further explored here.

It will be concluded that the analysis highlights Alkan's novel use of rhythm, and it is his use of rhythm particularly that gives his music that individuality that sets it apart from other composers from the same era. It will also be shown that, for the most part, Alkan's use of a static or dynamic rhythm results in that motifs' Tonal Expression also being static or dynamic.

Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind is that the analysis presented in this thesis is just one analytical interpretation of Alkan's use of rhythm in these three cycles of compositions.

Chapter 1

Mid Nineteenth-Century Paris: A Historical Survey of its Musical Life

‘S’il est une physionomie d’artiste originale et curieuse à étudier entre toutes, c’est bien certainement celle de Ch.-V. Alkan, dont l’intérêt se double d’une sorte de mystère et d’enigme à pénétrer.’¹

1.1 Introduction

When making the music of Charles Valentin Alkan the subject of a musicological or an analytical study, it is important to consider it firstly within the greater context of the nineteenth century, and secondly, within the context of Romanticism itself. The former allows the investigator to appreciate and witness the sometimes-progressive nature of Alkan’s music (through his use of rhythm, harmony, structure and tonality) that, at times, gives glimpses of future developments. The latter illustrates to the same investigator just how stylistically and structurally rigid Alkan’s compositions can be, particularly when placed side-by-side with pieces from Chopin, Liszt or Schumann.

Paris, considered by many to be the cultural capital of nineteenth-century Europe, drew to its borders many leading musicians in an effort to showcase their talents as instrumentalists, composers and conductors. In this context, comparisons and

¹ Marmontel: *les Pianistes Célèbres*, cited in Ronald Smith: *Alkan The Man The Music*, (1976; London: Kahn & Averill, 2000), I, p. 13.

contrasts can be made between Alkan's musical style and that of his European contemporaries visiting the city. It is to this end that the visits of Liszt and Chopin (and to a lesser extent that of Mendelssohn) serve not only to highlight Parisian culture during the early-to-mid decades of the nineteenth century, but also to illustrate the various reactions of the concert-going public to these composers and their music while giving a personal insight into the composers' own 'Parisian experience'.

1.2 Charles Alkan: A Short Biography

There is little known of Alkan's general life. Invaluable publications and article contributions by Ronald Smith, Hugh MacDonald and William Eddie (to name but a few) have helped in piecing together the major events that dominated Alkan's professional life while also giving some insight into his private life.

Charles Valentin Alkan was born on November 30th 1813, the second of six children born to Jewish parents Julie and Alkan Morhange.² His father 'ran a small boarding school where young children, mostly Jewish, received elementary

² Alkan's siblings all received a formal musical education. His sister Celeste Alkan (1812 – 1897) won first prize in solfège at the Paris Conservatoire in 1825 and also studied voice with Felix Pellegrini (1774 – 1832) in 1829. His brother Ernest Alkan (1816 – 1876) won first prize in solfège at the Paris Conservatoire in 1832 and won first prize in Flute the same year. He studied fugue and counterpoint from 1837 to 1839. His brother Maxime Alkan (1818 – 1876) studied piano with Pierre Zimmerman (1785 – 1853) winning first prize in 1834. He studied harmony with Victor Dourlen (1780 – 1864) but his studies were discontinued by 'decision of the Committee'. His brother Napoléon Alkan (1826 – 1906) studied solfège under him at the Paris Conservatoire winning first prize in 1837. He also studied piano with Zimmerman winning first prize in 1843. He took organ lessons with François Benoist (1794 – 1878) from 1848 to 1850 and also studied fugue and counterpoint with Adolphe Adam (1803 – 1856) winning first prize in 1849. The youngest of his siblings, Gustave Alkan (1827 – 1882) studied composition with Jean-François Halévy from 1850 to 1852. For a full family tree and list of musical achievements see diagrams 1.1 and 1.2 in William Alexander Eddie: *Charles Valentin Alkan: His Life and His Music*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007), pp 3–4.

musical instruction there and were also taught the rudiments of French grammar.’³

It was at his father’s boarding school that Alkan received his first musical training. Antoine Marmontel (1816–1898) writes of his time at Alkan Morhange’s school in his book *Les Pianistes Célèbres*. He reminisces:

I can still picture Mr Alkan Sr’s house, the highly patriarchal environment which shaped Valentin Alkan’s talent and within which that hard-working youngster grew up. I spent some months there as a boarder [...] together with a number of children who came for solfège lessons and basic musical instruction. It was like a preparatory school, a junior annexe to the Conservatoire. What pleasant evenings I spent there at little expense in Valentin Alkan’s room, when he had not yet become the solitary hermit of his mature years. Cheery and confident, he, like the rest of us, possessed the faith, enthusiasm and cherished hopes of youth.⁴

David Conway places Marmontel’s comments in context when he says:

Much is revealed by [Marmontel’s] extract. The school attended by both Jews and Gentiles, run by a Jew, teaching elements of French grammar (at a time when more Parisian Jews spoke Yiddish than French), and regarded as a step to a great national institution, is a notable symbol of the cultural and social transition achievable by French Jews of the period. The school was still advertising itself under the administration of ‘M. Alkan Père’, who was clearly by now benefiting from the reflected glory of his children, in 1844, mentioning ‘the numerous successful pupils [...] over the last twenty years who have entered the Conservatoire’.⁵

Alkan was accepted into the Paris Conservatoire at the age of six, winning the Premier Prix for solfège at seven-and-a-half years old.⁶ He later went on to gain Premier Prix in piano (1824), harmony (1827) and organ (1834) with his Opus 1,

³ A. F. Marmontel: *Les Pianistes Célèbres*, (Paris: 1878), Chapter XII, trans. Julian Haxby and printed in *The Alkan Society Bulletin*, No. 85, July 2011, p. 2. Credit must also be given to François Luguenot who inserted explanatory footnotes to this chapter that appeared in the *Société Alkan Bulletin*, No. 19, December 1991.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 3.

⁵ David Conway, *Jewry in Music*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 225. The ending quote is from Ronald Smith, *Alkan the Man The Music*, (1976; London: Kahn & Averill, 2000) Vol I, p. 40

⁶ Ronald Smith: *Alkan The Man The Music*, (1976; London: Kahn & Averill, 2000), I, p. 16.

(*Variations on a theme from Steibelt*) published in 1828.⁷ H. H. Bellemann wrote of Alkan's Op. 10, which was published in the same year, that:

The earliest opus of distinct value is marked ten. It is the *Concerto da camera* in A minor. This thoroughly melodious composition may be played without orchestra. It seems quite incredible that it could have been written so early — dating, as it does, before 1828. There is already the marked freedom that characterizes all of Alkan's writing.⁸

Eddie notes that 'Alkan's first concert appearance was as a violinist [...] in 1821.'⁹ It was not until 1826 that his first piano concert was organized, by Zimmerman, at the salon of the piano manufacturer Henri Pape. The promotional material for this concert claimed that Alkan was only eleven years old when in fact he was thirteen.¹⁰ Alkan's prodigious piano playing caught the attention of the Princess de la Moskova and de Bertha comments that:

[Alkan] always remembered with great fondness the friendly welcome that he received from Princess de la Moskova, at the time when he was considered a child prodigy, at the age of 13 or 14, when that great lady had him play at her musical soirées, which were virtually the only ones in Paris then [circa 1826].¹¹

⁷ Hugh MacDonalad, 'Alkan', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), I, p. 377.

⁸ H. H. Bellamann and Charles Valentin Morhange Alkan: 'The Piano Works of C. V. Alkan', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 10 No. 2, (Apr., 1924), pp 251-262, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 253.

⁹ William Alexander Eddie, *Charles Valentin Alkan: His Life and His Music*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007), p. 2.

¹⁰ Both William Eddie and Ronald Smith mention this event. Eddie on p.2 of *Valentin Alkan: His Life and His Music*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007) and Smith *Alkan The Man The Music*, (1976; London: Kahn & Averill, 2000), I, p. 19.

¹¹ Alexander de Bertha: 'Ch. Valentin Alkan: A Psycho-Musical Study', *Bulletin Français de la Société Internationale de Musique*, February 1909 (pp. 135–147) trans. Juliam Haxby and printed in the *Alkan Society Bulletin*, No. 88 Devenber 2012 pp. 10–18, p. 12. (Haxby's translation is of an appearance of this article, with notes, from the bulletin of the *Société Alkan*, No. 13, September 1989).

Alkan began teaching solfège on a part-time basis at the Paris Conservatoire in 1829, and continued doing so until 1836.¹² It was during this time that he met and befriended Chopin (1810 – 1849). It is also during this period that he met and befriended the composer and pianist Santiago de Masarnau. Recently discovered letters document a close and previously unknown friendship with Masarnau, the dedicatee of the *Trois études de bravoure*.¹³ The letters give insight to Alkan's views on friendship, on teaching piano and even on love. Their relevance here lies in their emotional content.

Alkan is revealed in these letters as a passionate individual with almost obsessive emotional traits. This passion and 'obsession' transcends the written word and manifests itself in his music – in the form of obsessive rhythmic/tonal repetition (which can be seen in *Prière* No. 3, Op. 64 discussed in Chapter 3) which, more often than not, is combined with exceptionally quick tempi (a striking example from his piano works would be the Etude No. 5, Op. 35 '*Allegro Barabaro*')¹⁴

¹² Hugh MacDonalad, 'Alkan', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), I, p. 377.

¹³ Santiago Fernández de Masarnau (1805–1882) was a Spanish composer and pianist. He was a child prodigy, performing on the organ for King Ferdinand VII playing some of his own compositions. For decades he split his time between Madrid, Paris and London. In 1834, in Paris, he met Alkan and the two became intimate friends. Following a profound religious experience in 1838, Masarnau decided to dedicate the rest of his life to the service of the poor. To this end he joined the (lay) Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Paris, becoming an active member. Subsequently, when he returned permanently to Spain in 1843 he was instrumental in the establishment of the Society there. He is currently a candidate for canonization. For a more detailed biography see David Conway, 'The Alkan-Masarnau Correspondence', *Alkan Society Bulletin*, No. 82, 2010, pp. 2-6.

¹⁴ The correspondence between Alkan and Masarnau is only currently being translated into English by David Conway, Julian Haxby (*Alkan Society*) with assistance from François Luguénot (*Société Alkan*). To date, only the first seven letters have been translated. Conway mentions that the 38 original letters have been digitised and are available to view at <http://pares.mcu.es>

In a letter to Masarnau, dated Paris, September 1 1834 Alkan outlines his feelings for him and their friendship. He states:

So I must believe all the more in the fine friendship of which you speak. --- I don't want to dispute here which one of us likes the other better, for I like that no more than to argue about who will pay the bill at a café; but I will tell you only that by nature I feel inclined to love, first, those who love me, then those who have talent, and finally good folk. So it's up to you to judge whether I should feel inclined toward you – give me the pleasure for the moment of setting your modesty aside – and if I should be proud and happy to be loved by you – that's enough chatting about friendship for the moment, we can always get back to it, as for me at least it's most interesting.¹⁵

This extract also illuminates Alkan's human side and his emotional need to be liked and loved. This emotional intensity is again seen in reference to the depth of friendship between himself and Masarnau. The following extract illustrates Alkan's almost-hyperbolic sentimentality:

I love you, less for the incredible variety of your knowledge, than for yourself, for the goodness of your soul; which is perhaps the fruit of your unusual learning. I love you, but with a friendship that admits no sharing – a friendship which resembles constantly the fleeting love that an impassioned woman may have for you for a moment. If I write to you all the time; if I have been a year without speaking to you; you are nonetheless the image I have before me when returning to my room alone with my thoughts I seek a friend, as the image of she who has died presents itself when I seek a lover. So look inside yourself, think about it, and see if you can resolve to respond to what I ask; or else otherwise burn this letter and my earlier ones to you – if I were only to be granted a moment more of friendship.¹⁶

¹⁵ Letter II to Masarnau in Madrid dated Paris, September 1 1834 translated by David Conway (acknowledging the assistance of François Luguenot and Julian Haxby) printed in the *Alkan Society Bulletin*, No. 88, December 2012, p. 7. Conway makes the point that these are the 'first attempt' at English translations and that Alkan's style of writing can, at times, be difficult to decipher.

¹⁶ Letter III to Masarnau in Madrid dated Paris, January 3 1835 translated by David Conway (acknowledging the assistance of François Luguenot and Julian Haxby) printed in the *Alkan Society Bulletin*, No. 88, December 2012, p. 10. (Underlining is Alkan's)

In the third letter Alkan tells Masarnau of a woman he once loved whose death seems to have had a profound affect on him and stayed with him throughout his life. In the letter he states:

I have a beautiful memory, it is of who is no more, perhaps that is why [it is so beautiful]. A woman loved me, but with a pure love, a disinterested love; she is dead. Is that fortunate, is it unfortunate, I ask myself? If she had lived, I might perhaps have wished to try her too sorely and there would not have been for me what I now call a beautiful memory. – Meanwhile I'm desolated, I weep. Yes, even though I sometimes forget in the whirlwind of events which surrounds me, it comes back to me later, and then it is a new force, remembrance, which arises from the smallest things, tearing my innards; inhuman desires seem to dominate my heart; I burn, I crave for something I cannot identify, I feel suspended in mid-air, wholly unable to cling either to heaven or earth and yet she who causes my torment today suffered in her lifetime through me. I showed towards her a coldness that I did not feel, I went for a long time without seeing her, I never said farewell at her deathbed! Even though I was not to blame for this last cruelty, I would give my last drop of blood to have embraced her at her last moment, to be sure she forgave me my indifference.¹⁷

The identity of the woman to whom the twenty-one year old Alkan is referring is unknown. It is clear from the letter that the mental anguish he suffered as a result of her death and the guilt he experienced at her passing without imparting forgiveness for his 'coldness' show Alkan to be passionately emotional. In these letters Alkan reveals himself to be lonely, longing for meaningful relationships and, indeed, love. The following extract casts light on Alkan's loneliness:

[But] last night it occurred to me, for the first time in a long while, to work a little at my piano, and after having played some of Weber's sonatas (which almost made me cry, they are so beautiful and poetic) I turned to embrace someone, or to tell someone "I love you", and as there was no one beside me I took some paper and wrote to Madrid. [...] I do not think it would be possible to love someone

¹⁷ Letter III to Masarnau in Madrid dated Paris, January 3 1835 translated by David Conway (acknowledging the assistance of François Luguenot and Julian Haxby) printed in the *Alkan Society Bulletin*, No. 88, December 2012, p. 8.

more than I love you, and moreover, that it would be possible to tell you this more stupidly.¹⁸

Alkan's friendship with Masarnau appears, sometimes, to be tainted with a possessive type of jealousy – at least from Alkan's perspective. This is evident from the following extract from a letter written by Alkan in November 1835:

My jealousy, which is almost as strong as in friendship as in love, makes me think that Field¹⁹ has gained a closer intimacy with you on this subject. Perhaps I would never have spoken to you so indiscreetly if in your last letter you had not spoken to me about the Ballade that you have just composed and that you say caused you to shed so many tears. Please, if you love me, send me this Ballade so that I may weep over it as well.²⁰

Alkan, in these letters, speaks candidly and honestly about his personal life and, because of this, a side to him which has previously been unknown (and, perhaps, unexplored) is exposed. He writes to Masarnau about a love interest saying:

I have met a young person, good, pious, intelligent and well-educated, young and pretty, but entirely lacking in poetry. A young woman who has striven from her earliest years to husband all her passions. Someone who, when reading a book, whether sad or happy, looks in the mirror to keep her expression unaltered. understanding all the beautiful things, but unable to share her appreciation with you. Never an exclamation, never any cordial enthusiasm; always calm. Oh! That is not what an artist needs, an artist who has known the most poetic and the most expressive person who ever existed. And yet I am bound, and I find it difficult to separate myself from this new lover. Even though every one of her glances, her words, makes me grow cooler, more sensible, if you will. Though the blood slows in my veins, and my thoughts slow in my head. She was due to go abroad, but I think unfortunately that she will remain. What can I do? She loves me and has done much for me. Perhaps I love her too, but she is killing me. She has killed me. Oh, if I had you with me, perhaps I would detach myself,

¹⁸ Letter IV to Masarnau in Madrid dated Paris, August 18-19 1835 translated by Julian Haxby (acknowledging the assistance of François Luguénot with notes by David Conway) printed in the *Alkan Society Bulletin*, No. 89, May 2013, p. 6-7.

¹⁹ This is a reference to the English pianist Henry Ibbot Field (1797-1848).

²⁰ Letter V to Masarnau in Madrid dated Piscop, near St. Brise, Seine-et-Oise, chez. Mr. Pahin, November 6 1835 translated by Julian Haxby (acknowledging the assistance of François Luguénot with notes by David Conway) printed in the *Alkan Society Bulletin*, No. 89, May 2013, p. 7.

perhaps I would become something once more. My life is ebbing away. I am 22 years old. 10 of my rivals have reached their zenith, whilst I languish.²¹

The identity of the woman in this letter is unknown. Alkan's concern at his lack of creativity seems to be affected by the success of his rivals. This depressive introspective mood is carried through in the next letter dated six months later. Here he tells Masarnau that:

My heart is empty and grows drier with each passing day. I still wish to recall my former hopes, the time when I had honest men and women close to me, when my flow of ideas granted me a range of moods that I tried to reproduce in my compositions. Now I am the same at all hours. My ideas have come to a halt. I am very organised. I never do anything foolish. I study grammar and ancient history. At least if I had you near I would study astronomy and mathematics and would carry to the heavens the monotony and listlessness that are so much part of my present mood.²²

His first period of withdrawal (from the concert stage) began in 1839 and lasted until 1844.²³ William Eddie suggests that:

firstly, he found the musical tastes of Parisian bourgeois audiences deplorable...his championing of chamber music was out of phase with the Parisian mass audience taste. A second reason may have been the birth of his natural son Elie Miriam Deladorde on 9 February 1839.²⁴

After this five year period 'he gave two concerts [in 1844] for *La France musicale*, followed by two in 1845 in the Salle Erard.'²⁵

²¹ Letter VI to Masarnau in Madrid dated Paris, April 18 1836 translated by Julian Haxby (acknowledging the assistance of François Luguénot with notes by David Conway) printed in the *Alkan Society Bulletin*, No. 89, May 2013, p. 10.

²² Letter VII to Masarnau in Madrid dated Paris, October 22 1836 translated by Julian Haxby (acknowledging the assistance of François Luguénot with notes by David Conway) printed in the *Alkan Society Bulletin*, No. 89, May 2013, p. 10.

²³ William Alexander Eddie, *Charles Valentin Alkan: His Life and His Music*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007), p. 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Hugh MacDonalad, 'Alkan', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), I, p. 377.

Despite Alkan's reclusiveness, he managed to maintain a series of close friendships. His friendship with Chopin, who moved to Paris in 1831, is perhaps the most generally known. They, along with the author George Sand (1804–1876) who lived with Chopin, spent time as neighbours at the 'fashionable centre of artistic life in the capital [Paris], the Square d'Orléans.'²⁶ Alkan would, later on, call on George Sand for help in his quest for a Conservatoire job.

'Alkan dreamed of a permanent position at the [Paris] Conservatoire'²⁷ and in 1848, on the retirement of Joseph Zimmermann (1785–1853), he felt sure he would be the one to replace him.²⁸ 'There was public controversy as to whether Alkan or Marmontel should succeed to the teaching post at the Conservatoire' and both men canvassed openly for the position.²⁹ Alkan wrote a letter to the Minister of the Interior outlining why he should be appointed to the post. In it he states that:

If you uphold the administrator of the Department of Fine Arts, I will be elected. If you discover public opinion instead of a small faction, I will be elected. If you gather the votes of all the leading musicians of Europe, I will be elected. If you judge the competition on three aspects – performance, composition and teaching – I will be elected. If you would postpone your decision until the new plan for adjustment takes place despite the influences exercised over a significant portion of teachers, I would still be elected by a large majority and would very likely inspire the unanimous vote of students.³⁰

²⁶ Ronald Smith: *Alkan The Man The Music*, (1976; London: Kahn & Averill, 2000), I, p. 22.

²⁷ Robert Rimm, *The Composer-Pianists: Hamelin and The Eight*, (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 2002), p. 23.

²⁸ Rimm suggests that 'Zimmermann had decided to retire' (pg 23) and that is how the position in the Conservatoire became available. However MacDonald, in his article for *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, gives 1848 as the year the position became available 'on the death of Zimmermann' (p. 377). Zimmermann did not die until 29 Oct 1853.

²⁹ Hugh MacDonalad, 'Alkan', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), I, p. 377.

³⁰ AN F 12 1291, cited in William Alexander Eddie: *Charles Valentin Alkan, His Life and His Music*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007), p. 10.

Alkan also turned to George Sand asking her for help with this matter. She obliged in the form of a letter of recommendation which she ‘penned in 1848 [...] to Charles Blanc (1813–1882), Director of the Department of Fine Arts, which she posted to Alkan to read and forward.’³¹ However despite his best efforts his appointment did not come and it was Antoine Marmontel that succeeded Zimmerman as head of piano studies. Sand was later to write to Louis Blanc, a brother of Charles Blanc, a letter (dated 5 April 1849) in which she says, ‘I wrote to your brother a few months ago to ask him to do something just [...] He preferred to do something that was not, and did not even answer me.’³² Alkan gave few concerts after this time and when he did ‘he played more music by other composers than his own works.’³³

Following the death of Chopin in October 1849, Alkan began a steady descent into reclusivity, despite being classed as one of the leading virtuosos of the time. David Conway describes his involvement with the Paris Jewish Consistory during this period when he says:

Alkan’s services were employed by the Consistory in the appointment of Naumbourg³⁴, who also commissioned work by Alkan for *Zemiroth Yisroel*. During the late 1850s Alkan sat briefly on a committee considering revision of the musical liturgy. Earlier, when in 1851 and 1852 the Consistorial Temple was rebuilt, to include, for the first time, a fixed organ, the Consistory set about recruiting its first official organist. The name of Alkan was proposed and unanimously endorsed by the committee concerned, which included Halévy³⁵. Alkan accepted, and then within a few days resigned, citing at length, in a letter

³¹ Ruth Jordan, ‘Alkan’s friendship with Chopin and George Sand’, *Alkan Society Bulletin*, No. 38, May 1989, p. 10.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Hugh MacDonalad, ‘Alkan’, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), I, p. 377.

³⁴ Samuel Naumbourg (1815–1880), French composer and was involved in the reforming of synagogue music.

³⁵ Fromental Halévy (1799–1862), French composer, teacher and writer on music.

that has sadly been lost, artistic considerations. Halévy and the Consistory President, who were deputed to talk Alkan round, failed in their task.³⁶

In 1853 he gave two concerts entitled ‘Séances de musique classical et retrospective’³⁷ and again in 1855, the year of his father’s death, he played an active role in ‘demonstrating [Erard’s] latest instruments’ at the International Exhibition.³⁸ But such public appearances by Alkan around this time were in fact rare.

In the decade that followed the Conservatoire misfortune Alkan busied himself with composition. In 1857 he published the *Douze études dans tous les tons mineurs*, Op. 39 proving that perhaps his ‘withdrawal had been more than justified.’³⁹

In 1861 Alkan wrote of his reclusiveness:

I am becoming daily more and more misanthropic and misogynous...nothing worthwhile, good, or useful to do...no one to devote myself to. My situation makes me horribly sad and wretched. Even musical production has lost its attraction for me for I can’t see the point or goal.⁴⁰

Here we see that even composition no longer excites him, and there is a depressive tone to his correspondence. Alkan was aware to a certain extent that his reclusivity was causing him great loneliness and in further correspondence with Hiller in 1862 he states ‘were it not for a little reading, I should be living

³⁶ David Conway, *Jewry in Music*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 234

³⁷ William Alexander Eddie, *Charles Valentin Alkan, His Life and His Music*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007), p. 13.

³⁸ Ronald Smith:, *Alkan The Man The Music*, (1976; London: Kahn & Averill, 2000), I, p. 51.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ A letter to Hiller, cited in Ronald Smith: *Alkan The Man The Music*, (1976; London: Kahn & Averill, 2000), I, p. 56.

rather like a cabbage or a mushroom.⁴¹ His friendship with Hiller is one of the most significant relationships that endured throughout his life.

The circumstances surrounding Alkan's death, and the facts of that matter, have been, and still are, the subject of much debate. Reports which circulated at the time of his death, in March 1888, conflict on a number of key points. There exists one story that Alkan died as a result of an accident in which he was reaching for the Talmud from his bookcase, which in turn fell on him and killed him.⁴² Evidence suggests that this is in fact untrue, or at least has been exaggerated to a certain degree. Hugh MacDonald, in his article 'More on Alkan's Death', sheds new light on the composer's death. In his article he quotes from a letter of an old student of Alkan's, Marie-Antoinette Colas, in which she gives an account of the composer's death. In it she says:

He died by an accident, living alone. It was his custom to go downstairs each morning about eleven o'clock to see the concierge and get his lunch, or something to make lunch with. That day, which was, I believe, Good Friday, the concierge became anxious at not seeing him come down. She went upstairs and heard groans. He had fallen face down in the kitchen, and a very heavy umbrella-stand had fallen on top of him. He had not been able to free himself ... He was picked up and carried to his bed, but he died about eight o'clock that evening. No-one knew how long he had been underneath.⁴³

⁴¹ William Alexander Eddie, *Charles Valentin Alkan, His Life and His Music*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007), p. 16.

⁴² This account is well known and has been documented in many reports that circulated shortly after Alkan's death. See Chapter 11 of Ronald Smith, *Alkan The Man, The Music* in which he relays all the accounts of Alkan's death. Hugh Mac Donald has two articles on the subject both appearing in the *Musical Times*, one in January 1973 (p. 25) and the other on the centenary of the composer's death in March 1988 (p. 118).

⁴³ Letter from Marie-Antoinette Colas to Louis Colas dated April 4th, 1888 cited in Hugh MacDonald: 'More on Alkan's Death', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 129 No. 1741, (Mar., 1988), 119–120, Musical Times Publications Ltd, (p. 119).

There is no mention of the supposed bookcase incident. In an effort to shed some light on the myths, MacDonald goes further by referring to the official ‘certificate of death’ which says:

Charles Morhange ALKAN, unmarried, born 30 November 1813 in Paris, son of Morhange and Julie Abraham his wife (both deceased), died at his domicile 29 rue Daru on 29 March 1888 at 8 p.m. Notification was given at 3 p.m. the following day at the Mairie by Isidore Pohl, aged 47, employee, residing in Paris, 13 rue Jean Beausire, and by Jules Damlincourt, aged 37, employee, residing at 48 rue Lafitte, neither related to the deceased.⁴⁴

Again, there is no mention of the falling bookcase incident. The actual circumstances concerning the composer’s death will always be the subject of intrigue.

1.3 Musical Life in Mid Nineteenth-Century Paris (to 1840):

Natives, Settlers & Visitors

It would be a Herculean task to give mention here to every composer, pianist and learned musician that lived, settled or visited Paris in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Instead, a cross-section of the more well-known and influential musicians (particularly those that had influence on Alkan’s development as a composer, pianist and organist) will be looked at. To this end, the native (French) composer Alexandre Boëly, the settlers Franz Liszt and Frédéric Chopin, and the visitor Felix Mendelssohn will be looked at.

⁴⁴ Certificate found in the Archives of Mairie of Paris’s 8th Arrondissement, cited in Hugh MacDonald: ‘More on Alkan’s Death’, *The Musical Times*, Vol. 129 No. 1741, (Mar., 1988), pp. 119–120, Musical Times Publications Ltd, (p. 118).

The achievements of some nineteenth-century French composers have been somewhat underestimated in current academic literature. Those of Alexandre Boëly⁴⁵, in particular, have been greatly overlooked. Significant for a number of reasons, his contribution to composition and organ playing, and his writing for pedal piano, are linked to the developments of pedal piano that Alkan later went on to champion. The following quotation from Amedeé Gastoue illustrates just how important this composer is:

Boëly, who became one of the greatest of French organists, was thus a most definite link between two periods in the history of the organ - that of the older Classical School and that of the Romantic School.⁴⁶

Acknowledging Boëly as ‘a most definite link between two periods in the history of the organ’ is important as it allows us to view the efforts of Alkan, regarding the autonomy of the pedal piano as an independent instrument, in a contextual light. The beginning of Boëly’s efforts in this respect is thus significant, Gastoue offers the following:

From 1817 onwards, Boëly turned his efforts towards the composition of works of a quite new and individual distinction, by writing for the pedal-piano, on which the pedals were capable of producing an independent part, like those of an

⁴⁵ Alexandre Pierre François Boëly was born in Versailles on April 19th 1785 and received his early musical training from his father, Jean François Boëly (1739–1814). He was accepted in the Pairs Conservatoire aged 11, studying both violin and piano, but did not complete his studies. In 1840 he was appointed titular organist at St. Germain-l’Auxerrois and had the organ there fitted with a German pedalboard. During his time here he gained a reputation as an organ virtuoso. Boëly is recognised as one of the first organists in France to promote the works of Bach while also being an early admirer of Beethoven. In 1851 he had to resign his post in St. Germain-l’Auxerrois as the clergy and congregation thought his music style was too austere. He died in Paris on December 27th, 1858. For a list of works and more details on the composer’s life and influences see Brigette François-Sappey, ‘Boëly, Alexandre Pierre François’, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), III, p. 780.

⁴⁶ Amedee Gastoue, Anselm Hughes: ‘A Great French Organist, Alexandre Boëly, And His Works’, *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 30 No. 3, (Jul., 1944), (Oxford: Oxford University Press) pp. 336–344, p. 336.

organ ... Boëly gave the pedal part, in the playing of which he excelled, an importance and a fulness theretofore unknown in the French school.⁴⁷

Alkan, too, was noted for his pedal technique on the pedal piano and in some respects he continued to build on the foundations laid by Boëly before him.

It is interesting to note that while Boëly was being praised for his virtuosic pedal technique in France in the early 1820s, virtuosic pianism was on the rise in Europe giving fame to the young Liszt, Chopin and even Alkan.

When Franz Liszt (1811–1886) first arrived in Paris in December 1823 it was as part of a successful concert tour of European cities, organised by his father Adam. During his stay, he sought admission to the Paris Conservatoire but was refused. ‘The rules would not permit Cherubini to admit foreigners, even one so famous as Liszt.’⁴⁸ Despite this perceived ‘snub’, Liszt was well received in Paris and endeared himself to both the concert-going public and the nobility. Liszt quickly adapted to life in France, as Joanne Cormac points out:

Along with this fluency ... came assimilation into French society and an interest in French cultural life [...] He apparently adopted native mannerisms, and it seems to be the case that he spoke the language with a native accent.⁴⁹

It was during this time that Liszt first met Alkan. The meeting was not a particularly pleasant one for the latter as Liszt had upstaged him at one of the Princess de la Moskova’s soirées. De Bertha recalls the event as follows:

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 338.

⁴⁸ Alan Walker, ‘Liszt, Franz’, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), xiv, pp 755–877, p. 757.

⁴⁹ Joanne Cormac, ‘Liszt, Language and Identity: A Multinational Chameleon’, *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Spring 2013), (California: California University Press, 2013), pp 231–247, p. 235.

Alkan recounted on several occasions how dismayed he had been on the evening when he heard the playing of the young Franz Liszt, whose already astonishing virtuosity overshadowed him. He wept with vexation throughout the evening and slept not a wink that night.⁵⁰

After the death of his father Adam in 1827, Liszt ‘assumed complete financial responsibility for himself and [his mother] Anna, for he was soon able to establish himself as a fashionable young piano teacher. With his reputation, Franz did not have to seek out the sons and daughters of the aristocracy; they sought out him.’⁵¹

By all accounts he was a popular and successful teacher. In a letter, dated December 23, 1829, to M. de Mancy he writes:

I am so full of lessons that each day, from half-past eight in the morning till 10 at night, I have scarcely breathing time. Please excuse me therefore for not coming, as I should have liked to do, to lunch with Madame de Mancy, but it is quite impossible.⁵²

Liszt acquainted himself with many of his musical and literary contemporaries who were living and visiting Paris at that time. His intellectual appetite saw him familiarise himself with the writings of Hugo and Byron *et al*, and, too, the music of Berlioz. He ‘attended the first performance of Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* in the company of the composer (5 December 1830).’⁵³ This work had a profound

⁵⁰ Alexander de Bertha: ‘Ch. Valentin Alkan: A Psycho-Musical Study’, *Bulletin Français de la Société Internationale de Musique*, February 1909 (pp. 135–147) trans. Juliam Haxby and printed in the *Alkan Society Bulletin*, No. 88 Devenber 2012 pp. 10–18, p. 12. (Haxby’s translation is of an appearance of this article, with notes, from the bulletin of the *Société Alkan*, No. 13, September 1989).

⁵¹ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt, The Virtuoso Years 1811 – 1847*, (London: Farber and Farber, 1988) p. 96.

⁵² Franz Liszt, *The Letters of Franz List, Volume 1*, trans. Constance Bache, (London, 1893; Dodo Press, 2006) p. 3.

⁵³ Alan Walker, ‘Liszt, Franz’, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), xiv, pp 755–877, p. 759.

affect on him, inspiring him to transcribe it for piano. The transcription was published in 1834 – eleven years before Berlioz’s orchestral score.⁵⁴

Parisian salon culture played a vital role in the ‘formation’ (and acceptance) of Liszt as a serious artist. It was here that he met the great writers and artists, each having a great impression on him. In a letter, dated Paris, (Beginning of the 30th year) Liszt writes to Alphonse Brot, saying:

It would give us great pleasure, my dear M. Brot, , if you would dine with us [...] I do not promise a good dinner, – that is not the business of us poor artists; but the good company you will meet will, I trust, make up for that. Monsieur Hugo and Edgard Quinet [French writer and philosopher] have promised to come.⁵⁵

It is clear from the extract that Liszt enjoyed the company of fellow artists and thinkers. Katherine Eillis suggests that it was his great understanding of literature and art that set him aside from other performers. She says:

[...] French critics wrote appreciatively of Liszt’s playing: the fact that he so obviously understood the greatness of Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller, Byron, Hugo and Hoffman set him apart from other, unidimensional and therefore less Romantic, musicians.⁵⁶

Most writers on Liszt are in agreement that it was during this period that he ‘developed’ his style as a composer. Alan Walker maintains that:

[...] it was Paris that formed Liszt. He lived there for twelve years. He absorbed its culture and adopted its customs. He mastered its language and soon spoke

⁵⁴ It would be remiss of me not to mention that the ‘famous’ review by Schumann of Berlioz’s *Symphonie fantastique* that appeared in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, was based on Liszt’s piano transcription. See Alan Walker, ‘Liszt, Franz’, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), XIV, pp 755–877, p. 759.

⁵⁵ Franz Liszt, *The Letters of Franz List, Volume 1*, trans. Constance Bache, (London, 1893; Dodo Press, 2006), p. 5.

⁵⁶ Katherine Ellis, ‘Liszt: the Romantic artist’, *The Cambridge Companion to Liszt*, ed. Kenneth Hamilton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 4.

French in preference to his mother tongue [...] For the rest of his life he looked upon France with gratitude and affection.⁵⁷

It is the music that he wrote from this time which has most endured the test of time. Charles Rosen draws attention to this when he says:

It is essentially the inspirations of the young Liszt of the 1830s [...] that remain alive today, and we still draw upon them for musical sustenance. They gave Liszt his stature. The early works are vulgar and great; the late works are admirable and minor.⁵⁸

Ellis, too, acknowledges just how important Liszt's experiences from his time in Paris were when she says:

Liszt's experiences of the 1830s largely defined his outlook and his behaviour, and, consequently, the manner in which he was perceived as an artist.⁵⁹

However, it was his acquaintance with the Abbé Félicité Lamennais – the revolutionary cleric and author who championed social reform – that perhaps had the greatest influence on him. Having read one of the cleric's books, *Paroles d'un croyant*, Liszt penned a letter to him telling of the deep impact the work had on him. In a reply, Lemennais invited Liszt to La Chênaie, where he spent most of the summer of 1834.⁶⁰

Walker suggests that, while at La Chênaie, Liszt's talent for composition was realised. He says:

⁵⁷ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt, The Virtuoso Years 1811 – 1847*, (London: Farber and Farber, 1988), p. 96.

⁵⁸ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 474.

⁵⁹ Katherine Ellis, 'Liszt: the Romantic artist', *The Cambridge Companion to Liszt*, ed. Kenneth Hamilton, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 1.

⁶⁰ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt, The Virtuoso Years 1811 – 1847*, (London: Farber and Farber, 1988), p. 157.

The fact is not sufficiently stressed that Liszt discovered himself as a composer at La Chênaie during that summer of 1834. Several compositions were born there which bear the unmistakable imprint of his mature style, including the three *Apparitions*, *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*, and the revolutionary piece *Lyon*.⁶¹

There can be little doubt surrounding the influence that Lemannais had on Liszt. Walker's point is validated by Liszt himself in a letter, dated 14 January, 1835, written to Lemannais some months after his stay in La Chênaie. In it Liszt mentions a work that he has written in remembrance of his time at La Chênaie, he writes:

[...] I shall have the honour of sending you a little work, to which I have had the audacity to tack a great name – yours. It is an instrumental *De profundis*. The plain-song that you like so much is preserved in it with the Faburden. Perhaps this may give you a little pleasure, at any rate, I have done it in remembrance of some hours passed (I should say “lived”) at La Chênaie [sic].⁶²

In March 1837 Liszt, having returned to Paris from Switzerland (where he had eloped to with Marie d'Agoult in the spring of 1835), gave one of his most memorable concerts. He shared the stage with a pianist rival; Sigismond Thalberg (1812–1871), whose piano playing had created a sensation. This piano ‘duel’ between the two virtuosi attracted much attention and ‘it is often said that Thalberg suffered a defeat as a result of the comparison [with Liszt], but the facts speak otherwise.’⁶³

⁶¹ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt, The Virtuoso Years 1811 – 1847*, (London: Farber and Farber, 1988), p. 157.

⁶² Franz Liszt, *The Letters of Franz List, Volume 1*, trans. Constance Bache, (London, 1893; Dodo Press, 2006), p. 11.

⁶³ Alan Walker, ‘Liszt, Franz’, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), xiv, pp 755–877, p. 761.

It was exactly this type of theatricality that Chopin disliked about Liszt's public performances. He preferred, and sought out, the quiet ambience of the salon over the frenzied public appearances favoured by Liszt.

Chopin, considered perhaps to be one of France's greatest adopted musical sons, arrived in Paris in late 1831. His letters, particularly those from the early years of his 'exile', reveal a lot about musical life, and life in general, in the French capital. In a letter dated the 18th November 1831 (addressed to a K. Kumelski) he writes of his first impression of Paris:

[...] the impression produced on me by this big town after Stuttgart and Strasbourg. There is the utmost swinishness, the utmost virtue, the utmost ostentation [...] shouting, racket, bustle and more mud than it is possible to imagine [...] one day you can eat the most hearty dinner for 32 sous in a restaurant with mirrors, gilding and gas lighting, and the next you can lunch where they will give you enough for a dicky-bird to eat, and charge 3 times as much: that happened to me before I had paid the necessary tax on ignorance.⁶⁴

Later on in the same letter Chopin gives mention to the pianist Kalkbrenner⁶⁵, whom he deeply admired, saying:

I am in very close relations with Kalkbrenner, the 1st pianist of Europe, whom I think you would like. (He is one whose shoe-latchet I am not worthy to untie.

⁶⁴ Frederic Chopin, *Chopin's Letters*, collected by Henryk Opieński, translated by E. L. Voynich (New York: Dover Publications, 1988 republication of the edition published in New York: Alfred A Knopf Inc, 1931), p. 151.

⁶⁵ Frédéric Kalkbrenner (1785–1849) was a French pianist of German origins. He attended the Paris Conservatoire from 1799 to 1801 where he studied piano and harmony, winning the *premier prix* in both in 1801. He met Haydn and Clementi while visiting Vienna from 1803 to 1804. In 1814 he moved to England and, settling in London, rose to fame as a virtuoso. It is from this time that he became extremely active as a performer, teacher and composer from which he became quite wealthy. He is recognised perhaps as the top pianist in Europe from 1825 to 1835. Chopin, having arrived in Paris in 1831, held Kalkbrenner in high esteem with the latter suggestion he take his piano course. Chopin declined, but the two remained good friends. For more details on Kalkbrenner's life and works see Paul Dekeyser, 'Kalkbrenner, Frédéric.' *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Accessed 19 Jan. 2014. <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/14623>>.

Those Herzes, and so on, — I tell you they are just windbags and will never play any better).⁶⁶

Chopin's debut concert in Paris took place in the Salle Pleyel on 26 February 1832 and was attended by Hiller, Berlioz and Liszt.⁶⁷ Interestingly, Walker mentions that 'as soon as Chopin entered Paris, Liszt made his acquaintance.'⁶⁸ Like Liszt, Chopin was sought after as a teacher and from the winter of 1832 teaching was to be his main source of income.⁶⁹

Despite being one of Europe's leading pianists of the time, Chopin gave surprisingly few large-scale public performances. Instead, he favoured the more intimate setting of the salon. Jim Samson points out that:

From his earliest days in Warsaw he had been at ease in such circles [salons], and his playing, with its discriminating sensitivity of touch, was best suited to them. His creative path reflected this. The limitation of medium was in itself an eloquent credo, but within it we may note a progression from public virtuosity [...] towards a mature pianism at once more intimate and powerful.⁷⁰

A cursory glance at the composer's list of works immediately makes obvious the 'intimate' nature of his music with titles such as *Nocturne*, *Ballade*, *Polonaise* and *Waltz* whose duration and scale are all suited to the gentile refinement of the

⁶⁶ Frederic Chopin, *Chopin's Letters*, collected by Henryk Opieński, translated by E. L. Voynich (New York: Dover Publications, 1988 republication of the edition published in New York: Alfred A Knopf Inc, 1931), p. 152.

⁶⁷ Kornel Michalowski and Jim Samson, 'Chopin, Fryderyk Franciszek', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), v, pp 706–736, p. 708.

⁶⁸ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt, The Virtuoso Years 1811 – 1847*, (London: Farber and Farber, 1988), p. 184.

⁶⁹ Kornel Michalowski and Jim Samson, 'Chopin, Fryderyk Franciszek', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edn., 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), v, pp 706–736, p. 708.

⁷⁰ Jim Samson, 'A biographical introduction', *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed Jim Samson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 2.

salon. This, by no means, limited the reach of his music during this time – Chopin was always in demand as a performer of his own works.

As with Liszt, there too can be little doubt of the influence Parisian style, culture and living had on the ‘composer’ Chopin. The following from Samson perhaps best describes this:

It was especially, but by no means exclusively, in France that Chopin the ‘romantic composer’ – the ‘poet’ of the piano who expressed the depths of his inner world to us all – was cultivated.⁷¹

Chopin, in a letter from 1832, details his acceptance by the musical establishment in Paris which, undoubtedly, contributed to his success as a composer, pianist and teacher. He says:

Though this is only my first year among the artists here, I have their friendship and respect. One proof of respect is that even people with huge reputations dedicate their compositions to me before I do to them: Pixis has inscribed to me his last Variations with a military band; also, people compose variations on my themes. Kalkbrenner has used my mazurka in this way; the pupils of the Conservatoire, Moscheles’s pupils, those of Herz and Kalkbrenner, — in a word, finished artists, take lessons from me and couple my name with that of Field.⁷²

Not only did the musical elite in Paris accept Chopin as one of them, they also held him, his work, his pianism and his teaching in very high regard. This was important to him as he was eager to assimilate and be accepted by his peers and

⁷¹ Olgierd Pisarenko, ‘Chopin and his contemporaries. Paris 1832–1860’, *Studies in Chopin*, ed. D Żebrowski, (Warsaw: 1973), pp. 30–48. Cited in Jim Samson, ‘A biographical introduction’, *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed Jim Samson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 5.

⁷² Frederic Chopin, *Chopin’s Letters*, collected by Henryk Opieński, translated by E. L. Voynich (New York: Dover Publications, 1988 republication of the edition published in New York: Alfred A Knopf Inc, 1931), p. 169.

society figures. For his part, Chopin made great efforts in maintaining his appearance, looking the part of the gentleman. Lawrence Kramer points out that:

he [Chopin] began to dress the part [...] of a prominent social type, that of the dandy, the beautiful young man always decked out in the height of elegant fashion, immaculate and well barbered, untouched by the vulgar and the ordinary.⁷³

This perceived ‘worldliness’ of Chopin’s is, according to Charles Rosen, present in his music. He suggests that ‘there is an urbane, worldly aspect to [his] style that partly accounts for his immense popularity’ and that his ‘urbanity has two strong contrasting facets; a virtuoso glitter [...] and a fashionable sentimentality.’⁷⁴

Chopin admired the technique employed by other pianists of the era, particularly Kalkbrenner, as mentioned earlier. He also admired the playing of Liszt and dedicated his *Etudes* Op. 10 to him. In a letter to Hiller, dated Paris, June 30th 1833, Chopin gives mentions Liszt’s piano playing as follows:

I write to you without knowing what my pen is scribbling, because at this moment Liszt is playing my etudes, and transporting me outside of my respectable thoughts. I should like to steal from him the way to play my own etudes.⁷⁵

Despite this high praise for Liszt’s playing, the two were not considered to be close friends. ‘Chopin disliked Liszt’s theatricality, his playing the *grand*

⁷³ Lawrence Kramer, ‘Chopin’s Rogue Pitches: Artifice, Personification, and the Cult of the Dandy in Three Later Mazurkas’, *19th-Century Music*, Vol. 35, No. 3, (California: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 224–237, p. 224.

⁷⁴ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 383.

⁷⁵ Frederic Chopin, *Chopin’s Letters*, collected by Henryk Opieński, translated by E. L. Voynich (New York: Dover Publications, 1988 republication of the edition published in New York: Alfred A Knopf Inc, 1931), p. 171.

seigneur, and he came to regard Liszt the composer as a mere striver after effects.⁷⁶

‘Chopin, who was not prodigious with his affection, counted Alkan high on the small list of his confidants.’⁷⁷ The pair appeared in a concert together in March 1838 playing Alkan’s arrangement of Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony for eight hands. The other two pianists were Zimmerman and a pupil of Chopin’s, Adolphe Gutman.⁷⁸

Chopin, like Alkan, admired the works of Bach and in 1839, while staying at the country home of George Sand in Nohant, he writes in a letter:

Having nothing to do, I am correcting the Paris edition of Bach; not only the engravers mistakes, but also the mistakes hallowed by those who are supposed to understand Bach.⁷⁹

Charles Rosen mentions the importance of Bach as an influence on Chopin’s music: he says:

Chopin’s music is largely derived from his early experience of opera, the rhythms and harmonies of native Polish dances, and Bach. The art that held all this together came above all from the last, in particular the *Well-Tempered Keyboard*.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Alan Walker, *Franz Liszt, The Virtuoso Years 1811 – 1847*, (London: Farber and Farber, 1988), p. 184.

⁷⁷ Ronald Smith: *Alkan The Man The Music*, (1976; London: Kahn & Averill, 2000), I, p. 23.

⁷⁸ Jim Samson, *Chopin*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 136.

⁷⁹ Frederic Chopin, *Chopin’s Letters*, collected by Henryk Opieński, translated by E. L. Voynich (New York: Dover Publications, 1988 republication of the edition published in New York: Alfred A Knopf Inc, 1931), p. 171.

⁸⁰ Charles Rosen, *The Romantic Generation*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 285.

Chopin was critical of the Paris Conservatoire for the significant lack of Baroque music in its concert programmes. In a letter to his old piano teacher, Jozef Elsner, dated Paris, 24 July, 1840 he tells him:

The Conservatoire lives on old symphonies which it knows by heart; and the public is lucky if it sometimes gets a chance to hear a bit of Haendel or Bach. Haendel has only just begun to be appreciated last year, and even then only excerpts, not whole works.⁸¹

The music of Bach and Handel was particularly dear to another visitor to the French capital, Mendelssohn. Felix Mendelssohn (1809–1847) arrived in Paris around the same time as Chopin and gave a successful series of concerts.

While residing in Paris, Mendelssohn, too, took an active part in its musical life — attending the Opera, partaking in soirées and visiting musicians. He seems to have enjoyed the activities of the smaller theatres best and comments on this in a letter to Carl Immermann:

I like best going to the little theatres in the evening, because there French life and the French people are truly mirrored; the “Gymnase Dramatique” is my particular favourite, where nothing is given but small *vaudevilles*. The extreme bitterness, and deep animosity which pervade all these little comedies, are most remarkable, and although partially cloaked by the prettiest phrases, and the most lively acting, become only the more conspicuous.⁸²

Again, Mendelssohn appears to be taken with the ‘extreme bitterness and deep animosity’ that is present in these productions. They suggest a political

⁸¹ Frederic Chopin, *Chopin's Letters*, collected by Henryk Opieński, translated by E. L. Voynich (New York: Dover Publications, 1988 republication of the edition published in New York: Alfred A Knopf Inc, 1931), p. 222.

⁸² Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, *Letters from Italy and Switzerland*, trans. by Lady Wallace, 8th edition, (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1881), pp. 314–315.

undertone, or some sort of political satire. In another letter to Immerman dated Paris, January 14th 1832, he tells him:

I now first begin to feel at home here, and really to know Paris; it is indeed the most singular and amusing place imaginable; but for one who is no politician, it does not possess so much interest. So I have become a *doctrinaire*. I read my newspaper every morning, form my own opinion about peace and war, and, only among friends, confess that I know nothing of the matter.⁸³

It is obvious from this letter that politics and talking about politics dominates nearly all intellectual conversation in Paris of the 1830s, and to have an interest in these matters is of benefit to any visitor to the city. He goes on to explain how political references and the new found French liberalism is ever present in the works that appear in the Parisian theatres. He continues:

How unmistakable are the symptoms of bitterness and excitement even in the most insignificant farce; how invariably everything bears a reference to politics; how completely what is called the Romantic School has infected all the Parisians, for they think of nothing on the stage now but the plague, the gallows, the devil etc., one striving to outdo the other in horrors, and in liberalism.⁸⁴

Interestingly, he refers to the Romantic School as having ‘infected all the Parisians’ — a school, to which he himself would belong. While the subject matter of the theatre productions of Paris may have been a little macabre, it was while he was in Paris that he completed his ‘Midsummer Night’s Dream’.

It is clear from the experiences of the composers examined here that Paris, culturally, played a significant role in the evolution and development of their talents. This is particularly true for Liszt and Chopin who were able to assimilate in to the heart of the French ‘Romantic Movement’, acquainting themselves with

⁸³ Letter to Carl Immermann (Mendelssohn, Wallace p. 320).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p. 323.

the influential artists that championed radical change and immersing themselves in their art, literature and philosophies.

1.4 Early Music and the Romantics: Revival and Reception in France

John Warrack, in his article on Romanticism for *The Oxford Companion to Music*, presents an overview of the essence of ‘Romanticism’. In it, he states:

[...] in all its manifestations Romanticism emphasized the apparent domination of emotion over form and order. This was often more apparent than real, since the disciplines of Romantic music needed to be no less secure than those of Classicism in order to express ideas effectively. But new value was set on novelty and sensation, on technical innovation and experiment [...].⁸⁵

Jim Samson, like Warrack, avoids offering an explicit definition of Romanticism.

He does, however, venture a ‘meaning’ of the term when he writes:

The Romantic artist, privileged by his genius, would reveal the world in expressing himself, since the world (according to the influential position established by Kant) was grounded in the self. Hence the growing importance of expression as a source of aesthetic value, overriding the claims of formal propriety and convention. Music in particular was viewed as a medium of expression above all else, and crucially its power of expression was at the same time a form of cognition, albeit one precariously poised between sensory perception and intellectual understanding, between *sensus* and *ratio*.⁸⁶

In his introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin* entitled ‘A biographical introduction’, he adds:

Above all it [Romanticism] is grounded in the idea that the world may be more fully known by feeling, intuition and the creative imagination than through

⁸⁵ John Warrack, ‘Romanticism’, *The Oxford Companion to Music*, Oxford University Press, Accessed: 28 Feb. 2014
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e5729>>.

⁸⁶ Jim Samson, ‘Romanticism’ *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press. Accessed: 3 Mar. 2014.
<<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/23751>>.

conceptual thought or empirical thinking. In music a romantic aesthetic took its stand on the primacy of the emotions and on the capacity of musical language to *express* the inner emotional world, as well as the external perceived world.⁸⁷

It is, however, Charles Rosen's comments that perhaps best pinpoints that which is quintessentially 'Romantic'. He ascertains that 'the great art of the Romantic generation was to imply the existence of a program without realizing the details in any specifically extramusical sense.'⁸⁸

It seems odd, then, that interest in 'older' music occupied the Romantic composers and yet there is no doubt that the rediscovery of Bach's compositions in the nineteenth century had a major influence on a generation of composers.

Friedrich Blume recognises this influence fully when he says:

The re-emergence of Bach in the Romantic period has long been a familiar fact - so familiar, indeed, that we are no longer fully aware of the unique nature of that event. Historically, it seems a miracle: a musician whose life and works had all but fallen into oblivion appears quite suddenly on the horizon of a new age, almost exactly half a century after his death, acquiring in the ensuing generations a resonance he had not even come close to attaining in his own lifetime, a resonance that gains strength from decade to decade, that has yet to reach its peak after a century and a half and, meanwhile, has engulfed in its waves the whole musical activity of the 19th and 20th centuries.⁸⁹

Blume goes even further by placing greater emphasis on the event as a whole which has had a knock on effect in other areas of (contemporary) musical life by saying:

The Bach revival has influenced concert life, performance practice, musical instruction, esthetics, the cultivation of taste; and the effect — 'historically

⁸⁷ Jim Samson, 'A biographical introduction', *The Cambridge Companion to Chopin*, ed Jim Samson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 1–8, p. 2.

⁸⁸ Charles Rose, *The Romantic Generation*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 298.

⁸⁹ Friedrich Blume, Piero Weiss: 'Bach in the Romantic Era', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 50 No. 3, (Jul., 1964), (Oxford University Press), pp. 290–306, p. 290.

influential,' 'epoch-making' in the truest sense — cannot be fully evaluated even today.⁹⁰

Blume attributes much to the 'Bach Movement', including the interest that was shown in the revival of other composers' music, 'old music' generally and authentic performances. He continues:

The revival of older music, all music-history research, with every one of its results – the publication of old music, the reconstruction of old instruments, and much more besides – may be traced back, in the final analysis, to this 'Bach movement.'[...] As early as 1827, C. F. Zelter compared it to the Shakespeare and Calderón revivals in the days of Goethe and Schiller.⁹¹

'The nineteenth century was an age of musical archaeology, and the *St Matthew Passion* was its first major find.'⁹² This statement by Harry Haskell serves as a solid starting point when considering the musical movement that beset the nineteenth century; that of reviving the works of earlier composers. The revival of works by Bach, in particular, is an important feature of musical development in nineteenth-century Europe. From its beginnings in Germany, championed by such people as Zelter and Mendelssohn, the revival spread throughout Europe and engaged the interest of musicians and music critics in England, Belgium and France.

The revival in France, however, was a slow process that progressed into the twentieth century. In an article that appeared in *The Musical Times* entitled 'C. M. Widor: a Revaluation', Andrew Thomson states:

⁹⁰ Friedrich Blume, Piero Weiss: 'Bach in the Romantic Era', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 50 No. 3, (Jul., 1964), (Oxford University Press), pp. 290–306, p. 290.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² Harry Haskell, *The Early Music Revival: A History*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), p. 13.

The Bach Revival was essentially a German and English movement. In France the advocacy of Bach by Widor and the influential Princesse de Polignac (patron of neo-classical composers in the 1920s and 30s) made slower headway. Saint Saëns regarded Bach's works merely as a source of musical techniques, and to Fauré and Reynaldo Hahn his fugues were dull.⁹³

Although interest in early music, and notably Bach, was evident in Germany by 1829, the number of major figures involved was small with very few public performances of Bach's larger works until Mendelssohn's performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* in 1829. However, in the second half of the eighteenth century, in the years following the death of J. S. Bach, Berlin was the most important centre in Germany regarding Bach reception. This is due to three of his sons, Carl Philippe Emanuel, Johann Christian and Wilhelm Friedemann, and some of his former pupils (J.F. Agricola and F.W. Marprug to name but two) being resident there.⁹⁴ The greater German public was practically unaware of Bach's large and varied musical output. With Mendelssohn's successful performance of the *St. Matthew Passion* interest in pre-Classical music and the works of Bach began to spread.

The Bach revival in France differed significantly from that in Germany. Some of Bach's works were published in Paris in 1801 by Simrock⁹⁵ (*The Art of Fugue* and *The Well-tempered Clavier*) but were used as pedagogical tools to demonstrate the importance of counterpoint rather than as concert pieces. It is Alexandre Choron

⁹³ Andrew Thomson, 'C. M. Widor: a Revaluation', *The Musical Times*, Vol. 125 No. 1693. (Mar., 1984), pp. 169–170, Musical Times Publications Ltd., p. 169.

⁹⁴ Peter Wolly; 'Reception and Revival no. 3 Germany', in *Oxford Composer Companions, 'J.S. Bach'*, ed. Malcom Boyd, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 388.

⁹⁵ Yo Tomita, 'The English Reception of Bach's *Well Tempered Clavier* in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century seen through the Editions Published in London', *The Piano in Nineteenth-century British Culture: Instruments, Performers and Repertoire*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 33.

(1771–1834), a Parisian music publisher, who is most credited with promoting early music in nineteenth-century France. Charged with the Paris Opera in 1816 by Louis XVIII, Choron set to revive not only works by the old masters, but also the art of singing.⁹⁶ He stayed at the Paris Opera only a year and resigning his post, founded the Institution Royale de Musique Religieuse.

The revival of early choral music was met with mixed opinions, but the Institution Royale still managed to attract a lot of gifted students from both France and abroad. However, this success was ephemeral for, as mentioned earlier, when Louis Philippe ascended the throne in 1830, the state subsidy Choron was getting to run the Institution was reduced to practically nothing thus forcing the school to close. Nevertheless, early music was still proving to be a popular past-time for the upper classes, as was the case in Germany also.⁹⁷

The revival and reception of J. S. Bach's music during the Romantic era in France (circa 1830s) faced a more serious problem than the mere circulation of his compositions. Musicians and music critics were somewhat reluctant to involve themselves with the early music movement for fear that they would be accused of nostalgic notions and unable to appreciate the 'new' developments within music composition and performance. But not all musicians were shy about their interest in Bach: Chopin, Alkan and Liszt often included keyboard works of Bach's in their recitals with composers like Boëly daring to complete the unfinished

⁹⁶ Harry Haskell, *The Early Music Revival*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), p. 16.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 17.

contrapunctus of *The Art of Fugue*.⁹⁸ However, some of Bach's keyboard works were used in public piano recitals to illustrate a sort of chronology or timeline of compositional development, which gave a clear message that his music was dated. Unfortunately this view was shared by a large majority of the musical professionals in France at this time. Jean Huré, in an article for the *Musical Quarterly* in 1920, tells us that:

[...] in France he [Bach] was looked upon as an obscure composer, a pure savant, invariably grandiose and solemn, void of charm, spirit and inspiration. (The dictionaries, in particular that of Larousse, up to the end of the 19th century, established this fact).⁹⁹

Such statements (or perhaps more correctly labelled as 'opinions') appearing, as Huré points out, in the dictionary of Larousse were sure to influence the younger generation of French musicians. Indeed Friedrich Blume reminds us that:

We must not imagine that the first printed editions of Bach's works had the effect of stones that, thrown upon still waters, generate slowly spreading circles. Rather, the response to each type of work varied considerably, receptivity was very inconsistent, and appreciation of the works ranged from the most vigorous rejection to fervent enthusiasm.¹⁰⁰

Interestingly, Jean Huré goes on to say that:

It was by this school, so evidently opposed to the art of Bach, that our French organists were formed – to play Bach crudely and heavily was known as 'having the Bachian tradition.' Besides, the organists of that day hardly knew the works of the French organists of the 17th and 18th centuries. They only played Bach, with registrations and phrasings which made his music as monotonous and

⁹⁸ Walter Corten; 'Reception and Revival no. 2 France', in Oxford Composer Companions, 'J.S. Bach', ed. Malcom Boyd, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 386.

⁹⁹ Jean Huré, Frederick H. Martens, 'The French School of Organ Playing in Its Own Land', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, April 1920), pp. 272–275, p. 273.

¹⁰⁰ Friedrich Blume and Piero Weiss: 'Bach in the Romantic Era', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 50 No. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, July 1964), pp. 290–306, p. 291.

tiresome as possible; they played Mendelssohn and compositions of their own, as a rule, imitations of what these great masters had written.¹⁰¹

This harsh criticism of organists from mid-nineteenth century France seems to contradict the laudable efforts made by Boëly (et al) in the field of Bach revival and promotion. However, it must be remembered that these insightful men were perhaps in the minority, with their work in reviving Bach and his organ music being appreciated by small groups of the French intelligentsia. Gerard Brooks in his article in *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ* entitled ‘French and Belgian Organ Music after 1800’ says of Boëly that:

[he] especially was admired by the minority who deplored the current trends in church music, and he stands out as one, for the most part, who refused to give in to the demands of contemporary taste. He was one of the first French composers to give a prominent part to the pedals, and one of the few who revered and regularly played the works of J.S. Bach (something that was to be his undoing, for in 1851 he was sacked from his post at St Gervais for playing music that was deemed too serious).¹⁰²

Indeed Mendelssohn’s first visit to Paris in 1825 tells a similar tale of intellectual ignorance regarding Bach’s organ music. In a letter to his sister Fanny he says:

You say I should try and convert the people here, and teach Onslow and Reicha to love Beethoven and Sebastian Bach. That is just what I am endeavouring to do. But remember, my dear child, that these people do not know a single note of ‘Fidelio’ and believe Bach to be a mere old-fashioned wig stuffed with learning. The other day, at the request of Kalkbrenner, I played the organ preludes in E minor and A minor. My audience pronounced them both ‘wonderfully pretty’, and one of them remarked that the beginning of the prelude in A minor was very much like a favourite duet in an opera by Monsigny. Anybody might have knocked me down with a feather.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Jean Huré, Frederick H. Martens, ‘The French School of Organ Playing in Its Own Land’, *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, April 1920), pp. 272–275, p. 273.

¹⁰² Gerard Brooks, ‘French and Belgian Organ Music after 1800’, *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ*, ed. Nicholas Thistlewaite and Geoffrey Webber, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 266.

¹⁰³ Letter of 20 April 1825 cited in Russell Stinson, *The Reception of Bach’s Organ Works from Mendelssohn to Brahms*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 14.

It is clear from this that Mendelssohn is quite shocked at the public's reaction to the two Bach preludes, implying that popularising Bach and his organ music in mid nineteenth-century Paris would be no easy task.

Further efforts in the field were required and it was the Belgian born musicologist and composer F. J. Fétis (1784–1871), who was a tutor in harmony at Choron's Institution Royale de Musique Religieuse in the 1820s, that took 'revival' to the next level.

Fétis championed early music concerts, promoting not only the performances themselves, but the necessity of 'historical' interpretation. He achieved this 'historical' interpretation by using authentic instruments. Though these concerts proved popular, Fétis endured great criticism for his arrangements of these early works but rebuked his critics by saying that he staged these compositions 'with the instrumentation and the system of execution which their authors intended, so that a nineteenth-century listener would have the illusion of attending a sixteenth-century entertainment in the palace of a Florentine nobleman.'¹⁰⁴ This Romantic interpretation was quite common and even Mendelssohn's 1829 arrangement of *The St. Matthew Passion* was indulgent of it. With regard to the French musical audience, *The St. Matthew Passion* did not prove popular when the first extracts were played at the Conservatoire in 1840, and it was not until 1888 that the full

¹⁰⁴ Wilibald Gurlitt, 'Franz-Joseph Fétis und seine Rolle in der Geschichte der Musikwissenschaft', *Musikgeschichte und Gegenwart*, vol. 2, Wiesbaden, 1966, p. 137, cited in Harry Haskell; *The Early Music Revival*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), p. 20.

‘authentic’ version of this choral masterpiece was heard and lauded by a different French audience.

The reception of Bach by the French was a slow and often difficult task, hampered often by political instabilities and war. His influence, however, can be traced through the compositions of such composers as Mendelssohn and Alkan which at times hint at the Baroque.

While one could not doubt the influence that Baroque composers and compositions had on some of the great Romantic composers, it can at times be difficult to trace external influential patterns (that is, the influence of non-French composers). The influence of Bach can be seen in the etudes of Alkan, with the latter’s *Clavier-Übung* being said to have had an influence on the former’s etudes, primarily in the way the pieces are titled, e.g., concerto, overture etc.¹⁰⁵

The variety of transcriptions that were published in the mid nineteenth-century is testament to the rising popularity of ‘old’ music. Alkan’s Op. 66 contains a transcription of part of Handel’s *Messiah*, and was published in 1870 with his 11 *Grands Préludes pour Piano à Clavier de Pedales*. Liszt also published transcriptions and J.S. Bach’s *Fantasia and Fugue* in G minor (BWV 542), which was transcribed for piano, was published in 1863.

¹⁰⁵ Howard Ferguson, Kenneth L. Hamilton; ‘Study’, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 2nd edition, 29 vols, (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), xxv, p. 622.

Alkan's transcriptions of Baroque and Classical music by composers such as Bach, Handel, Grétry and Marcello is motivated by a deep appreciation of their works, and a desire to make known to the public (and the amateur keyboard player) some of the greatest music of the Baroque era. The Handel transcription that was published as part of Alkan's Op. 66 Preludes, does not require the skill of a virtuoso organist to play, in fact Alkan even offers an alternative to the organ by suggesting that the piece (as indeed the eleven preludes of Op. 66) be played on piano for three hands. This novel three-hand duet alternative must have proved popular with young amateur pianists of that time, and made Baroque music a little more accessible.

While Liszt also felt a deep appreciation for Baroque music and for its composers, his transcriptions were motivated by virtuosity. He played his own transcriptions at public recitals and he wanted to 'make the solo piano, under his hands, a rival of the orchestra'.¹⁰⁶ He transcribed all of the nine Beethoven symphonies, and other major works by Wagner, Berlioz and Rossini turning them into colossal works for solo piano, geared toward the finest virtuosi.

Piano transcriptions play an important role historically in music during the nineteenth century. Thomas Christensen highlights this in his article 'Four-Hand Transcription and Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Musical Reception'. In it he states that:

¹⁰⁶ Leon Plantinga, *Romantic Music: A History of Musical Style in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1984), p. 183.

No other medium was arguably so important to nineteenth-century musicians for the dissemination and iterability of concert repertory. Assuming a role that would be played by the radio and phonograph in the twentieth century, the duet arrangement offered any two amateur pianists an opportunity to hear in their own home a wide variety of symphonic, chamber and choral works beyond what they might have access to in live performance.¹⁰⁷

This, perhaps, sheds some light on the perceived instrumental ambiguity of Alkan's works for organ/pedal-piano. The very clear instructions on the title pages of most of the works for organ/pedal-piano offer a 'piano three hands' alternative also. The inclusion in these compositions of transcriptions of some of Handel's music (namely arias from the *Messiah*) also echoes Christensen's point.

As the trend in piano transcriptions and reductions intensified during the nineteenth century, and their appeal strengthened in various capacities in France (from merely a pleasurable past-time for the *amateur* to a dominating pedagogical tool), Marc-André Roberge writes:

One of the results of the French Musical Renaissance, which is usually dated from 1871 with the foundation of the Société nationale de musique, was that French composers became more aware of their musical past.¹⁰⁸

This 'awareness of the musical past' was partly achieved by producing piano reductions and transcriptions of works by early nineteenth-century French, and other, composers.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Christensen, 'Four-Hand Transcription and Geographies of Nineteenth-Century Musical Reception', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (California: University of California Press, Summer 1999), pp. 255–298, p. 256.

¹⁰⁸ Marc-André Roberge, 'From Orchestra to Piano: Major Composers as Authors of Piano Reductions of Other Composers' Works', *Notes*, Second Series, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Wisconsin: Music Library Association, March 1993), pp. 925–936, p. 928.

Other French composers and non-French composers who were resident in Paris, such as Chopin, were influenced by Baroque music. As mentioned earlier, Boëly, who wrote many compositions for pedal piano and organ, was an advocate of Bach. He was one of the first French organists to promote the organ works of Bach in France and his knowledge of counterpoint was exceptional for his time.¹⁰⁹ Boëly's Op.15 Preludes are heavily influenced by Bach and he tried to do for the Paris Gradual of Chants, what Bach did for Lutheran Hymn tunes. In contrast to Boëly's very public appraisal of Bach and early music, Chopin's efforts in early music appreciation could almost go unnoticed. Although Chopin's compositional style is extremely unique, 'provision was made for counterpoint, the strict style of Bach, but at the same time it was so hidden and so completely resolved into the later composer's own personal style that, as in everything perfect, it was unobtrusive'.¹¹⁰

Even though there may have been a slight reticence on the part of the early Romantic composers to publicly extol the importance of J.S. Bach and early music in general, the influence it had on them, and on those composers who matured mid-era, cannot be over looked.

The reception of Beethoven's works in France is a mixed tale. The first French performance of his first symphony took place in 'Paris in 1807 and was

¹⁰⁹ Brigitte François Sappey; 'Boëly, Alexandre Pierre François' *Grove Music Online*, ed L. Macy <<http://www.grovemusic.com>>, [Accessed 4th September 2010].

¹¹⁰ Alfred Einstein, *Romantic Music: Music in the Romantic Era*, (London, 1947), p. 77.

unanimously recognized as a ponderous flop'.¹¹¹ Yet in the space of twenty years the obvious disdain that the French had for the works of Beethoven had now switched to frantic popular approval. 'More than anything else, however, the exultant testimony of listeners who now cheered Beethoven ecstatically concert after concert, season upon season, shows just how dramatic this revolution in popular music sensibilities truly was.'¹¹²

Indeed, as time progressed and more of Beethoven's works (particularly the symphonies) were appearing on concert programs, the French public were still demanding more. Johnson writes:

The third concert of the [Soci t  des Concerts] 1828 season opened with Beethoven's Fifth [Symphony] whose first movement produced 'a kind of stupor visible on every physiognomy' and prolonged salvos of applause (despite the fact that the nervous trumpeter never once managed to play the right notes of the opening motif).¹¹³

This reception 'turn-around' by the French public is truly remarkable concerning the Symphonies of Beethoven. Their popularity in the mid-nineteenth century surely had a knock-on affect on those French composers who were composing music at this time.

Alkan too played Beethoven. Smith tells us that at the age of 15:

¹¹¹ James H. Johnson, 'Beethoven and the Birth of Romantic Musical Experience in France', *19th Century Music*, Vol. 15 No. 1 (California: University of California Press, Summer 1991), pp. 22–35, p. 24.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

[...] on St. Cecilia's Day [1833], Alkan was entrusted with the important piano part in a performance of Beethoven's Triple Concerto with the distinguished members of the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra.¹¹⁴

Five years later, Alkan's admiration for Beethoven becomes truly obvious in his arrangement of the latter's Seventh Symphony for piano eight-hands which, as mentioned previously, was given its performance by Zimmerman, Chopin, Gutmann and Alkan on March 3rd 1838 while Beethoven-mania was still in its zenith in France.

1.5 Piano, Pedal-piano and Organ in Nineteenth-Century France

Placing Alkan's music within the context of the Romantic Movement seems almost paradoxical in many respects. Contrasting directly with the music of Chopin (particularly the Nocturnes), Alkan's driving rhythmic language would appear to negate the emotional sentiment that is synonymous (unfairly or otherwise) with music from this period. In his preface to the 2000 edition of *Alkan The Man The Music*, Roland Smith offers counsel to young contemporary pianists by saying:

A word of warning to those pianists coming to the composer's [Alkan's] major works for the first time. Like his friend Chopin, Alkan stands outside the mainstream of nineteenth-century Romantic virtuosity. Such works as the Concerto or Symphony for Solo Piano are born of a classical pedigree. Their transcendental pianism is integral to the conception and never imposed for effect. The huge first movement of Alkan's Concerto for Solo Piano will fall apart if subjected to the tempo fluctuations and dramatic posturing that beset so many performances of works by his contemporaries.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Ronald Smith, *Alkan the Man, The Music*, (1976; London: Kahn & Averill, 2000), I, p. 21.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. iii.

Here we are again reminded of the influences that bore heavily on Alkan's compositional style and the important role that music from the Classical (and Baroque) era played in his compositional method.

The nineteenth century saw a steady increase in popularity for the conventional piano in France. This activity was championed by Nicolas Séjan (1745–1819), who is credited with being 'one of the first French composers to write specifically for the piano [and] is justly considered to be one of the creators of the French piano school.'¹¹⁶ It was the ability to achieve greater dynamic contrast on the instrument that helped it succeed. Jean-Louis Adam wrote:

The pianoforte is the most frequently used of all the instruments. It is preferred over the harpsichord because it can express sounds as loud or as softly as required and imitate all the subtleties of other instruments, which is quite impossible with the harpsichord.¹¹⁷

Perhaps a more 'practical' view for the increased popularity in the pianoforte in France is expressed by Howard Schott in his article 'From Harpsichord to Pianoforte: A Chronology and Commentary' and deserves mentioning. Schott puts forward the following hypothesis:

We know that [...] Balbastre arranged the 'Marseillaise' and the Revolutionary air, 'Ça ira', expressly for the pianoforte, and published them in 1793. Was the harpsichord by then so closely associated in the popular mind with the *ancien regime* that it was considered politically unacceptable?¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Kimberly Marshall and William J. Peterson, 'Evolutionary Schemes: Organists and Their Revolutionary Music', *French Organ Music From the Revolution to Frank and Widor*, ed. Lawrence Archbold, William J. Peterson, (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1999), pp. 3–17, p. 6.

¹¹⁷ Jean Mongrédien, *French Music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism 1789–1830*, trans. Sylvian Frémaux, (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), p. 300.

¹¹⁸ Howard Schott, 'From Harpsichord to Pianoforte: A Chronology and Commentary', *Early Music*, Vol. 13, No. 1, The Early Piano II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, February 1985), pp. 28–38, p. 34.

When considering the rise in popularity of the piano through the nineteenth century in France, such a hypothesis seems credible when taking into account the underlying political motivations which culminated in revolution.

Chopin, having decided to settle in Paris in 1831, induced what Jean Mongredien describes as ‘a true renaissance’ for piano music.¹¹⁹ But for Alkan, a ‘renaissance’ of a different kind was taking place concerning the instrument itself. In the years that followed Chopin’s arrival in Paris, Alkan switched his attentions to an instrument that lifted the restrictions placed on him by the pianoforte: the pedal piano.

There were two main manufacturers of pianos in Paris during the nineteenth century; Erard, whose instruments were favoured by Alkan and Liszt, and Pleyel, whom Chopin preferred and also used as an intermediary for his French publishing. Cyril Ehrlich writes of Erard:

Erard’s pianos were models of consistently high craftsmanship and elegance. A remarkable and little known example made in Paris is the huge and ingenious *pedalier*, Number 24598 (with extra notes to be played with the feet) now in the [Paris] Conservatoire’s museum. Built in the early 1850s for the eccentric composer Alkan, whose quirkish compositions have recently enjoyed a revival which would have astonished Schumann and his contemporaries, it is a veritable showpiece of the old technology.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Jean Mongrédien, *French Music from the Enlightenment to Romanticism 1789–1830*, trans. Sylvian Frémaux, (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), p. 313.

¹²⁰ Cyril Ehrlich; *The Piano: A History*, (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1976), p. 110.

The pedal piano evolved from the pedal harpsichord which in turn evolved from the pedal clavichord.¹²¹ These earlier examples of pedalled keyboard instruments were used primarily as a practice instrument for organists. Bach himself was in possession of a pedal harpsichord and there is some evidence to suggest that he composed on the instrument. The A minor fugue from *The Well Tempered Clavier I*, BWV865 contains passages in which there are some bass notes that cannot be played by the left hand. This would suggest that for a literal performance, the use of the pedal harpsichord would indeed be justified.¹²²

In the mid to late eighteenth-century we see the pedal piano being used publicly by a surprising advocate: Mozart. While the exact historical details surrounding Mozart's use of the pedal piano are sketchy and incomplete, there are striking reports that can leave us in no doubt that he was also a campaigner for the instrument. In an article for the *Early Music Journal*, Richard Maunder and David Rowland present strong evidence suggesting that Mozart's use of the instrument was more than just a hobby. He played the instrument publicly and it was even made reference to in a flier for a concert which took place in Vienna on March 10th 1785 which stated:

Herr Kapellmeister Mozart...will not only play a newly finished fortepiano concerto [k467], but will also extemporize on a special large *Forte piano Pedal*.¹²³

¹²¹ For more on the pedal clavichord and the pedal harpsichord see the following article, Karrin Ford, 'The Pedal Clavichord and the Pedal Harpsichord' *The Galpin Society Journal*, Vol 50, (Mar., 1997), pp. 161–179

¹²² Ripin, Edwin M. and John Koster, 'Pedal Harpsichord', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), XIX, pp. 271–272.

¹²³ *Mozart: Die Dokumente seines Lebens*, ed. O. E. Deutsch (Kassel, 1961), 10 March, 1785. Cited in Richard Maunder, David Rowland; 'Mozart's Pedal Piano', *Early Music*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, May 1995), pp. 287–296, p. 287.

Maunder and Rowland make the claim that Mozart premiered and played some of his concertos (K466 and 467) on the Pedal Piano, and although no documentary evidence has been found to support this, the fact that his pedal piano was brought to the royal courts and various concert venues where he played and premiered concerti does lend some credence to the claim.¹²⁴

Maunder and Rowland argue that in bars 88 to 90 of the first movement of the K466 Piano Concerto in D Minor, Mozart actually wrote notes for pedals in the autograph and the absence of notes specifically for pedals after bar 90 suggests that he improvised a pedal part.¹²⁵ This encourages us to rethink the concept of authenticity regarding contemporary performances of Mozart's piano concerti and we must ask ourselves this question: are we missing out by not hearing some of them performed on pedal piano?

The popularity of the organ as a performance instrument in France was hampered by its liturgical association. In her book *Organists and Organ Playing in Nineteenth-Century France and Belgium*, Orpha Ochse points out that:

Reviews of organ performances found in nineteenth-century French periodicals sometimes give the modern reader a deceptive impression about the nature of the event. For example when Jacques Lemmens (1823–81), a Belgian organist, performed in 1852 on the recently installed organ at Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, Paris, his several appearances were given for invited groups of musicians; they were not public recitals.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Richard Maunder, David Rowland, 'Mozart's Pedal Piano', *Early Music*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, May 1995), pp. 287–296, p. 291.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 291.

¹²⁶ Orpha Ochse, *Organists and Organ Playing in Nineteenth-Century France and Belgium*, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 8.

She also confirms that Alkan and Boëly were among one of the groups that heard Lemmens play.¹²⁷ The idea of the ‘organ recital’ in contemporary terms does not truly represent these musical gatherings. It was much nearer the latter end of the nineteenth century that ‘stand-alone’ organ recitals (given by one soloist) became popular. Ochse continues:

Throughout the nineteenth century most organ programs relied on at least one other medium to provide variety. It is clear that the general public was not interested in hearing organ music exclusively, one piece after another. More often than not further variety would be added to the program by including performances by more than one organist.¹²⁸

Clearly the (French) Parisian public were the main consideration when choosing organ performances; making sure that they were satisfied and interested seemed to be of paramount importance to all concerned in the putting together of a recital.

The latter decades of the nineteenth century in France saw a number of great organists rise to important teaching and liturgical positions. Widor, who was Franck’s successor as Professor of Organ at the Paris Conservatoire, is a key figure in the development of an organ technique. Interestingly, his influences included both Alkan and Franck.

1.6 Conclusion

It is somewhat fortunate that Alkan, as a young and talented virtuosic pianist and composer, found himself present at the emergence of Paris as the intellectual and

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 37.

musical melting-pot of Europe during the nineteenth century. The new-found worth that was placed on solo instrumental performances catapulted him, and indeed Chopin and Liszt, on to the concert stage as demand for this type of music rose.

Alkan's documented friendships, particularly with Hiller, Chopin and Marsarnau, play an important role in helping to understand the kind of person he was. The emotional outpourings present in the letters to Marsarnau portray Alkan as a passionate man, prone to jealousy and calculating in matters of love. The bouts of depression and his period of reclusion, documented in the letters to Hiller, paint a picture of a lonely, somewhat bitter, man. These emotional traits can be seen in his music, particularly that for piano, and contribute to the development of his individual style.

The evolution of an organ technique is perhaps one of the more significant developments musically that took place in France during the nineteenth century. The credit for this can be attributed partly to Boëly and Alkan whose ability at the pedalboard is well documented. Their understanding of Bach's organ music, and the integral part the pedal line played in the overall counterpoint his music, can be seen in their own works for the instrument. Their efforts most definitely contributed to increasing awareness of, and popularising, the music of Bach amongst Parisian concert-goers. Their influence on successive generations of organists (particularly Franck and Widor), and to the development of a 'French' organ method and technique, must also be acknowledged.

Chapter 2

Outlining an Analytical Paradigm

“In view of its importance and the amount of attention it has received, rhythm has so far proved to be a rather intractable area of investigation. Why this should be so cannot be answered with certainty; if it could we should know more about rhythm.”¹

2.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this thesis is to present an interpretation of Alkan’s treatment of rhythm as a compositional tool. To this end, the dominant rhythmic motifs will be identified, illustrated and contextualised by way of reference to three specific sets of works; the Op. 64 *Prières*, Op. 66 *Grands Préludes* and Op. 72 *Pièces dans la Style Religieux*. It is the current author’s belief that by exploring Alkan’s rhythmic language, specifically through his use of small-scale rhythmic motifs, an identifiable personal style emerges. A secondary objective might be that, by making the music of Alkan the subject of academic exploration, it is hoped that it might bring his compositions to a wider audience or, indeed, encourage others to explore his rich compositional output.

The following chapter will outline an analytical model that will be used in the analysis of Alkan’s music for organ/pedal-piano. Before finalising the analytical paradigm an examination of contemporary analytical methods and writings will be

¹ Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed Joseph N. Straus, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 29.

conducted, outlining the main areas of importance. It is by doing this that the present model will emerge, incorporating elements of some of the theories discussed.

Malcolm MacDonald says of Alkan's musical style:

He was admired for an absolute technical mastery, a striking range of colour, and most of all for a rhythmic discipline which scorned rubato and made him the supreme exponent of the French *style sévère*. All these qualities are demanded in his own music.²

Indeed, other writers comment directly about the rhythm of individual pieces. William Eddie observes that the 'many features [of Alkan's music], relating to sonority, texture and rhythm look forward to twentieth-century composers.'³

Eddie also observes that:

The second chant of op 70 is one of Alkan's tough and concentrated miniatures in the tradition of the obsessively perpetuum mobiles as *Le chemin de fer* op 27. This op 70/2 piece is merely titled *Andantino* and it is an essay in bi-rhythmic metre [...]⁴

Again, Eddie points out:

In the op 25 [*Alleluia*], melody has almost been superseded by texture: parallel harmony abounds and rhythmic novelties are presented within a basic compound quadruple metre.⁵

² Malcolm MacDonald, 'ALKAN, Charles –Valentin', *Makers of Nineteenth Century Culture*, Vol. II ed. Justin Wintle, (Routledge 2001), p. 8.

³ William Alexander Eddie, *Charles Valentin Alkan, His Life and His Music*, (Aldershot: Ashgate 2007), p. 109.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 118.

⁵ *Ibid.* p. 97.

Ronald Smith's thoughts on Alkan's compositional and musical style acknowledge its individuality. He says:

Here [in the *Trois etudes de bravoure* op. 16, subtitled *Scherzi*], for the first time, the composer seems able to brand his personality on to every aspect of his invention, whether he is exploring new paths or wringing new meanings from well-worn ones. Their manner is brusque, their style tough and, like the first study from op. 12, *they are fuelled by tight, rhythmic cells which form themselves into ever larger units adding momentum to vitality*. Alkan probably learnt this method of construction from studying Beethoven and it becomes a vital, unifying factor in many of his greatest works.⁶ [Italics added]

Describing Alkan's rhythmic language can be a difficult enterprise. There are a number of traits that are almost unique to him, yet when pressed to pinpoint these traits one can find oneself at a loss for suitable adjectives. It is the present author's belief that this is so for a number of reasons, but mainly due to the combination of a stylised rhythmic language with a very personal sense of harmony and melody.

Therefore, by making Alkan's music the subject of an analysis, which seeks to explore rhythmic motifs, we are presented with an opportunity to experience his music at a fundamental level. MacDonald's indication that Alkan's music is 'demanding' (to play) is indeed true, and it is one of the main contributing factors to his music having been neglected for so long.

⁶ Ronald Smith: *Alkan The Man The Music*, 'Alkan; The Music' (1976; London: Kahn & Averill, 2000), II, p. 23.

2.2 Rhythm: Exploring the Difficulties within Analysis

The analysis of rhythm presents a number of problems for the analyst. Even the basic question itself, ‘what is rhythm?’ evokes a myriad of answers (not all agreeing), each with something different to add or omit.

A definition or understanding of rhythm is offered by Wallace Berry in his article ‘Metric and Rhythmic Articulation in Music’. He offers the following:

I conceive rhythm as the articulation of time by events of a particular class. In thus suggesting that there are many interacting or cohering streams of rhythm in any individual structure, one acknowledges as well some ultimate rhythmic composite of all events in all operable elements, one that must typically be, in interesting pieces, a rhythm of bewildering complexity.⁷

The inclusion of ‘rhythm of bewildering complexity’ in the above quote could be interpreted as being subjective. However, Berry is suggesting that the complexity of any rhythmic gesture or motif does not solely lie in its appearance, that is, its notated form. Consideration also needs to be given to its function within the context of the piece as a unit, observing its interaction with the other rhythmic features contained within.

Joel Lester goes further by speaking about music within the broader context of general temporality. He says:

Music can exist only in time. From such fundamentals as the differentiation of pitches from one another and the distinction between melody and harmony to the whole range of musical interactions (including but not limited to harmonic

⁷ Wallace Berry, ‘Metric and Rhythmic Articulation in Music’, *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 7 Time and Rhythm in Music, (California: University of California Press, Spring 1985), pp. 7–33, p. 7.

succession, melodic structure, texture, phrasing, form, climax, and even style), time is of critical importance. The difference between one pitch and another depends on the rate of vibration per unit of time. Melody arises from pitches following one another in time, harmony from pitches sounding simultaneously. Functional tonality arises from particular orderings of harmonies interacting with particular melodies. Musical form, from motives to phrasing to the largest subdivisions of a piece, is the division of a piece into segments following one another in time as they add up to the whole. The process of growth and decline, antecedence and consequence, preparation and resolution, and motion toward and recession from climax, regardless of how they are described and in whatever terms, all depend on orderings of musical elements and relationships in time.⁸

Lester's contextualisation of rhythm within the broader concept of temporality is very important. His acknowledgement that *all* 'musical interactions' are affected by temporal phenomena, affords one the opportunity of focusing on a few primary musical elements and examining the interactions between them in relation to *time*.

In the opening paragraph of his article 'The Theory and Analysis of Tonal Rhythm', Robert Morgan acknowledges that 'our understanding of tonal rhythm remains at a relatively primitive stage of development.'⁹ He maintains that 'we seem to be little further today than we were a century or more ago'.¹⁰

Peter Westergaard, writing about the problems in approaching the rhythmic structure of contemporary music, makes some valid points that are very relevant to the analysis of rhythm in *all* types of music. He says that:

The problem of rhythm in [contemporary] music lies not in the difficulties of extending traditional analytical concepts to handle increasing complexity in new

⁸ Joel Lester, *The Rhythms of Tonal Music*, (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), p. 1.

⁹ Robert P. Morgan, 'The Theory and Analysis of Tonal Rhythm', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 64 No. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, October 1978), pp. 435–473, p. 435.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 435.

music, but in the inadequacy of traditional analytical concepts to handle any music.¹¹

While Westergaard's statement seems to generalise with respect to all types of traditional methods of rhythmic analysis, his criticisms extend to individual theorists from the late nineteenth-century/early twentieth-century, namely, Riemann. He goes on to say:

To my knowledge the basic problem of the relationship of rhythm and meter, phrase and cadence to the location of the structural downbeat has not been solved in the literature of rhythmic theory. Those few writers who have considered the problem have characteristically been so concerned with their own particular universal that their solutions are of little general use.¹²

Westergaard, in a footnote that appends the above statement, specifically names Riemann as 'the ranking theorist to exhibit this widespread disease'.¹³ While his use of the word 'disease' clearly points to his frustration at the lack of progression in the field of rhythmic theory, it is perhaps unjustified, as surely the development or starting point for a theory of rhythm is analogous to picking a point on a line of infinite length: the difficulty is with finding a suitable and plausible starting point.

In his essay 'Theories of musical rhythm in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', William E. Caplin begins by further highlighting these, and other difficulties as follows:

[...] it is a difficult task to talk about rhythm in music, or, for that matter, the temporal experience in general. Compared with the spatial relations, which appear to us as fixed and graspable, temporal ones seem fleeting and intangible.

¹¹ Peter Westergaard, 'Some problems in Rhythmic Theory and Analysis', *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (Washington: Perspectives of New Music, Autumn 1962), pp. 180–191, p. 181.

¹² *Ibid.* p. 181.

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 181 footnote number six.

As a result, the language of time and rhythm is complex, contentious, and highly metaphorical.¹⁴

The effect of other factors bearing down on the rhythmic activity of a piece makes the study of rhythm complex. Christopher F. Hasty says that:

[...] in the analysis of rhythm we cannot so easily ignore the course of events as they emerge for us in a particular experience of 'this' piece. To the extent that it suggests process rather than product, a *fait accomplissant* rather than a *fait accompli* [...], rhythm stands as a reminder of the reality of temporal passage. And it is for this reason that rhythm remains such a problematic concept for music theory and analysis.¹⁵

Other music critics and scholars share Caplin's and Hasty's concerns and Nicholas Cook points out that 'expectation plays an important role in music.'¹⁶ If then there is an element of expectation in music, it is thus reasonable to assert that there is also an element of expectation regarding the analysis of music. Cook affirms this by saying that 'we expect an analysis to tell us something about the way we experience music.'¹⁷

Experience plays a vital role in both the understanding of music and the way music is, and should be, interpreted and analysed. Steve Larson's article 'The Problem of Prolongation in 'Tonal' Music: Terminology, Perception and Expressive Meaning' validates the use of cognitive science in the field of music analysis. In it he states that his 'view of prolongation is cognitively orientated: it

¹⁴ William E. Caplin, 'Theories of musical rhythm in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries', *The Cambridge History Of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) (4th printing) No. 21, p. 657.

¹⁵ Christopher F. Hasty, *Meter as Rhythm*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 4.

¹⁶ Nicholas Cook, *A Guide to Musical Analysis*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 10.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 219.

is motivated by an attempt to understand the *experience* of music.’¹⁸ Larson’s important point is that the desire to ‘understand the *experience* of music’ is imperative to the music-analytic act. It is then by providing a way in helping to ‘understand the *experience* of music’ that analysis (in general terms) has to prove itself in terms of providing a credible methodology and in the application of that methodology to the musical sources.

2.3 Identifying Components Important to Analysis

This section focuses on the various components associated with analysis as put forward in the writings of a number of analysts, theorists and musicologists. The goal here is not necessarily to critique the work of these analysts rather it is to expose the individual ideas that each presents, identify the elements that are common to each paradigm and modify or refine those ideas in forming an analysis to be applied to Alkan’s music.

It is important, and indeed prudent, to seek clarification on the general usage of the term ‘analysis’ by seeking first to define it. Ian Bent and Anthony Pople offer the following:

A general definition of the term [analysis] as implied in common parlance might be: that part of the study of music that takes as its starting-point the music itself, rather than external factors. More formally, analysis may be said to include the interpretation of structures in music, together with their resolution into relatively

¹⁸ Steve Larson, ‘The Problem of Prolongation in “Tonal” Music: Terminology, Perception and Expressive Meaning’, *Journal Of Music Theory*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Yale: Duke University Press, Spring 1997), pp. 101–136, p. 101.

simpler constituent elements, and the investigation of the relevant functions of those elements.¹⁹

This well-rounded definition is a good example of what *this* analysis is setting out to investigate: the functioning role of internal rhythmic elements in the context of the governing harmonic palette.

Reflecting on Bent and Pople's definition of analysis the next important question posed to the analyst could be thus: What is the purpose of analysis and what are its chief concerns? This important two-fold question evokes different responses from different analysts and critics. Paradoxically, this two-fold question would appear to have already been answered decades before by Theodor W. Adorno. He puts forward the following:

[...] to investigate the inner relationships of the work and to investigate what is essentially contained within the composition.²⁰ Analysis is thus concerned with structure, with structural problems, and finally, with structural listening. By structure I do not mean here the mere grouping of musical parts according to traditional formal schemata, however; I understand it rather as having to do with what is going on, musically, *underneath* these formal schemata.²¹

Adorno's views allow the analyst to put aside the need to observe and analyse each individual construct of a composition: instead the attention can be focused on what is not 'seen': its *foundations*.

¹⁹ Ian Bent and Anthony Pople, 'Analysis', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, 29 vols (1980; London: Macmillan, 2001), I, p. 526.

²⁰ T. W. Adorno and Max Paddison, 'On the Problem of Musical Analysis', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, July 1982), pp. 169–187, p. 171.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 174.

Ian Cross maintains that ‘consideration of the nature of musical perception should be of central concern to the music-analytic community.’²² In his article ‘Music Analysis and Music Perception’, he develops this by saying:

musical analysis should at least be underpinned by scientific accounts of perception, replacing analytic ‘folk-psychological’ views of perception with theories that are grounded in cognitive science if these can be shown to be more accurate, more generalisable, and more fruitful.²³

Cross, however, later refines his earlier statement, by contradicting the notion of ‘replacing analytic folk-psychological views of perception’. He retracts the statement by pointing out that:

the project of replacing the music-analytic ‘folk-psychology’ of musical perception with a scientifically founded one ... might be misconceived – one task of the cognitive science of music being not to *replace* folk-psychological accounts of musical perception but to *explain* them.²⁴

Despite the shifting viewpoint, Cross’s argument, that the idea of ‘perception in music’ is crucial to musical analysis, is an important one. Indeed, this view is shared by other music analysts. Candace Brower emphasises the importance of perception in music. She adds:

Musical time is analogous to artistic space – it provides the canvas upon which musical patterns unfold. In music, as in art, patterns emerge at different levels of structure. In order to perceive patterns at each level, we must be able to change our perceptual horizon, broadening it to take in the relationship among widely spaced objects or events, or narrowing it to focus on the intricacies of more detailed patterns.²⁵

²² Ian Cross, ‘Music Analysis and Music Perception’, *Music Analysis*, Vol. 17 No. 1 (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, March 1998), pp. 3–20, p. 3.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 6.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 17.

²⁵ Candace Brower, ‘Memory and the Perception of Rhythm’, *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (California: University of California Press Spring 1993), pp. 19–35, p. 19.

Cooper and Meyer, in their book *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, also talk about perception in music in a more specific way. They illustrate the effects that are attached to a rising melodic line regarding the listeners' perception, the dynamic actions of the composer and the interpretation of the performer. They say:

The energy and striving implicit in a rising line make each successive tone move *toward* the one which follows it, rather than *from* the one preceding it. A rising melodic line feels very much like a crescendo. Indeed most people perceive it as such. This is shown not only by the tendency of performers to crescendo in rising passages and of composers to indicate crescendos over rising passages much more frequently than over descending ones, but also by the fact that people actually hear higher pitches as louder, even though intensity remains constant.²⁶

As a result of this it can be asserted that composers (and performers) themselves contribute to musical perception their own biases, which in turn encourages the listener to perceive a set of musical elements – in this instance a rising melodic line – a certain way. Cooper and Meyer add that:

The mind tries to group stimuli in the simplest possible way and tends whenever possible to equalize the accented and unaccented points of a rhythm.²⁷

This they call the 'Principle of Metric Equivalence.'²⁸ Aurally this is important as such things as rhythmic ambiguity, beat stressing and various types of grouping distort the 'actual' governing time signature resulting in that which is fact (that is, the written governing time signature) versus that which is perceived. This will be discussed in more detail further on in the chapter.

²⁶ Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer, *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 15.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 22.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

This idea of aural perception and visual perception is also highlighted by Lester.

He points out that:

[But] musical notation, as a visual representation of some aspects of heard music, lends itself easily to synoptic perception. We can look at a musical phrase as a whole or grasp at once the shape of a melody. Indeed, we can view a single note, no matter its duration, as a single symbol, ignoring its separate beginning, continuation, and termination in heard music.²⁹

It therefore becomes obvious that consideration must then be given to the idea of musical perception, or more specifically the ‘perception of rhythm’ as a component of musical perception.

Early twentieth-century writings on the Psychology of Music are useful insofar as they offer a point from which to start. One noted writer on the psychology of music was Carl E. Seashore and in his article ‘The Sense of Rhythm as a Musical Talent’,³⁰ Seashore states that:

there are two fundamental factors in the perception of rhythm: an instinctive tendency to group impressions in hearing, and a capacity for doing this with precision in time and stress. The subjective tendency is so deeply ingrained, on account of its biological service, that we irresistibly uniform successions of sound, such as the tick of a clock, into rhythmic measure. The supposed limping of a clock is often purely subjective. This is called subjective rhythm to distinguish it from objective rhythm, in which the grouping is actually marked, as in music and poetry.³¹

Seashore sheds further light on the ideas mentioned in the above quotation and explains that:

²⁹ Joel Lester, *The Rhythms of Tonal Music* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), p. 3.

³⁰ This article was later expanded by Seashore to form a chapter of his book, *Psychology of Music*, (New York: Dover, 1967)

³¹ Carl E. Seashore, ‘Sense of Rhythm as a Musical Talent’, *Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, October 1918), pp. 507–515, p. 507.

Subjective rhythm is more fundamental than objective rhythm and always plays a large role in the objective. This is why we find rhythm more essentially a matter of personality than a matter of objective grouping. All rhythm is primarily a projection of personality.³²

If we apply Seashore's conclusion that 'all rhythm is primarily a projection of personality' to the composer (as opposed to the listener) what consequence then would such a statement have on the music of Alkan? Is there a part of the composer's personality present in his music, represented by the rhythmic structures it contains? Surely all art has its creator present in some way, whether it be an obvious representation or an ambiguous one? Yet there are instances in Alkan's music where he is quite ambiguous; rhythmically, instrumentally and tonally. By analysing his music for pedal-piano/organ, it will be shown that Alkan's use of rhythm is the product of a highly developed personal style, and as such portrays a little of the composer's personality. This can clearly be seen in the *Prières* Op. 64, particularly in No. 3.

Seashore goes further by providing a definition for the sense of rhythm (or perception of rhythm) saying:

We may now define the sense of rhythm as an instinctive disposition to group recurrent sense impressions vividly and with precision, by time or intensity, or both, in such a way as to derive pleasure and efficiency through the grouping.³³

This definition alludes to the relationship held between experience and perception.

But what is important to musical perception?

³² *Ibid.* p. 508.

³³ *Ibid.* p. 508.

Seashore distinguishes between ‘rhythmic perception’ and ‘rhythmic action.’ From the perspective of perception and memory he outlines some key points, which are summarised as follows:

Rhythm favours perception by grouping. It has been demonstrated that, under happy grouping, one can remember approximately as many small groups as one can remember individual objects without grouping; for example, in listening to a series of notes, one can grasp nearly as many measures, if they are heard rhythmically, as one could grasp individual sounds if they were not heard rhythmically.³⁴

We can interpret Seashore’s ‘happy grouping’ as meaning ‘conventional grouping’ in regular (as opposed to irregular) time signatures. This becomes a crucial element in the analysis of Alkan’s rhythmical style and structure. The composer’s penchant for rhythmic ambiguity becomes even more exposed as a result. This analysis’ exploration of repetition will be discussed further on.

To achieve a well-rounded analysis there must be significant reference to the harmonic and tonal structures within each set of works. The early pages of Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer’s book *The Rhythmic Structure of Music* makes clear this importance. The opening line of chapter one of this book tells us that ‘to study rhythm is to study all of music.’³⁵ Cooper and Meyer elaborate on this by saying:

To experience rhythm is to group separate sounds into structured patterns. Such grouping is the result of the interaction among the various aspects of the materials of music: pitch, intensity, timbre, texture, and harmony – as well as duration.³⁶

³⁴ Carl E. Seashore, *Psychology of Music*, (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1967), p. 140.

³⁵ Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer, *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 1.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 1.

While acknowledging the necessary inclusion of other musical ‘materials’ and their influence on the rhythmic movement of a given piece of music, it is important to again note the role perception plays in this activity. Following on from Seashore, Cooper and Meyer add:

As a piece of music unfolds, its rhythmic structure is perceived not as a series of discrete independent units strung together in a mechanical, additive way like beads, but as an organic process in which smaller rhythmic motives, while possessing a shape and structure of their own, also function as integral parts of a larger rhythmic organization.³⁷

While Cooper and Meyer’s concept of perception may seem a little abstract when considering the conclusions a listener without a musical background might draw, they nevertheless address the point that smaller rhythmic motives are generally incorporated into ‘a larger rhythmic organization’.

Central to their theory is the presence of various levels of rhythmic activity (within the structure of a musical composition) which they call Architectonic Levels. They describe the rhythmic patterns of music using the five prosodic groupings of iamb, anapaest, trochee, dactyl and amphibrach. They categorise all rhythmic activity in this manner stating that:

Since [...] rhythmic organization is architectonic, more extensive rhythmic structures – phrases, periods, etc. – as well as shorter, more obviously rhythmic motives exhibit these [prosodic groupings’] basic patterns.³⁸

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 2.

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 6.

In an attempt to make their theory clear to the reader, and the music analyst, Cooper and Meyer outline *their* definitions of traditional rhythmic terms as a prerequisite for gaining a true understanding of their work.³⁹

The areas of greater interest to Cooper and Meyer are pulse, metre, rhythm, accent, stress and grouping.

However, Schachter is somewhat critical of Cooper and Meyer's *The Rhythmic Structure of Music* when he says:

I believe that reading *The Rhythmic Structure of Music* can make one more sensitive to the nuances of rhythmic organization. But I also believe that the analytical approach has serious flaws.⁴⁰

The three main flaws as Schachter sees them are; 1) the suggestion that rhythmic groups gather around a single accent 'creates a disconnected picture at every level of the analysis', 2) 'the approach is extraordinarily reductive' and 3) 'the notion of an enduring accent contradicts an essential attribute of music: motion.'⁴¹

Interestingly, Schachter highlights another perceived short-coming with Cooper and Meyer's (and, indeed, Cone's) analytical approach. He says:

Both approaches, Cone's as well as Cooper and Meyer's, appear to operate on the assumption that tonal events, in themselves, produce a kind of rhythm. But neither approach makes headway against the central problem posed by this

³⁹ Cooper and Meyer clearly outline these definitions and the basic principle of the treatise in Chapter One of *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, pp. 1–11.

⁴⁰ Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed Joseph N. Straus, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 32.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

assumption: to distinguish between *rhythm as an active force* (helping to shape tonal events) and *rhythm as resulting* from the activity of tonal events.⁴²

Schachter also realises the important role that perception plays in analysis. He acknowledges it in the following way:

I do not propose to offer solutions to all of the analytical problems associated with the aspects of meter that I shall discuss [...] my conception of metre is more traditional than that of many recent writers. In particular, I am more reluctant than some of my colleagues to dismiss the composer's notation. As in my two previous essays, my point of departure will be perception.⁴³

Awareness and perception become significant facets in understanding Schachter's take or slant on Schenkerian analysis. He goes on to say:

For duration [rhythm] to become even a moderately important issue in a piece, the pattern must become intelligible to the listener, who must be able to compare one span of time with another and thus intuit relationships among the various durations that make up the pattern.⁴⁴

Schachter seems to go one step further, by recognising the listener's perspective as an important gauging tool when theorising about musical perception and awareness in a broader context. This is clearly the case when he says:

Once the listener becomes aware of recurrent durational units—beats, measures, and larger periodicities—that awareness, in and of itself, finds another layer of accentuation to the musical image. The accents thus produced are true *metrical accents*—metrical because they arise directly out of the listener's awareness of the equal divisions of time that measure the music's flow.⁴⁵

⁴² Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed Joseph N. Straus, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 33.

⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 80.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* p. 81.

This, perhaps on a smaller scale, helps in forming that contradiction in Alkan's music whereby the music that is printed in the score is at odds with what the listener is hearing. (There are numerous examples of this in the works that are to be analysed, the most obvious example of this can be seen in Chapter 3, Example 3.2.2)

Expanding on Cooper and Meyer's and Schachter's ideas concerning grouping and durational units, we can examine these under the larger concept of phrasing. In this respect, the writings of William Rothstein prove invaluable.

In an effort to define 'phrase', Rothstein combines parts of two existing definitions and elaborates on them which results in the following:⁴⁶

A phrase should be understood as, among other things, a directed motion in time from one tonal entity to another; these entities may be harmonies, melodic tones (in any voice or voices), or some combination of the two. *If there is no tonal motion, there is no phrase.*⁴⁷

The emphasis placed on the need for 'tonal motion' to be present in order to constitute a phrase is important for two reasons. Firstly, it explicitly presents the correlation that exists between tonality (in the broadest sense) and rhythm; secondly, it emphasises the intrinsic need for the combined activity of 'tonality and rhythm' to be present in an almost autonomous beginning-and-ending fashion.

⁴⁶ The definitions of Roger Sessions and Peter Westergaard, which Rothstein outlines on pages 3 and 4 of his book *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music*, Schirmer Books, New York, 1989.

⁴⁷ William Rothstein, *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1989), p. 5.

Rothstein elaborates and explains his definition in the following way:

Defining a phrase is not a matter of counting measures. There are many four-measure phrases in tonal music, but not every identifiable segment of four measures qualifies as a phrase, because not every segment of four measures describes a *tonal* motion with beginning, middle and end. Raising the quota to eight or sixteen measures doesn't help much, though it may eliminate many non-phrases (and some phrases) from consideration. A phrase cannot be defined by some a priori measure count; it is a fundamentally different sort of unit.⁴⁸

Accepting Rothstein's comprehensive definition lifts the restriction, placed on earlier analysts, of pigeon-holing or quantifying musical phrases by the number of bars they (supposedly) occupy. Instead, the once-necessary act of labelling a phrase in respect to the number of bars it occupied is replaced by viewing the phrase in its elemental constituents: rhythm and pitch. This is significant when considering phrase development and motivic movement in Alkan's works. His rigorous adherence to the governing time signature very often means that a phrase begins or ends on a particular beat, and not necessarily at the beginning or end of a particular bar.

In simple terms, the aim of any compositional process is to produce a work that is coherent whether in the form of a straight-forward 'singing' melody as can be heard in Mozart's piano sonatas, or an intricately woven melodic line, encompassing all the active parts of the composition, as can be heard in the Intermezzi of Brahms. The basis of this coherency is two-fold: the notes used and the rhythmic meter. The former appeals directly to our senses, but relies on the latter for structural clarity. One possible outcome then is that rhythm becomes the very foundation that gives 'meaning' to melody.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 7.

As a consequence of its temporality, rhythm is ‘unseen’. The use of musical notation as a tangible attempt to express that which cannot be seen and the durational values that are assigned to each note is therefore subjective. A crotchet, for example, is a note of varying durational value depending on the metronome marking at the beginning of a composition. Thus we can view conventional musical notation as representing rhythmic units, irrespective of their durational values. The temporal nature of rhythm leads to an experiential process that culminates in a perception of motion. With regard to experience, Cook also has some interesting things to say on this issue. He asserts that ‘the point of an analysis is not to *describe* what people consciously perceive: it is to *explain* their experience in terms of the totality of their perceptions, conscious and unconscious.’⁴⁹ The importance is therefore placed on the act of *perception* as being a co-requisite to the experiential process. This makes perfect sense, for the sum total of our perceptions inevitably results in ‘experience’. He states further that ‘the point of analysis is to explain what is obvious [...] in terms of structures that are not obvious and can only be deduced from analytical study.’⁵⁰ The implication is thus: that the analytical act must be part (or wholly) exegetical, trying to maintain a high level of objectivity.

In an article entitled ‘Phrase Expansion: Three Analytical Studies’, David Beach uses Rothstein’s approach to analysis (which is a development of Heinrich Schenker’s analysis) as a paradigm for his study. He states that:

⁴⁹ Nicholas Cook, *A Guide to Musical Analysis*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 221.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 222.

One of the most important points made by Rothstein is that we must be able to view the worlds of metric and tonal hierarchy separately as well as together.⁵¹

This is an important aspect of this thesis. Objectifying and identifying rhythmic motifs ex-harmonically in the first instance exposes their fundamental (durational) structure. This does not ignore the important roles that melody and harmony play in the structural process of composition; on the contrary, it is when they are then examined in light of the harmonic language that surrounds their usage that a true structural, all-encompassing analysis is achieved.

Identifying a true rhythmic structure within a given piece of music is itself a difficult task. It is incumbent upon the analyst to separate rhythmic movement in to such categories as ‘structural rhythm’ (that is, the rhythmic movement that is fundamental to the rhythmic organisation) and ‘decorative rhythm’ (that is, ornaments; particularly those that occur before the beat or elongate the beat, like a turn). The act of distinguishing between rhythms that are structural or decorative involves being clear as to what rhythmic movement is fundamental to the rhythmic organisation of the work.

2.4 Linear Analysis and the Analysis of Rhythm

When writing about analysis, and the various approaches that exist, it would be remiss of any would-be analyst not to include a section on linear analysis and its ‘evolution’. The writings of perhaps the most obvious exponent of Schenkerian

⁵¹ David Beach, ‘Phrase Expansion: Three Analytical Studies’, *Music Analysis*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, March 1995), pp. 37–47, p. 38.

Theory and linear analysis, Carl Schachter, will be the primary focus as he attempted to advance Schenkerian ideas to include more comprehensively the elements of rhythm and metre.

One of the more troubling criticisms that have dogged linear analysis is that Schenker never gave any great weight to rhythm. This is acknowledged by many analysts, with Schachter himself admitting this shortcoming:

Of all the criticisms occasioned by the work of Schenker and his school, one has been especially persistent. It is that Schenkerian analysis, whatever insight it may give in many respects, fails to do justice to rhythm, that crucial element without which there could be no music. One might tend to brush aside such an objection if it were expressed only by those unconvinced by Schenker's approach. However, musicians who subscribe to many of Schenker's views have also voiced this criticism.⁵²

David Beach, too, acknowledges Schenker's lack of specificity regarding rhythm when he writes:

'One of the criticisms frequently voiced in the past against Schenker is that he did not attempt to deal in any depth with the parameters of metre and rhythm — that his is just a theory of pitch relations.'⁵³

While Robert Morgan also writes about the problem of trying to apply Schenkerian analysis to the rhythm, he suggests that it has some merit and states:

Although a fully realized systematic theory of tonal rhythm along Schenkerian lines is undoubtedly a long way off (if it is obtainable at all) ... a Schenkerian approach leads to important insights into the nature of tonal rhythm.⁵⁴

⁵² Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed Joseph N. Straus, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 17.

⁵³ David Beach, 'Schenkerian Theory', *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Special Issue: The Society for Music Theory: The First Decade (California: University of California Press, Spring 1989), pp. 3–14, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Robert P. Morgan, 'The Theory and Analysis of Tonal Rhythm', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 64 No. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, October 1978), pp. 435–473, p. 436.

Beach concisely explains Schenker's view on rhythm and meter in his article 'Schenkerian Theory', arguing against the 'past criticisms' when he says:⁵⁵

[...] his [Schenker's] view of rhythmic-metric organization is directly dependent upon his structural levels and their interaction. This is what makes Schenker's approach unique. Rhythm and meter are not viewed in isolation from pitch; furthermore, interpretation of the former is directly dependent on the latter.⁵⁶

But is it possible to construct an analysis of rhythm using Schenkerian-based linear analysis as a starting point? What can the analyst elucidate from the music, in terms of rhythm and metric organisation, through use of linear analysis? Even Schachter admits that:

Schenker's most devoted adherent must agree that he elaborated no systematic approach to rhythm comparable to what he achieved in the realm of voice leading and tonal organization.⁵⁷

Allen Forte, in his article 'New Approaches to the Linear Analysis of Music', acknowledges Schenker's contribution to and influence on twentieth-century music theory but raises some very valid points on the general use of Schenkerian analysis. In it he says:

[...] the uncritical application of Schenkerian paradigms to certain kinds of music has often led to poor results, indeed, has misled scholars, in some cases quite seriously, and has obscured important issues that require confrontation.⁵⁸

Forte's observations could be viewed as a caution by those analysts who feel it necessary to develop the established Schenkerian model.

⁵⁵ David Beach, 'Schenkerian Theory', *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Special Issue: The Society for Music Theory: The First Decade (California: University of California Press, Spring 1989), pp. 3–14, p. 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* p. 4.

⁵⁷ Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed Joseph N. Straus, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 18.

⁵⁸ Allen Forte, 'New Approaches to the Linear Analysis of Music', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 14 No. 2 (California: University of California Press, Summer 1988), pp. 315–348, p. 316.

Schachter does concede that to truly engage with a composition, separation of the musical elements is necessary in order to expose internal relationships. From a tonal perspective, he offers the following:

If the analyst has the necessary mixture of common sense and imagination, and studies thematic design in its connection with linear–harmonic structure, such analysis provides an indispensable view of the individual features of a composition. To perceive such relationships we must separate [...] tonal events from their rhythmic contour.⁵⁹

Taking Schachter’s view on board then, it becomes clear that the reverse must also hold true and the above quote could be reinterpreted in the following way; by replacing ‘linear–harmonic structure’ with ‘linear–*rhythmic* structure’ and ‘tonal events from their rhythmic contour’ with ‘*rhythmic motifs* from their *tonal expression*’. Schachter continues:

Can one isolate rhythm and consider it apart from pitch? I believe that one can, but within narrower limits, for one crucial aspect of rhythm—grouping—depends in part on tonal relationships. Without taking these relationships into account, we are often unable to arrive at even a primitive understanding of rhythm. [...] our perception of rhythm depends upon tonal organization.⁶⁰

Does the inference by Schachter that rhythmic perception depends on tonal organization sound too absolute? It seems not to account for those that have at their core a musico-rhythmic tradition (African tribal communities, for example). However, he is acutely aware that, to date, no satisfactory answer has been given to the question: which came first, pitch or rhythm, and to this end he offers the following:

⁵⁹ Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed Joseph N. Straus, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 21.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

The argument about which came first—pitch or rhythm—has persisted for years without anyone’s having reached a satisfactory solution. [...] but is it really such an important problem? What is important is to understand how the two elements function in any composition or significant group of compositions. If it is true that, in Western art music, rhythm is more dependent upon pitch than pitch upon rhythm, then to place pitch at the core of a musical structure, as Schenker does, is, I think, a perfectly logical procedure.⁶¹

Schachter’s regarding the primacy of pitch (over rhythm) as ‘a perfectly logical procedure’ is predicated on the statement ‘rhythm is more dependent on pitch than pitch on rhythm’ being actually true. Such affirmations based on the condition ‘*if it is true*’ should (surely) be viewed cautiously? Schachter does, however, point out that:

Schenker himself never arrived at a really comprehensive theory of rhythm [...]. His last work, *Free Composition*, contains a highly interesting section on rhythm, and there are references scattered throughout his earlier works, but these do not constitute a systematic or exhaustive treatment of the subject.⁶²

Perhaps the most immediate problem with Schachter’s concept of durational reduction is that it would appear not to be universally applicable, a fact which he himself acknowledges:

In this essay I shall try to develop further some of the ideas sketched out in the earlier one. I shall do so by demonstrating an analytic notation that can help reveal connections between durational and tonal organizations, *at least in some types of music*.⁶³ (Italics added)

Indeed, when he outlines the possible usefulness of durational reduction many inadequacies can be established. He says:

The pacing of tonal events with respect both to phrase structure and to form also emerge more clearly durational than from voice-leading graphs. At the same

⁶¹ Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed Joseph N. Straus, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 23

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 28

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

time, certain inescapable disadvantages limit the usefulness of these graphs. [...] the rhythmic notation makes it more difficult to show structural levels and, in general, makes the voice leading harder to perceive. This problem is minimized in simple pieces [...] With longer more complicated works, the deficiencies of the notation would soon make themselves felt. In addition, at or near the foreground of the piece, the reduced durations suggest a tempo several times faster than the real one and, consequently, produce a distorted picture. [...] And finally, the smaller details of rhythm, those at the most immediate level of foreground, do not show up at all in these [durational] reductions.⁶⁴

Charles Burkhart (and Heinrich Schenker's) article entitled 'Schenker's "Motivic Parallelisms"' develops the idea that motivic repetition is a dominating factor of tonal music. Burkhart outlines the theory as follows:

I refer to his discovery that, in a given tonal composition, a melodic unit, or 'motive,' can be subjected to 'hidden repetitions.' While these repetitions could take the form of simple rhythmic transformations on the surface, Schenker was much more interested in those that involved sub-surface elements, that is, in which the motive was expressed on different structural levels—both low and high—or, as is often said, expressed 'in the small' and 'the large'.⁶⁵

This is significant insofar as it points to the importance of motivic movement within a given piece, and the necessity to charter this movement through the piece to see how it 'acts' — its repetitive pattern.

Beach's definition of 'motive' best describes the term as it is used in this thesis' analysis. He defines it in the following manner:

As most commonly used, 'motive' implies a figure, whose main feature is its rhythmic pattern — in short, a 'motif.' Such is the initial idea of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Though its original statement can be defined in terms of pitch,

⁶⁴ Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed Joseph N. Straus, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 76.

⁶⁵ Charles Burkhart and Heinrich Schenker, 'Schenker's "Motivic Parallelisms"' in *Journal of Music Theory*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Yale: Duke University Press, Autumn 1978), pp. 145–175, p. 146.

*its repetitions are recognizable not in terms of pitch but in terms of rhythm.*⁶⁶
[Italics added]

This legitimises the necessity of this analysis to firstly separate rhythm from ‘pitch’/harmony in its investigation. The repetition of a ‘motif’ is thus a rhythmic construct and not pitch-dependent. Beach adds to his motive-definition:

I would suggest that a more precise label for surface patterns of this sort is “rhythmic motive.” Such a notion is tied to the musical surface, since at deeper levels an idea is no longer defined, or perhaps I should say “perceived”, by a particular rhythmic articulation.⁶⁷

This further allows the rhythmic act to be autonomous: freeing the “rhythmic motive” from the (now unnecessary) *tonal* consequence. This splits into clear distinctions the temporal relations (rhythmic movement) and the spatial relations (the auditory sounds of pitches).⁶⁸

This analysis, in Schenkerian terms, is of the ‘surface rhythm’: starting with the subjective act of identifying rhythmic motifs and various rhythmic schemata (including repetition) within a piece of music. The following from Beach helps to clarify why this is so when he says:

[...] he [Schenker] also observed repetitions [of motives] at deeper levels, where the motive becomes obscured by its elaboration. Such a ‘hidden’ repetition, to

⁶⁶ David Beach, ‘Schenkerian Theory’, *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Special Issue: The Society for Music Theory: The First Decade (California: University of California Press, Spring 1989), pp. 3–14, p. 6.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p. 6.

⁶⁸ It is important to note that Schenker also proposed a definition of ‘motive’ in his book *Harmony*, ed by Oswald Jonas, trans. Elisabeth Mann Borgese, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954 5th impression; 1972). Here he states: “The motif is a recurring series of tones. Any series of tones may become a motif. However, it can be recognized as such only where its repetition follows immediately. As long as there is no immediate repetition, the series in question must be considered as a dependent part of a greater entity, even if later on, somewhere in the course of the composition, the series should be elevated to the rank of a motif.” p. 4.

use one of Schenker's terms, is defined not by its rhythmic articulation but by its ordered pitch content in relation to the original statement [...]⁶⁹

However, it is not possible to solely rely on Schenker for a clear set of rules governing the development of motivic ideas, as he 'did not attempt to formulate any rules for motivic development.'⁷⁰

While not totally abandoning Schenkerian ideas regarding motivic importance, further discussion of the matter is required in order to maintain a certain level of objectivity. Burkhart's treatise, on the notion of 'motivic parallelisms', does help to elucidate the concept and importance of motivic repetition in (tonal) music. In it, he states importantly that 'no motives of any kind can be meaningfully analyzed without a full accounting of their relation to harmonic elements.'⁷¹

Rhythmically, this makes perfect sense. While this analysis is primarily centred on the rhythmic elements of Alkan's music for pedal-piano and organ, the motifs are also contextualised within the tonal structure. This will be called *Tonal Expression* and is defined further on.

⁶⁹ David Beach, 'Schenkerian Theory', *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Special Issue: The Society for Music Theory: The First Decade (California: University of California Press, Spring 1989), pp. 3–14, p. 6.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* p. 6.

⁷¹ Charles Burkhart and Heinrich Schenker, 'Schenker's "Motivic Parallelisms"', *Journal of Music Theory*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Yale: Duke University Press, Autumn 1978), pp. 145–175, p. 155.

2.5 A Detailed Outline of the Analytical Paradigm

By way of contextualising this proposed analytical paradigm, the words of Jean-Jacques Nattiez might first be considered. In his article ‘The Concepts of Plot and Seriation Process in Music Analysis’ he says:

Ever since I have been involved with music analysis, I have been particularly interested by problems of ambiguity. [...] it is when confronted by an ambiguous musical phenomenon that analyses differ the most, and therefore through these differences it is easiest to question the workings of music analysis and the criteria for its elaboration and construction. Different interpretations of the same fact are not shocking in themselves. It could even be said that they are in the nature of things, since music is a human product, subject to human exegesis and interpretation. What really matters is understanding the reasons for these differences. The only shock, if indeed there is any shock at all, would be for an author of a particular analysis to regard it as the only true or possible one, to the exclusion of all others.⁷²

Nattiez’s remarks are significant insofar as they highlight the individuality of the music-analytic act. The implication here is that there is a certain modesty attached to music analysis, that one should not view one’s analysis as being superior: instead one’s own analysis offers a different or alternative way of understanding music and its structure; adding to existing models, referencing them and incorporating them as the building blocks and starting point of a ‘new’ analysis or analytical interpretation.

Schachter, too, offers a qualifying statement regarding his analytical interpretations of metrical analysis. He says:

⁷² Jean-Jacques Nattiez, (Trans. Catherine Dale), ‘The Concepts of Plot and Seriation Process in Music Analysis’, *Music Analysis*, Vol. 4, No. 1-2, Special Issue: King’s College London Music Analysis Conference 1984 (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, March–July 1985), pp. 107–118 p. 107.

An irreducible residue of personal opinion remains in any metrical analysis of a piece which [...] lends itself to more than one plausible interpretation. There is no way that I (or anyone else) can “prove” the correctness of my reading [...] The important thing is to make our evaluations of the meter in the light of the clearest and most comprehensive understanding that we can achieve of all the significant aspects of the piece.⁷³

This is important as it highlights the overall subjective and personal nature of analysis.

The proposed analytical method is centred on identifying the number of dominant rhythmic motifs within each piece of music and examining the way in which they are used (and their function within the overall structure of the piece). Each motif identified will then be labelled as ‘static’, ‘dynamic’, ‘latently static’, or ‘latently dynamic’, depending on its functioning role within the composition. Before an examination of the characteristics necessary for static and dynamic rhythm can be explained, it is first important to clarify the criteria that will govern this analysis.

This analysis is not dependent on the harmonic progressions that are in place in a given piece of music: instead it is the eventual interaction between rhythm and pitch/tonality that will be considered. This idea of stripping away ‘tone’ from analysis of rhythm is not a particularly new concept. Such was also considered by Oscar Bie in the early decades of the twentieth century. In his article for *The Musical Quarterly* entitled ‘Rhythm’, he says:

The investigation of rhythm has become sadly complicated through its relations with verse and likewise through comparisons with life. It is necessary, first, to

⁷³ Carl Schachter, *Unfoldings: Essays in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis*, ed Joseph N. Straus, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. 101.

sever its association. We exclude tone; we limit ourselves to the rhythmical beat. This 'tone' no longer rings, it only raps. It requires a certain exertion to realize this abstraction.⁷⁴

The concept of initially 'de-toning' a piece of music to expose its rhythmic pattern is indeed an abstract act, albeit a necessary act in this analysis. After the bare rhythmic movement is uncovered, consideration must then be given to melody and its affects on grouping/rhythm while also considering the overall harmonic palette, thus leading to a more general conclusion as to the main types of harmony that dominate a particular set of works, for example, the use of mediant modulations, Neapolitan modulation, chromaticism, intervallic dominance and so on.

It is first necessary to give a brief outline of the processes to be employed which will lead to a functional analytical paradigm.

The first process involved shall be the identification of the dominating rhythmic movement of each individual piece within a set. This process will firstly exclude the governing harmony and focus solely on the dominating rhythmical forces that are at play throughout the piece, thus identifying those patterns that occur most frequently.

⁷⁴ Oscar Bie, trans. Theodore Baker, 'Rhythm', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, July 1925), pp. 331–338, p. 331.

What has been labelled as ‘rhythmic reduction’ within the work of such analysts as Forte⁷⁵ and Gilbert⁷⁶ is in essence a reduction of the fundamental harmonic framework that is present within the context of the rhythm. In order to truly identify rhythmic patterns and motifs it is therefore necessary at this first stage of the analysis to abandon the peripheral conclusions, primarily those of a harmonic nature, that emerge from it.

Below is an example of the procedure that is to be used throughout the analytical chapters in identifying the rhythmic motifs. Firstly, by way of clarification, figure 1 shows the first five bars of *Prière* No. 3 as they appear in the score. Viewing the first few bars of the score will help to put in to context the process involved in determining what a motif is.

Fig. 1: Alkan, *Prière* No. 3 bars 1 – 5

The musical score for Alkan's *Prière* No. 3, bars 1–5, is presented in three staves. The top staff, labeled 'Mains.', is in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. It begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a tempo marking of *Poco adagio*. The middle staff, labeled 'Pieds.', is also in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It contains a few notes in the final bar, marked *Legato* and *Molto espressivo*. A performance instruction, 'L'8va bassa solamente sin'al fine.', is placed between the Mains and Pieds staves. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots.

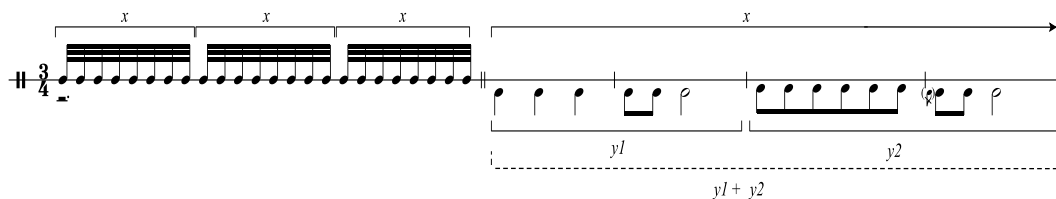
⁷⁵ It is worth mentioning here that Allen Forte appears to be highly critical of David Beach's application of Schenkerian theories. He unambiguously states this in his article 'New Approaches to the Linear Analysis of Music', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (Summer, 1988), pp. 315–348, University of California Press, p. 315 where he says: '...the fountainhead of this approach to [linear] analysis resides in the writings of Heinrich Schenker, although no doubt that eminent personage has turned over many times in his final resting place in response to some of the uses to which his concepts have been applied posthumously (see Beach 1985, especially 288-93)'.

⁷⁶ An example of a 'rhythmic reduction' by Forte and Gilbert of bars 1–4 of J.S. Bach's *Prelude No. 2 in C minor WTC I* is shown as Example 10 in Kofi Agawu, V., 'Schenkerian Notation in Theory and Practice', *Music Analysis*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, October 1989), pp. 275–301, p. 288.



Figure 2 illustrates by way of example the process that is involved when considering rhythmic movement in motivic terms. We see bars 1–5 of *Prière* No. 3 rhythmically exposed. All the rhythmic activity of Fig. 1 is present in Fig. 2. The process is reductionist — taking a piece of music and ‘reducing’ it to one of its fundamental constructs which, in the case of this analysis, is Rhythm.

Fig. 2: Process of Identifying Rhythmic Motifs from Bars 1–5 of *Prière* No. 3



The piece is ‘dissected’ rhythmically, resulting in a motivic outline of the governing rhythmic activity. The use of algebraic functions to label the different

rhythmic motifs as they become apparent allows one to easily identify firstly, the frequency of their usage and secondly, the context in which they are used in relation to the other rhythmic motifs identified within the piece. The labelling of each motif as it appears is a subjective act: X may not always be a dynamic rhythm, it is merely the first rhythm identified within the piece – the same is true for Y. Motif Z however always signifies a new unrelated motif, that which is different from both X and Y. Each of the under-mentioned symbols can appear either alone or as part of a combination, for example Y could be made up of Y1 + Y2. The use of the terms augmentation and diminution also need to be clarified in the context of this analysis. Diminution of X will constitute any act that shortens the durational length of the initial motif X. It must be made very clear that X-2 (that is the second diminution of X) may not necessarily be durationally shorter than X-1: it is merely the ‘second way’ in which the motif X has been shortened. The same principles will be true for augmentation.

The following is a full explanation of the symbols used in the analysis.

X is the first rhythmic motif identified

X -1(2, 3 etc.) first (second, third etc.) diminution of the motif X

X +1(2, 3 etc.) first (second, third etc.) augmentation of the motif X

X1(2, 3 etc.) first (second, third etc.) part of motif X

Y is the second rhythmic motif identified

Y -1(2, 3 etc.) first (second, third etc.) diminution of the motif Y

Y +1(2, 3 etc.) first (second, third, etc.) augmentation of the motif Y

Y1(2,3 etc.) first (second, third etc.) part of motif Y

1(2, 3 etc.)→X first (second, third etc.) derivation of motif X

1(2, 3 etc.)→Y first (second, third etc.) derivation of motif Y

Z is the third rhythmic motif identified

O is the fourth motif identified

R is a dominating repetitive rhythmic gesture that is ornamental/decorative

H is a homorhythmic pedal line (or lowest bass line if pedal is omitted)

E is an episode that may or may not relate to any of the fundamental motives — it can dominate all the parts, or can be used in conjunction with one (or more) of the previous motives

N.R.A. is a Note of Rhythmic Anticipation

A.R.A. is an Action of Rhythmic Anticipation

The algebraic symbols that are used here to label the rhythmic activity are similar to those used by Edward T. Cone in his article entitled ‘On Derivation: Syntax and Rhetoric.’⁷⁷

After clearly labelling all the rhythmic activity the analysis moves on to the next stage; that of examining the functioning roles of the primary rhythmic motifs. It is at this stage that the terms static and dynamic are introduced. In terms of language, the term dynamic is something similar to the term employed by Hugo Riemann (1849–1919) in his theory of musical rhythm. In his treatise ‘*Musikalische Agogik und Dynamik* published in Hamburg in 1884’, Riemann

⁷⁷ See Edward T. Cone, ‘On Derivation: Syntax and Rhetoric’, *Music Analysis*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, October 1987), pp. 237–255.

uses the terms *dynamic* and *agogic*.⁷⁸ ‘Riemann’s initial model is based...on the gradually changing intensity of two or three tones grouped into a *metrical motive*.’⁷⁹ His use of the term ‘dynamic’ describes *dynamic shading* which is ‘the most important feature of a metrical motive.’⁸⁰ Riemann ‘introduces the concept of *agogic* accent — the minute durational extension of an individual note — to differentiate, for example a 3/4 meter from a 6/8 meter.’⁸¹

There exists some relationship, although not a particularly strong one, between Riemann’s concept of ‘dynamic’ and this analysis’ concept of the same term (which will be defined later on). They both describe the character of a metric motive (to use one of Riemann’s terms) but where Riemann’s ‘is clearly a theory of musical performance, one rooted in a Romantic aesthetic of ultra-expressivity’⁸² this analysis is concerned primarily on the activity and behaviour of the rhythmic motif, without explicit or direct reference to performance.

The crux of this analysis is simply thus: that there are a limited number of rhythmic ideas present in each individual piece belonging to each set of works in Alkan’s music for organ/pedal-piano. The way in which they are used and re-used and in what combinations, is what makes his music and his particular style of composition worthy of exploration. It is to be proven that each set of works uses

⁷⁸ Ivan F. Waldbauer, Hugo Riemann, ‘Riemann’s Periodization Revisited and Revised’, *Journal of Music Theory*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Yale: Duke University Press, Autumn 1989), pp. 333–391, p. 335.

⁷⁹ William E. Caplin. ‘Theories of Musical Rhythm in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’ *The Cambridge History of Western Music Theory*, ed. Thomas Christensen, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 684.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* p. 684.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* p. 685.

⁸² *Ibid.* p. 684.

a particular rhythmic motif or organisation, unifying the individual pieces that make the set.

The fundamental criteria involved for the selection of rhythmic motifs is repetition. In order for a specific rhythmic grouping to be considered as a motif, it must appear in the same set of organised note values (the fundamental motif that is), and be used for at least an entire section of a piece.

After the dominating rhythmic motifs have been firstly identified the analysis moves forward by trying to establish the *nature* of the resulting dominant rhythmic motifs. It is here that each motif's functioning role is examined contextually within the piece allowing them to be categorised as being static, dynamic, latently static or latently dynamic. It is at this stage that consideration must be given to the harmonic palette and tonality of each individual piece observing such points as intervallic importance, modulation cycles, possible compositional influences, structure and style. This act helps to further justify the categorising of each motif as being static or dynamic.

There are other factors that also need to be considered relating to both the rhythmic realm and the harmonic realm. Observing the placement of accent and stress on motivic movement (and seen within the overall structure of each composition), which will be referred to as 'Metric Flow', requires the consideration of melody/pitch and harmony. At this point it is worth mentioning

Cooper and Meyer's insight and concerns on the problematic phenomenon that is the musical *accent*. They say:

Though the concept of accent is obviously of central importance in the theory and analysis of rhythm, an ultimate definition in terms of psychological causes does not seem possible with our present knowledge. That is, one cannot at present state unequivocally what makes one tone seem accented and another not. [...] In short, since accent seems to be the product of a number of variables whose interaction is not precisely known, it must for our purposes remain a basic, axiomatic concept which is understandable as an experience but undefined in terms of causes.⁸³

In his article entitled 'Some Problems in Rhythmic Theory and Analysis', Peter Westergaard admires Cooper and Meyer's approach to the analysis of tonal rhythm. However, he criticises them for 'failing to define adequate analytic criteria for the location of the accent,'⁸⁴ and uses the quote above as a reference. He also identifies a further apparent failing by Cooper and Meyer insofar as they fail 'to consider the rhythmic structure of polyphony'.⁸⁵

Westergaard's proposal to remedy these apparent failures is outlined as follows:

The first failure might be remedied by a study of rhythmic detail which, instead of assuming the bar lines of the printed page, examines the interplay of notated compositional elements with the unnotated means the performer uses to project accent placement. [...] The second failure might be remedied if someone were to act on Allen Forte's suggestion for 'constructing a theory of rhythm for tonal music'.⁸⁶

⁸³ Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard B. Meyer, *The Rhythmic Structure of Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 7.

⁸⁴ Peter Westergaard, 'Some Problems in Rhythmic Theory and Analysis', *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 1 No. 1 (Washington: Perspectives of New Music, Autumn 1962), pp. 180–191, p. 183.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 183.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* p. 183 – the statement in quotation marks is from Forte's article on Schenker published in the *Journal of Music Theory* April 1959, cited in Peter Westergaard's article.

It is, perhaps, Westergaard's latter suggestion, regarding Allen Forte's idea, which proves to be more valuable for this present analysis. It conceivably qualifies the approach taken herein, that it is first necessary to *separate* rhythmic and tonal entities, viewing them as autonomous bodies, before considering the effects that each has on the other or, in more analytical terms, their imposed juxtaposition.

The classification of Metric Flow as being either positive or negative is similar conceptually to that which is expressed in Moritz Hauptmann's *Die Natur der Harmonik und der Musik*.⁸⁷ While Hauptmann's usage of the terms positive and negative is an attempt at providing analytical continuity between the metric and harmonic components of his treatise, this analysis uses the same terms to describe the rhythmic movement of the music in terms of its accent and beat-stresses, both tonally and rhythmically, in light of the governing time signature.

Steve Larson, in an article entitled 'Rhythmic Displacement in the Music of Bill Evans', outlines a hypothesis concerning Rhythmic Displacement. This too is similar to Metric Flow. Larson's concept deals with polymeter and the juxtaposition of different meters in music (in this particular article it is jazz). If the polymetric sections align so that both rhythms enforce the downbeat he calls

⁸⁷ Robert Morgan outlines Hauptmann's use of these terms in his article 'The Theory and Analysis of Tonal Rhythm' (p. 438). Here he states, 'The words "positive" and "negative" reflect Hauptmann's attempt to derive both his harmonic and metrical system from the overtone series: the positive series gives rise to the major triad, the negative — or 'undertone' — series to the minor.' (p. 438).

this ‘measure-preserving’ polymeter, if this does not happen, he calls it ‘tactus-preserving’ polymeter.⁸⁸

Considering both the contemporary and the early ideas surrounding metric movement, the following defines Metric Flow in respect to the present analyses’ usage. Separating Metric Flow into two categories allows for clear definitions and these can be seen in 2.5.5 and 2.5.6 below.

2.5.1 Static Rhythm: A Definition

The rhythm of a piece or certain section of a piece will be said to be ‘static’ if a rhythmic motif or line remains constant throughout the piece, or section thereof, never gaining rhythmic dominance or a level of rhythmic independence. Such rhythmic gestures will be said to have a static quality; repeated notes (i.e., repeated quaver movement, repeated chordal movement etc.) irrespective of their function (i.e., as melody or accompaniment).

2.5.2 Dynamic Rhythm: A Definition

The rhythm of a piece or certain section of a piece will be said to be ‘dynamic’ if a rhythmic motif or line incorporates varying rhythmic activity, achieving rhythmic dominance throughout the piece or section thereof. Such rhythmic gestures will be said to have a dynamic quality; lines which make use of dotted

⁸⁸ For more on Larson’s Rhythmic Displacement see his article ‘Rhythmic Displacement in the Music of Bill Evans’, *Structure and Meaning in Tonal Music: Festschrift in Honor of Carl Schachter*, ed. David Gagné and Poundie Burstein (Pendragon Press, 2006), pp. 103–122.

rhythms; lines that incorporate the use of various note values, either chordal or solo, irrespective of their function (i.e., as melody or accompaniment).

2.5.3 Latently-Static Rhythm: A Definition

The rhythm of a piece or certain section thereof will be said to be 'latently-static' if a rhythmic motif or line that is fundamentally dynamic has a static tonal expression throughout the piece or section thereof. That is, it indulges (partially or wholly) in repetitions of the same *tonality*.

2.5.4 Latently-Dynamic Rhythm: A Definition

The rhythm of a piece or certain section thereof will be said to be 'latently-dynamic' if a rhythmic motif or line that is fundamentally static has a dynamic tonal expression throughout the piece or section thereof. That is, a static rhythm that is not indulging in repetitions of the same *tonality*.

2.5.5 Metric Flow: A Definition

Metric Flow refers to the succession of beats, in a composition, or section thereof, and how they are accented in relation to the governing time signature. It may be Positive or Negative.

2.5.6 Positive Metric Flow: A Definition

Positive Metric Flow refers to a piece of music, or a passage thereof, whose underlying rhythmic activity is enforcing the beat-stresses of the governing time signature.

2.5.7 Negative Metric Flow: A Definition

Negative Metric Flow refers to a piece of music, or a passage thereof, whose underlying rhythmic activity is exhibiting a persistent, but not necessarily exclusive, emphasis/stress on the weaker beats of the governing time signature.

Having already addressed the important role repetition plays in music, it must now be discussed in relation to this analysis. In keeping in line with the other components of this analysis, repetition will be defined under two main headings: Micro Repetition and Macro Repetition. These headings can be broken down further, namely into Partial Micro Repetition and Partial Macro Repetition.

2.5.8 Micro Repetition: A Definition

Micro Repetition will be said to have occurred if a gesture of not more than a bar's length is repeated exactly with respect to both rhythm and tonality.

2.5.9 Macro Repetition: A Definition

Macro Repetition will be said to have occurred if a larger section, or phrase, or motif, of more than one bar's duration, is repeated exactly with respect to both rhythm and tonality. Macro Repetition also incorporates the non-usage of repeat signs; where sections of a piece are *written* repeats. Macro Repetition also takes into consideration modulations; where the new tonality must follow the original identically.

2.5.10 Partial Micro Repetition: A Definition

Partial Micro Repetition will be said to have occurred if a gesture of not more than one bar's duration is repeated rhythmically but not tonally or tonally but not rhythmically.

2.5.11 Partial Macro Repetition: A Definition

Partial Macro Repetition will be said to have occurred if a larger section, or phrase, or motif, of more than one bar's duration, is repeated rhythmically but not tonally or tonally but not rhythmically

2.5.12 Tonal Expression: A Definition

Having first separated the two elements of Rhythm and Tonality to identify the dominant rhythmic motifs it is then possible to see how each individual rhythmic motif is expressed tonally throughout a given composition. A rhythmic motif, therefore, can have many tonal expressions as a composition develops.

2.5.13 Elided Cadence: A Definition

An Elided Cadence is a cadence whereby the chord of the antecedent ends one phrase or section while the chord of the consequent begins a new phrase or section. While the movement from the chord of the antecedent to the chord of the consequent is idiomatically cadential, the primary function of the two chords is to end one section (the function of the first chord) and begin another (the function of the second chord). An example of this can be seen in Example 3.11.4.

2.6 Conclusion

The analysis of rhythm is a difficult undertaking: the various problems discussed within this chapter are testament to that. Recognising the important contributions made by past theorists facilitates the construction of a balanced, well-informed analytical paradigm. This, then, allows for a different approach to analysis to be undertaken, drawing on the findings and methods of others and incorporating them into the outlined model, expanding on the original ideas and taking them in a

different direction. As with all analyses, the experiences of the past aid the development of present-day (and future) analytical and methodological structures.

The analytical model put forward in this chapter draws not only on contemporary models but also on those from previous centuries; for vocabulary, for method, for consistency and for continuity. It is in the application or testing of this analytical model that its true validity can be proved. The following chapters present an analysis of three sets of works by Alkan using the analytical model detailed in this chapter.

Chapter 3

An Analysis of the Op. 64 *Prières*

3.1 Introduction

The Op. 64 *Prières* present a set of compositions that illustrate Alkan's compositional diversity. This chapter will focus on an in-depth analysis that will explore the compositional components that give each individual 'Prayer' its structural frame while also identifying certain themes and motifs that are idiosyncratic to Alkan's work. Emerging from this analysis, it will be shown that there are a limited number of motives that the composer relies upon: one in particular appears over and over again, and as such becomes the unifying gesture that justifies the inclusion of all thirteen pieces in this set.

Alkan's use of harmony, his treatment of internal tonal activity and the way in which he presents motivic material will be discussed in relation to each individual piece examined in this set. The relationship that emerges between rhythm and harmony in these pieces shows Alkan to be a careful composer, always in control of these musical elements.

The primary aim of the analysis is to identify and classify the dominant rhythmic motifs present in each individual piece of this set. It will be shown that this classification of rhythm as being static, dynamic, latently static or latently

dynamic is reflected in the tonal expression of the motif. This becomes an important feature of all the pieces that form the basis of this analysis. It will also be shown that juxtaposition of the rhythmic motifs in the final stages of a piece serves as Alkan's most notable way of unifying the overall structure of the composition.

With regard to the division of a piece into sections, the following should be considered. The term 'development section' – for pieces that are clearly not in sonata form – is not relating to the form of a given piece: instead it is merely referencing the section in which material/motifs that were presented in the opening section of a piece are developed. For clarity, these sections will be referred to as 'developmental sections.'

3.2 *Prière* No. 1

The piece is in a quasi-antiphonal style, with a solo statement being answered by a chordal reply. From the opening bars of this piece, Alkan's penchant for tonal ambiguity is exposed. The tonic key is G major, yet the opening solo statement is in the key of the subdominant minor with the chordal answer in the tonic key (this will be discussed in more detail further on). The plagal cadence that is therefore implied is a suitable opening progression in the first piece of this set considering their title: *Prières*.

The piece then modulates to the relative minor (e minor), with a solo statement in e minor being answered by the chordal reply in the dominant major (B major). The remaining antiphonal motifs are then based on the harmonic progression iv – V in e minor. The return to the tonic key is grounded by repeated perfect fifths in the pedal-line starting on the tonic note using the rhythmic pattern of the previous answer sections from the antiphonal opening.

This developmental section brings together the two motifs from the antiphonal section and it soon becomes apparent that there are only two main rhythmic features to this piece: the rhythm from the solo statements and the rhythm from the chordal reply. There are further modulations in the developmental section, albeit sometimes very brief, but the main modulation here is to the subdominant (signified by the presence of an F natural in bar 39), which in turn serves as the basis for a plagal cadence to start the coda.

This first *Prière* should not form the basis of any judgement on Alkan's composition style. It would appear, when putting it in the context of the remaining twelve, that it is introductory by nature. This is also seen in Alkan's other sets of compositions. Alkan's compositional style can occasionally appear to be transparent and it is sometimes the most fundamental and even obvious of harmonic and rhythmic options which he employs that gives his music that 'Alkanian' feel. He uses simple compositional techniques in extraordinary ways to achieve ambiguity in his music and the first *Prière* is testament to this.

The use of the interval of a third, both major and minor, linearly and vertically is a main feature of this piece. The piece opens with the interval of a linear major third. This alone bears little significance, or so it would seem, but in relation to the key signature (G major) it has important consequences. Firstly the key which is implied in the opening bars is c minor, the subdominant minor of G major, yet we as listeners are fooled somewhat into thinking that the opening three notes of the piece (G, E flat and C) form the notes of the tonic triad.

With the first statement of the tonic key we are again fooled into thinking that a modulation has occurred, when in-fact it is merely the introduction of the tonic key. This clever idea of disguising keys is a feature of Alkan's music and is particularly used in Op. 64 *Prières* and is clearly shown in Example 3.2.1.

Example 3.2.1: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 1 bars 1–6

The musical score for Example 3.2.1 consists of three staves. The top two staves are labeled 'Mains.' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Pieds.'. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo marking is 'Andantino'. The Mains part has rests in the first two bars and then plays chords in the last two bars, marked 'Dolce e Sostenuto'. The Pieds part plays a melodic line in the first two bars, marked 'Mezzo voce e Sostenuto', and then rests in the last two bars.

The bracketed sections of Example 3.2.1 outline the two main themes that dominate *Prière* No. 1. The first is a monophonic statement, which incorporates different note values and dotted rhythms; the second is a homophonic answering statement that is dominated by quaver and crotchet note values. From this, it is possible to reduce these two themes into their simplest rhythmic expressions as follows:

The first rhythmic motif, motif X, is dynamic, using various note values and a dotted rhythm. The second motif is static as it has less internal rhythmic activity (than the first motif) and its tonal expression is also static (proven by the use of a repeated note for its duration, shown in Example 3.2.1 above). These motifs form the rhythmic basis of this piece and the way in which they interact with each other is a key factor in illustrating Alkan's compositional technique. Each of the motifs above represents a full statement.

From the example above it is immediately possible to see that repetition plays an important role in this particular piece. Both macro and micro repetition are displayed, and both will be discussed further on.

The time signature of 3/4 is obvious from the way in which beats are accented in the opening twelve bars. After bar 12 there is a false sense of 4/4, even though the time signature has not changed, and bar 16 opens with a dot and not a note in the pedal part. The emphasis is clearly on preserving the melodic line and rhythmic contour, with each phrase encased between thin double bar lines. By avoiding the obvious tying of the crotchet to a quaver over the barline, Alkan also retains the original and visual identity of the rhythmic motif. It is perhaps this over emphasis on preserving the visual element of the melodic phrase that causes the rhythmic metre to be off-set; this being a by-product of having each phrase enclosed within its own set of double bar lines. Example 3.2.2 is an exact replica of the published score:

Example 3.2.2: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 1 bars 13–17

The musical score for Example 3.2.2 consists of two staves: 'Mains.' (Upper) and 'Pieds.' (Lower). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The 'Mains.' part is written in treble clef and contains chords and chordal textures. The 'Pieds.' part is written in bass clef and contains a melodic line. The score is divided into two systems by a double bar line. The first system covers bars 13-15, and the second system covers bars 16-17. The 'Mains.' part has markings 'Sempre.' and 'Dolce.' indicating tempo and dynamics. The 'Pieds.' part has a dynamic marking 'p' (piano).

The rhythmic instability that is felt here is partially resolved at bars 20 and 21, but the succeeding section negates this resolution and there is a strange sense of poly-rhythmic activity taking place. The familiarity of the beat-stresses of motif Y that were felt in the opening bars of the piece is now distorted in the pedal line. The apparent diminution of the motif aids in creating this poly-rhythmic effect – the repetitions of double-quaver-crotchet in the bass allude to 2/4. The following example illustrates these points:

Example 3.2.3: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 1 bars 22–25

The musical score for Example 3.2.3 consists of three systems. The top system shows the right hand (treble clef) and left hand (bass clef) with the instruction "Dolce e Sosten:". The middle system shows the left hand with the instruction "Sostenuteo". The bottom system shows the left hand with the instruction "p Sempre coll'8va bassa". The music features a complex interplay of rhythms between the manual parts and the pedal line.

From the example above the perceived poly-rhythmic activity can be seen between the bass line and the manual parts. Its perceived occurrence is resulting from the emphasis that is placed on the crotchet in the pedal part, which falls in a beat-pattern of 2-1-3-2-1-3. This dichotomy between a positive-metric flow, seen in the manual part, versus a negative-metric flow, seen in the pedal line, adds impetus to the music. It also portrays Alkan as a composer who was willing to experiment with rhythm by introducing conflict.

Both motifs are first introduced in the antiphonal opening, which is twenty-one bars in duration and follows the pattern of solo statement with chordal answer. The first is part of the solo statement, melodic and unaccompanied (dynamic); the second is from the answering phrase which is chordal and melodically simplistic (static). It becomes apparent then that the main rhythmic movement of the piece is two-fold and as such the tracing of the two motifs through the first piece is made easier.

In the developmental section, starting at bar 23, vertical rhythmic juxtaposition occurs with both motifs occurring simultaneously for a brief period (two bars duration). The first motif is used in the contrapuntal section of the development, which is reminiscent of the melodic solo statements of the opening. It is linked to the piece via the pedal line of the bar preceding it, which uses the same rhythm. The layering effect of this short contrapuntal section (bars 34-39) seems to act as an introduction to the climax of the piece. This is achieved firstly by omitting the pedal part, and secondly by the upward direction of the harmonic progressions. The contrapuntal section ends on the chord of V7d (in C major) which resolves to the chord of I in C major at bar 40, implying a perfect cadence. However, the climax that is implied at bar 40 is false with the chord of C major being repeated, while the pedal plays an ascending melody.

Example 3.2.4: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 1 bars 33–34 and 39–40

The image displays two musical excerpts from Alkan's 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 1. The first excerpt (bars 33-34) shows a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass staff. The treble staff features a series of chords and a melodic line, while the bass staff has a simple accompaniment. The second excerpt (bars 39-40) shows a similar piano accompaniment, but with a more complex melodic line in the treble staff and a more active bass line. Both excerpts are in G major, as indicated by the one sharp in the key signature.

Linear juxtaposition of the two rhythmic motifs occurs in the ascending melodic line of the pedal part. This four-bar phrase uses the second motif melodically (in a solo-style statement) for the first time throughout the *Prière*. The repeated chord of C major eventually implies a plagal cadence in the tonic key (G major), thus marking the beginning of the final section of the piece, starting at bar 44.

The versatility with which Alkan treats the second rhythmic motif merits further discussion. From the beginning of the piece it is used in terms of chordal progression, with both hands playing the same (or almost the same) line an octave apart. This is not to say that these sections, from the beginning and right through the piece, are void of melody. The melody in these sections is simple if at times a little ambiguous. The repeated note D – which is common between the two chords – is kept in the same part with the remaining two notes moving, for the most part, in thirds. This creates a duet affect and can be clearly seen in the following example.

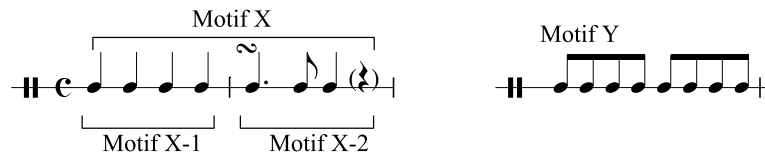
Example 3.2.5: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 1 bars 4–6

The bracketed sections show the note common between the two chords kept in the same voice, and because the left hand part is playing the same line an octave lower, we get a clear sense of what is melody and what is supportive harmony. The tonic pedal, over which the harmonic progression I – V(7) – I is being played, adds to the static nature of this rhythmic motif and along with the note common between the two chords being repeated in the same voice, we get a sense of being ‘stationary’ perhaps imitating or reflecting the stillness needed for sincere Prayer.

3.3 *Prière* No. 2

The dominating compositional feature of this piece is its arrangement in a melody-reliant homophonic style.

There are two main rhythmic features that dominate this *Prière*, and they are outlined as follows:



The first motif displays a dynamic usage because it has rhythmic variety. This motif is used in the melodic line of the piece. The decision to divide motif X into sub-motifs is important, as Alkan makes use of each (albeit for a short number of bars) independently.

The second motif, which is used in the accompanying part of the composition, exhibits a static quality as it displays no rhythmic variation. The pedal line in this piece has its own rhythmic independence, and has supremacy in dictating the harmonic pacing of the composition. The following example shows the first four bars of *Prière No. 2*. The clearly marked phrases in the right hand part, coupled with the instruction to play the line *dolce et cantabile*, clarifies the melodic role that it is to serve throughout the piece. The use of dotted rhythms, along with ornaments (more specifically the turn), further clarifies its function as a dynamically-rhythmic line. The repetitive nature of the accompanying quaver line qualifies it as being rhythmically static.

Example 3.3.1: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 2 bars 1–4

Mains. *Moderato*
Dolce et Cantabile

Pieds. *p, e Legato*

L'8ve bass solamente

To further support the distinction between strict homophony and a melody-reliant homophony, a closer examination of Example 3.3.1 is necessary. Strict homophonic writing moves homo-rhythmically, utilising the same note values in all parts of the composition — an example of this can be seen in Example 3.3.2 below. The main difference between strict homophonic writing and melody-reliant homophonic writing is the emphasis that is placed on the melodic line. If the melody in the above example were absent, the remaining parts would make little harmonic sense. In the example below however, if the upper notes of the chords were absent, a secondary melody would be perceived — this due to the homorhythmic movement that is affiliated with strict homophony.

Intervallic importance in this composition is centred on the consonant intervals of a third and a sixth. The accompanying part, at times, hints at a secondary melody, partly caused by the harmonic palette of this *Prière*, which will be discussed later.

In *Prière* No. 2 the dependence or reliance on a clear melody is even more exaggerated due to the fact that most of the composition is written in only three parts. Approximately half way through the piece, however, there appears a six-bar passage or episode that seems to have no connection with the material that has gone before it. It is strictly homophonic (using minim chords) and presents a ‘liturgical’ quality to the harmony. The rhythmic outline of this episode is static: all parts move at the same time and use the same note values and this is shown in Example 3.3.2.

Example 3.3.2: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 2 bars 24–29

The musical score for Example 3.3.2 consists of three staves. The top two staves are piano accompaniment, and the bottom staff is a single melodic line. The music is in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The tempo and dynamics are marked *f, e Sostenuto* and *Sempre f, e Sostenuto*. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and single notes in the left hand. The melodic line consists of single notes in the bass clef. The music is strictly homophonic and static, with all parts moving at the same time and using the same note values (minims).

The difference between the music illustrated in Example 3.3.1 and the music shown in Example 3.3.2 is obvious. They could be from two different pieces: the only thing that is common between them is the key signature and even this is

uncertain, as it would appear at Example 3.3.2 that the key of F-sharp minor is being alluded to. It breaks away from the flowing quaver rhythm and even reduces its melodic line to single repetitions of the three notes F-sharp F-sharp G-sharp.

After this brief episode the music reverts back to its original construction but with one difference. Until this point the music has been written in three parts, but seven bars after the episode a fourth voice is introduced to the accompanying left-hand part. It shadows the melody in consonant intervals without discrediting the existing melodic line. The pedal line too has had an extra note added and, for the final seventeen bars of the composition, the interval of the (tonic) perfect fifth grounds this final section in the home key. As a direct result of this, this entire section of seventeen bars can be considered to be an elongated cadential pattern. In the manual part, the fundamental harmonic outline is various statements of the progression V – I.

Repetition is also a key element of this composition. Micro repetition and partial-micro repetition are seen in the way the original motif is repeated (both partially and in full) throughout the composition. Because this piece is through-composed (considered such because it is monothematic, with the exception of the six-bar episode) there is no solid instance of macro repetition. The developmental aspect concerning motif X, by subdividing it into two sub-motifs, demonstrates Alkan's ability to be concise with thematic material. The following example illustrates the sub-motivic divisions of motif X:

Example 3.3.3: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 2 bars 35–38

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (bars 35-36) is in treble clef, marked *Dolce.* and *pp*. It features a melodic line with a fermata over the first note of bar 35 and a slur over the first two notes of bar 36. Boxed notes highlight the first two notes of bar 35 and the first note of bar 36. The second system (bars 37-38) continues the melodic line in the treble clef, with a slur over the first two notes of bar 37 and a slur over the first two notes of bar 38. Boxed notes highlight the first two notes of bar 37 and the first two notes of bar 38. The third system (bars 39-40) shows a constant bass line of two octaves below middle C, marked with a piano (*pp*) dynamic.

The boxed notes in the above example clearly illustrate the use of both X sub-motifs.

Throughout this piece there is a consistent emphasis on the beat-stresses of the governing time signature. This enforcing of the time signature creates a positive-metric flow, which keeps the rhythmic language of this composition stable.

The second *Prière* is similar to the first in its structure. The thematic elements of both are concise, with all aspects of development being very tightly contained. Alkan himself, through these two pieces, illustrates the two main types of homophonic writing. It is also apparent from the first two *Prières* that Alkan can make small-scale structures work: using small motifs and developing them in subtle ways. There is always a sense of motivic familiarity, irrespective of the original motives having been altered and developed.

3.4 *Prière* No. 3

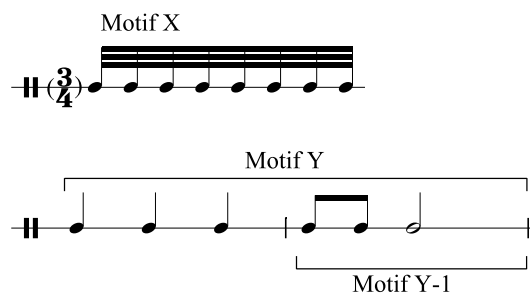
The way in which *Prière* No. 3 is structured is yet another good example of Alkan's homophonic writing. The use of oscillating demisemiquavers creates a haunting hypnotic tremolo effect which adds a certain tension to the composition, particularly when it is echoing parts of the melodic line. The unrelenting rhythmic pattern of the accompaniment is in direct contrast to the slow and steady movement of the melodic line.

In this piece, Alkan gives new dominance to the pedals by assigning the melodic line to them. The pedals are no longer playing a supportive role to the harmony, nor are they the lowest notes heard, but are instead the focus of the composition. The left hand part of the piece is playing two octaves lower than the pedal part, so the emphasis is on the technical elements necessary to render a coherent melodic line played with the feet.

Written in bass clef in all parts for the duration of the piece, this composition illustrates the important role a purposely-restricted range can play in exploiting the lower tone and timbre of the instrument, be it organ or pedal-piano. It is clearly mono-thematic with the pedals supplying the melody for the duration of the piece. The use of rests in the accompanying part in the final stage of this composition has a twofold effect on the tone and the structure of the piece. The relentless oscillations are stopped abruptly and are instead used to punctuate the melodic line: an effect where the silences become as strong and as necessary as

the musical notes of the melodic line. When they first appear, the rests add to the climax of the composition, by allowing the melody to be heard uninterrupted. In the final bars, where they are combined with oscillations of the tonic chord (E major), the rests add a sense of resolution to the piece.

This piece is again composed in a melody-reliant homophonic style. There are two main rhythmic features in this piece, both of which can be expressed in terms of a static and dynamic rhythm. The two are as follows:



Although the first motif contains a lot of movement, it is a static rhythm. It is the only rhythm to be used by the accompanying keyboard part — continuous oscillations of demisemiquavers. The second motif is a dynamic rhythm, as it contains rhythmic variation. The opening bars of *Prière* No. 3 illustrate the novel use of this tremolo-like accompaniment against the steady movement of melody and are illustrated at Example 3.4.1.

Example 3.4.1: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 3 bars 1–4

Poco adagio

Mains. *p*

Pieds.

L'8va bassa solamente sin'al fine

Legato

p Molto espressivo

The direction to play the melody ‘Molto espressivo’ with a legato touch affirms the importance of the melodic line. Its solid movement, contrasting directly with the impatient undulations of the accompaniment, creates a new awareness of the melodic idiom that is being employed. The decision to include a Y sub-motif, motif Y-1, is significant as it is the second most used rhythmic configuration in this composition. It has a subtle developmental aspect attached to it also, with Alkan introducing a grace note to it as well as expanding the quavers to a triplet in another instance. The following example illustrates this:

Example 3.4.2: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 3 bars 3, 5 and 7

Bar 3

Musical notation for Bar 3, showing three staves in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The top staff contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The middle staff contains a dense texture of sixteenth notes. The bottom staff contains a simple bass line with a few notes.

Bar 5

Musical notation for Bar 5, showing three staves in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The top staff contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The middle staff contains a dense texture of sixteenth notes. The bottom staff contains a simple bass line with a few notes.

Bar 7

Musical notation for Bar 7, showing three staves in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The top staff contains a melodic line with eighth notes. The middle staff contains a dense texture of sixteenth notes. The bottom staff contains a simple bass line with a few notes, including a triplet of eighth notes marked with a '3' below it.

From the example above the various ways which Alkan treats the sub-motif Y-1 become very clear.

The constant micro repetition that is evident in the manuals dominates the composition. The melodic pedal line also restricts itself to using note values found in motif Y (with the exception of the triplet first seen in bar 7). The underlying pattern is always based on the second motif. Macro and partial macro repetition are present, with the rhythm of the first four bars repeated almost identically in the succeeding four bars.

Despite the hypnotic tremolo effect employed by the manuals, the overall rhythmic pattern of the piece adheres to the governing time signature, securing a positive-metric flow throughout the piece.

The ending of the piece in the key of the tonic major is significant in the overall context of this set of works entitled *Prières*; the soft major tonality conjuring a sense of “prayer heard” or perhaps “prayer answered”. The importance of the key change to tonic major in the final bar illustrates Alkan’s awareness of baroque idioms, and the use of this *Tierce de Picardie* (of sorts) sees Alkan working old compositional (and tonal) idioms in new ways. The staticism that is associated with this piece, both rhythmically and tonally is carried through to the very end. The melodic line in the pedals is liquidated into repeated statements of the note B.

Through this piece Alkan demonstrates his ability to deliver a coherent composition within a very restricted range. The most obvious, and most used, intervals seen in this piece are the consonant intervals of a third and a sixth.

3.5 Prière No. 4

This 'Prayer' is in a quasi-antiphonal style, incorporating a number of different rhythms and three time signatures. The classification of the rhythmic themes into motifs is a little more complex in this piece.

The first motif to be identified is X, and it also has two derivatives associated with it; X1 and X2. These are outlined below as follows:

Motif X



Motif X1



Motif X2



Motif X is a dynamic rhythm, despite the static nature of the harmony that surrounds its usage. The opening five bars of the piece are all grounded on the tonic chord of B-flat major. The two derivative motifs of X, motif X1 and motif X2, are again rhythmically dynamic with the inclusion of various note values and triplets. The dotted rhythm is made more effective due to the abrupt modulation to g minor via the chord of the mediant major (in the tonic key of B-flat major), D major.

By way of clarifying the decision to class the two motifs X1 and X2 above as derivatives of X the following example should be considered:

Example 3.5.1: Alkan 13 Prières Op. 64 No 4 bars 1–9

The relationship between the three X motifs is evident in the way in which they are used, and the tonal structures that are employed around them. The common denominator between the motifs is the use of a repeated note (the pedal note in bars 1–5 and the repeated soprano note in bars 6–9) that adds a sense of unity to the overall harmonic organization of these opening nine bars — despite the changing of tonality from tonic to relative minor, and the changing of time signature from duple to triple. The notes asterisked in the box above show Alkan ‘fleshing-out’ the rhythmic values, the dotted crotched being divided into three quavers etc., while the tonal expression remains basically the same with the main

accents falling in the same places structurally. This illustrates Alkan's ability to be concise when developing his motivic material. Rhythmically, the four-quaver grouping that appears in motif X and motif X2 gives these derivatives another unifying dimension. These characteristics, both tonal and rhythmic, combine to reinforce the premise that motifs X, X1 and X2 all stem from the same motivic gene-pool.

The following table illustrates the appearance of all motifs in this piece while also outlining sectional durations and prevailing keys and/or harmony. This table also makes it easier to identify the sub-sections, particularly those from the opening section of the piece that have a change of time signature.

Table 1: Sectional Divisions illustrating Time Signature Changes, Motifs and Prevailing Harmony in *Prière* No. 4, Op. 64

<i>Sectional Title</i>	<i>Bar Numbers</i>	<i>Time Signature</i>	<i>Motif(s) Used</i>	<i>Prevailing Harmony (chord/bass note)</i>
A	1-5	2/2	X	B-flat Maj
	6-9	3/4	X1 & X2	g min/D bass
	10-14	2/2	X	G Maj
	15-22	3/4	X1 & X2	A-flat Maj/E-flat bass → b-flat min/F bass ending with a chord of F7 with an Aug 5th
	23-26	2/2	X	B-flat Maj/F bass
B	27-53	4/4	X3 & Y	B-flat Maj (bars 27-37)
				F Maj (bars 38-40)
				b-flat min via F Maj/E-flat (bars 41-45)
				F major with chromatic alterations ending on a chord of F7 with an Aug 5th (bars 46-53)
C	54-57	2/2	X	B-flat Maj
	58-74		Z with two anticipatory statements of X at bars 64 & 65	G min/D bass (bars 58-60)
			F Maj (bars 62-65)	
			V7 in E-flat Maj (bars 66-70)	
			V in B-flat Maj	
	75-End (bar 83)		Juxtaposition of X and Z with liquidation of motif X	B-flat Maj

Alkan ends section A and section B with a statement of the same chord, F7 with an augmented 5th. The following example illustrates the final bars of section A:

Example 3.5.2: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 4 bars 18–22

The musical score shows five measures of music. The right hand (treble clef) begins with a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a half note, and then a series of eighth notes with slurs. The left hand (bass clef) features a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a series of eighth notes. A 'Poco cal:' marking appears in the fourth measure of the right hand. The bottom staff is empty.

The succeeding section contains the remaining rhythmic motifs which are outlined as shown:

Motif X3: A quarter note followed by three eighth notes in 4/4 time.
 Motif Y: A sixteenth note followed by six eighth notes in a 7/8 time signature.
 Motif Z: A quarter note followed by three eighth notes.

Motif Y is dynamic, appearing as a pedal solo, and dominates the rhythmic plane of this new 4/4 section. The motif's rhythmic dynamism is mirrored in the tonal plane with its tonal expression also dynamic. Motif X3, another derivative of motif X from the opening section, supports motif Y in an accompanying role. This motif is static, there is no deviation from the quaver movement, nor is there any great melodic significance centred around its usage. These two rhythmic gestures are used in the developmental section of the piece, which displays a

‘melody and accompaniment’ style, or more correctly a melody-reliant homophony.

The real development occurs in the pedal line, which up until this point has been playing only repeated notes; exhibiting a static quality both rhythmically and tonally. Shifting the melodic line to the pedal part of the composition emphasises Alkan’s ability to elevate the pedal line from merely being a harmonic support to the existing harmonic progressions to playing an integral part of the melodic curve. It is in the developmental section that a clever display of melody-reliant homophonic writing is demonstrated.

The combination of various note values in the different parts, heightened by the use of a continuous trill in the right hand keyboard part, contribute to creating a blur of both sound and motion. The trill is the fastest moving component of this section and is in the upper register of the instrument (be it organ or pedal piano) followed by the slower repeated quaver chords in the mid section with the melodic pedal line, playing notes from the lower register, using larger note values thus being the slowest moving line of the development. This dissimulation of motion from fastest to slowest, top to bottom becomes a feature of the Op. 64 *Prières*.

The example below shows just how motifs Y (in the pedal line, starting with the triplet) and X3 (in the left hand part) are used in the context of the developmental

section of the piece and also illustrates this dissimilation of motion from the upper voice to the lower voice.

Example 3.5.3: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 4 bars 30–31

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, showing a melodic line with trills (tr) and a dynamic marking of *(f, et brillant.)*. The middle staff is in bass clef, showing a rhythmic accompaniment of chords with a dynamic marking of *(f, et sostenu.)* and the instruction *Sempre 8va bassa solamente*. The bottom staff is also in bass clef, showing a bass line with a sixteenth-note figure and a dynamic marking of *(Fort et majestueux)*.

From the example above it can be seen that a departure has been made regarding the rhythmic and tonal texture outlined in the opening bars of this *Prière*. The time signature has changed from 2/2 to 4/4 which is interesting as the division of beat-stresses in the bar has now doubled. However, this may be lost in performance despite the instruction to ‘*C’est-à-dire une mesure double de la précédente*’.¹ This behaviour again raises the need to address the notion of ‘visual versus aural’. This will be referred to throughout these analysis chapters, and will be expanded on further in the final chapter, chapter 6.

The final motif, motif Z, has characteristics of both static and dynamic rhythm. The rhythm itself possess a static quality as defined in chapter 2, however, in this case its function is dynamic, as it serves as a link-passage between section B and

¹ Charles V. Alkan: *13 Prières pour Orgue avec pédale oblige ou Piano à Clavier de Pédales ou Piano a 3 mains. Divisées en trios Suites. A la memoire de Pierre Érard. Op 64*, Richault Paris, 1866, p. 16

the final section, with the final section being in fact a coda. It can therefore be called a latently-dynamic rhythm: a static rhythm whose tonal expression can be considered dynamic.

The structural unity that is achieved in this particular piece can be marked out using the four rhythmic motifs that have been identified. The similarities between X, X1 and X2 rely on a rhythmic and tonal link; a repeated note (static rhythm and static tonality). Motifs Y and X3 dominate section B and are relying on each other for support in their various roles, while the juxtaposition of motif X and motif Z, used in the final phrase of the piece, brings the opening of the piece and the final coda together to further consolidate all elements of the composition as a unit.

Juxtaposition of motifs is a favoured method of Alkan's to bring unity to a composition. The following example illustrates the juxtaposition of motifs X and Z in the final phrases of the piece:

Example 3.5.4: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 4 bars 74–76

The musical score for Example 3.5.4 consists of two staves in 6/4 time. The right staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. It contains a sequence of notes with a dynamic marking of *ff*. A bracket above the staff identifies a specific rhythmic pattern as 'Motif X'. The left staff begins with a bass clef and the same key signature. It contains a sequence of notes with a dynamic marking of *sf* that transitions to *ff*. A bracket below the staff identifies a specific rhythmic pattern as 'Motif Z'. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a final 6/4 time signature.

The boxed notes in the example above help to illustrate Alkan's compositional tool of using tonality and/or rhythm to link two sections: the suggested chord of V ending the section using motif Z spanning durationally and tonally into the beginning of the coda with the juxtaposition of the motifs X and Z.

Throughout the entire piece, a positive metric flow prevails. This type of rhythmic organization helps to stabilise the music, with its continuously changing time signatures. The positive metric flow also helps to orientate the listener to the various sections' structural downbeats.

In this composition Alkan clearly marks himself as a composer that can weave a musical structure from tightly knit motivic structures. The closeness of the modulatory distance, with the presence of a Neapolitan modulation, also feeds in to this conciseness.

3.6 *Prière* No. 5

Alkan does not restrict the notion of antiphonal writing to solo statement versus chordal response and this is clearly shown in *Prière* No. 5. Here we see the emphasis is on exploiting the register of the instrument: pedal solo followed by a treble response which is in turn followed by a re-statement of the opening theme in the bass clef.

The rhythmic structure of this *Prière* is quite simple, and there are just three main rhythmic features that monopolise the metre. The first is the rhythm of the opening solo statements, a dynamic rhythm using dotted notes and notes of various time values. The second is a static rhythm with continuous crotchet movement used in an accompanying role to enhance the rhythmic flow of the first motif. The third motif is similar to the second in so far as it is used in an accompanying role alluding to an independent melody that imitates the dominant melody. However it never actualises into an independent melodic line, therefore the rhythmic movement here is static with latently-dynamic qualities – this is exaggerated by the use of a counter rhythm placed on top of motif Z elongating some of the notes to form a pseudo melody.

The three motifs can be outlined as follows:

Motif X is shown in 6/4 time, starting with a double bar line and a 6/4 time signature. The notation consists of a dotted half note, followed by a half note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a quarter note, and a half note.

Motif Y is shown in 6/4 time, starting with a double bar line. The notation consists of six consecutive quarter notes.

Motif Z is shown in 6/4 time, starting with a double bar line. The notation consists of six consecutive quarter notes, with a thick horizontal line above the notes, indicating a counter rhythm.

The antiphonal-like opening in section A is constructed of two four-bar phrases. The first three bars of each phrase are solo, with a cadential pattern being devised in the fourth bar of each individual phrase. With the statement of the third antiphonal reply, harmonic support is introduced allowing the piece to officially begin. It is with the third statement of the opening theme that the tonic key is first introduced. The first two statements suggest the key of the relative minor, with

modal cadences ending each phrase. The first cadence is a perfect cadence in A major, the second a perfect cadence in G major.

Example 3.6.1: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 5 bars 1–8

Adagio

The musical score consists of three staves. The top two staves are labeled 'Mains' (Upper and Lower) and the bottom staff is labeled 'Pieds'. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 6/4. The tempo marking is 'Adagio'. The score shows the first eight bars of the piece. In the first bar, the upper right hand has a melodic phrase starting on G4, moving to A4, B4, and then a half note G4. The lower right hand has a half note G3. The left hand (Pieds) has a rhythmic motif starting on G2, moving to A2, B2, and then a half note G2. In the second bar, the upper right hand has a half note G4, and the lower right hand has a half note G3. The left hand has a half note G2. In the third bar, the upper right hand has a half note G4, and the lower right hand has a half note G3. The left hand has a half note G2. In the fourth bar, the upper right hand has a half note G4, and the lower right hand has a half note G3. The left hand has a half note G2. In the fifth bar, the upper right hand has a half note G4, and the lower right hand has a half note G3. The left hand has a half note G2. In the sixth bar, the upper right hand has a half note G4, and the lower right hand has a half note G3. The left hand has a half note G2. In the seventh bar, the upper right hand has a half note G4, and the lower right hand has a half note G3. The left hand has a half note G2. In the eighth bar, the upper right hand has a half note G4, and the lower right hand has a half note G3. The left hand has a half note G2.

The main point of interest in this opening section is seen in the way Alkan passes the solo-melodic phrase from one voice to another; the pedals in the first instance, the upper manual part in the second and the manual bass part in the third, where it remains for twelve bars. It is during the third (rhythmic) statement of the first motif that it is developed. This, along with the chordal support, gives the composition a sense of beginning: or more correctly, there is a perception that the piece has ‘finally’ begun. The following table illustrates the geography of the piece:

Table 2: Sectional Divisions illustrating Motifs and Register of Dominant Melody in *Prière No. 5, Op. 64*

<i>Sectional Title</i>	<i>Bar Numbers</i>	<i>Motif(s) Used</i>	<i>Register of Dominant Melody</i>
A	1-4	X	Pedal Part
	5-8	X	Treble (Right Hand Part)
	9-20	X	Bass (Left Hand Part)
B	21-42	X & Y	Treble (Right Hand Part)
A1	43-46	X	Pedal Part
	47-50	X	Treble (Right Hand Part)
	51	X (False Start)	Bass (Left Hand Part)
B1	52-66	X & Z	Treble (Right Hand Part)
A2	67-71	X	Unison in all Parts
Coda	72-End	X Fragment & Z	Treble and Pedals

Musical perception plays an important role in Alkan's music and will be referred to throughout this analysis. Because of the composer's predilection for key ambiguity and rhythmic displacement, (as will be seen and discussed further in chapter four) multiple tonics and time signatures are sometimes perceived.

Section B of this *Prière* does not introduce new motivic material. Instead, it develops what has already been stated in the opening section by augmenting the melodic line, changing the rhythm of the accompanying part (from static homorhythmic dotted minim chords, to static repetitions of crotchet chords) and

fluctuating between modulations to major and minor keys. The integrity of the opening rhythmic motif is preserved throughout the entire piece (rhythmic motif X) with any augmentations that are made to it, added on to the end of the existing motif.

The presence of a counter-rhythm placed on top of the accompanying motif Z presents another dimension to Alkan's use of tonality. Consider the following example:

Example 3.6.2: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 5 bars 63 and 64

In the lower treble part the counter-rhythm can be seen — notes with stems up — and it mirrors to some extent the rhythmic pattern of the upper treble part. This type of activity in Alkan's *Prières* alludes to the emergence of sub-melodic material but never gains any proper independence from the dominant melodic line.

The various parts of this composition engage in a melodic dialogue that sees the melody being passed from one part and register to another. This reaches its maximum effect toward the end of the piece when all parts are playing in rhythmic and harmonic unison, as if all the parts have finally caught up on one another. These homorhythmic unison bars make a very prominent statement, leading out of a section that has been using an arpeggiated accompanying pattern.

The following example helps to put in context the points raised above:

Example 3.6.3: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 5 bars 66–68

The musical score for Example 3.6.3 consists of three staves in 6/4 time. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in bass clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The music is marked 'Librement.' and 'ff'. The score shows a transition from an arpeggiated pattern to a homorhythmic unison.

For the duration of this particular composition, the opening statement is the only major theme to dominate the music with it being repeated in succession either in full (macro repetition) or in part (partial-macro repetition).

The instrumental ambiguity that is associated with this particular set of works presents its own set of complications. Directional instructions in relation to

technique seem to be at odds with the actual music itself. The following example illustrates how the instruction to depress the *pedal* must refer to the sustaining pedal of the piano (or, indeed, the pedal-piano):

Example 3.6.4: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 5 bars 74–76





From the example above it can also be clearly seen that the lowest note is the C three octaves below middle C. This is not physically present on an organ. This too strengthens the argument that, despite the suggested instrumentation for these pieces, piano three-hands or pedal-piano are the only way to recreate the composer's true compositional intentions.

The final point worthy of mention regarding the styling of these compositions is that they all end with fermata over and under the final barline. Perhaps this may indicate that they were to be played as part of a set — each in succession? This is not seen in the other works presented in chapters 4 and 5.

3.7 *Prière* No. 6

The sixth piece from this set has a three-fold aspect to its construction, containing three contrasting sections. It combines compositional and structural elements from all the previous *Prières*, from repeated notes, to strict homorhythmic homophony and melismatic runs.

The rhythmic pattern of the composition can be broken-down as follows: motif X is the dominating dynamic rhythmic motif in the right hand part of the opening A section with a homorhythmic accompaniment labelled *H*. Motifs Y and Z are the dominant rhythmic movement in section B. The remaining rhythmic gestures found in this piece come from altered versions of these three motifs.

Motif X 	Accomp. Gesture <i>H</i> 
Motif Y 	Motif Z 

To clarify the overall structure of the piece, and the range of motifs and their appearance, the following table should first be considered:

Table 3: Sectional Divisions illustrating Motifs and Register of Dominant Melody in *Prière* No. 6, Op. 64

<i>Sectional Title</i>	<i>Bar Numbers</i>	<i>Dominant Motif(s) Used</i>	<i>Register of Dominant Melody</i>
A	1-8	X & H	Treble (Right Hand Part)
	9-16	X	
B	17-24	Y (<i>Anticipatory</i>)	Chordal - Rhythmic Unison
	25-34	Y & Z	Treble (Right Hand Part)
EPISODE	35-44	Liquidation of X Fragment (Rhythmically & Tonally)	Treble (Right Hand Part) & Bass (Left Hand Part) UNISON
A1	45-48	X with H (in the Right Hand Part)	Treble/Bass (Left Hand Part)
	49-50	X	Treble (Right Hand Part)
	51-52	X Fragment	Monophonic Statements
	53-58	X with H (sustained in the pedal)	Treble (Right Hand Part)
	59-78	X	Pedal
Coda	79-End	Descending Chromatic scale (partial)	Bass (Left Hand Part) Ending with Tonic Chord in all parts

From the opening bars of this *Prière* it becomes obvious that the prevailing structure is that of a melody-reliant homophony. Motif X is a dynamic rhythm, despite having very little rhythmic variation. However, when considered within the context of the surrounding rhythmic and tonal movement it is the only motif that has any dynamism attached to it.

The following example helps to clarify this:

Example 3.7.1: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 6 bars 1–2 and 8

Musical score for Alkan's 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 6, bars 1–2 and 8. The score is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features three staves: Mains (Right Hand), Pieds (Left Hand), and L'8va bassa (Lower Octave Bass). The tempo is Moderato. The Mains part is marked *Dolce e legato* and shows a melodic line with a motif X. The Pieds part is marked *p, e sostenuto* and features a static accompaniment of repeated Ds. The L'8va bassa part is marked *solamente* and features octave Fs. The score is divided into two systems, with the second system showing bars 1-2 and 8.

In the example above it can be seen that the accompanying homorhythmic feature *H* is static rhythmically and tonally – with the repeated Ds in the pedal line and the octave Fs in the manual bass part. The dynamic movement of motif X can also be seen in its tonal expression in the treble part of the example above.

Section B uses a pseudo-dotted rhythm (motif Y), making the rest ‘sound’ as a dot. The melodic line and the pedal are moving in rhythmic unison, with the inner part indulging in melismatic scale-like passages (motif Z). Motif Z contrasts directly with the opening section and its gentle rhythmic flow, and it is also at odds with the melody of section B. In effect, these melismatic ‘flurries’ make it hard to distinguish the exact number of beats that are occurring in each bar. This is so because the arrival point of these runs occurs on the second half of the second beat – as it begins its descent (see bar 25 in Example 3.7.2 below).

The contrast between the melodic idiom from section A and the one used in section B can be experienced on three different levels; melody, rhythm and

dynamics. The rhythmic contrast between rhythmic motifs X and Y can be clearly identified in the example shown above. The melodic difference is illustrated by the use of chords melodically in the developmental section – as opposed to the contrasting static chordal repetitions in the opening section. These ‘melodic chords’ are also the direct opposite of the flowing quaver melody of the opening section. The rhythmic differences between the two sections are obvious, with the pace quickening on all aspects in section B. The shift in dynamics from the *p* in the opening part to *f* in the development also adds to the forward motion of the piece; starting softly and building up to a louder dynamic. Example 3.7.2 below illustrates the three main contrasting elements of section B.

Example 3.7.2: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No 6 bars 25–28

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system consists of three staves: a treble clef staff at the top with the instruction *Sostenuto.* above it, a middle staff with *Sempre f* above it, and a bass clef staff with *Sostenuto.* below it. The second system also consists of three staves, with the instruction *ten:* appearing above the treble staff, above the middle staff, and below the bass staff. The music is written in a key with two sharps (D major) and a 3/4 time signature.

There also appears as part of this *Prière* a ten-bar episode which engages in a rhythmic process of distortion that does not introduce any new material; instead the rhythm is related to motif X. The function of the episode would appear to be that of a link passage that leads the music back to the tonic key. Harmonically this episode hints at B-flat melodic minor using notes from the upper tetrachord, descending from the tonic to the dominant degree of the scale. The time signature of 3/4 does not change throughout the piece, yet there are many instances where the rhythmic metre seems to be distorted or disguised. It is more prevalent here in the episode and the following example shows exactly how Alkan achieved this effect:

Example 3.7.3: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 6 bars 36–41

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system contains three bars of music. The second system also contains three bars, with the instruction *Dim: molto, ma poco a poco* written above and below the staves. The music is in 3/4 time and features a melody in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand, with a piano accompaniment in the bottom staff.

The four dotted quavers in the second bar of Example 3.7.3 give the illusion of four beats, thus distorting the rhythmic metre, promoting a negative metric flow. Negative metric flow is perceived to prevail even after the restoration of a positive metric flow, as the bars succeeding the pseudo-four beats now *sound* incomplete.

The melody is liquidated to the occurrence of just B-flat and A-flat, while the rhythm is liquidated to a minim in the final bar of the episode. This gives the impression that the composition is slowing down, despite there being no written instruction to do so. Interestingly, Alkan respells the A-flat to its enharmonic equivalent on the final minim beat of the last bar of the episode – this produces a diminished third (spelled G-sharp to B-flat) that goes unnoticed by the listener –

yet another example of the dichotomous relationship between the visual element of Alkan's music and the aural.

Alkan's modulating patterns in this composition deserve a further mention, particularly the one leading back to the final section. Here, Alkan makes use of a single bar's rest to clear the harmonic pallet in order to execute a chromatic modulation from g minor to E major (which is the chord of V of the dominant A major). This he does by way of repeating the upper manual part of the preceding bar up a half step. The repeated Ds in the lower manual bass part ground the modulation and add tonal continuity to the section. This modulation is illustrated in the example below.

Example 3.7.4: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 6 bars 63–66

The musical score for Example 3.7.4 consists of three systems of staves. The first system shows the beginning of the passage in G minor, with a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The second system shows a chromatic modulation to E major, with the melodic line shifted up a half step and the bass line containing repeated D notes. The third system shows the continuation of the modulation. The score includes dynamic markings: 'Dim:' and 'pochissimo rin f'.

The chromatic shift gives the music a sense of anticipation, which is heightened by the bar's rest. There is also a perceived air of expectancy resulting from the rhythmic silence, with the abrupt change in tonality destabilising the preceding tonal frame.

This is one instance whereby Alkan does not think it necessary to juxtapose the motivic elements in order to unify the compositional structure. As will be shown further on in this chapter and in Chapter 4, motivic juxtaposition is one of Alkan’s favoured compositional tools. This piece ends using a fragment of rhythmic motif X in its original “cadential” format – ending the motif, now ending the piece.

3.8 *Prière* No. 7

‘Prayer’ No. 7 displays a clever use of melody-reliant homophony. The composition is divided in to two opposing sections A and B, each being repeated. In the case of the second section, there are three different rhythmic gestures occurring at the same time: quaver movement in the pedals, demisemiquaver movement in the right-hand part and a mixture of larger note values in the melodic left-hand part. This adds a particular depth to the music, like a musical rhythmic prism. The main rhythmic motifs identified can be outlined as follows:

The image displays five musical motifs on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) in common time (C).
 - **Motif X**: A sequence of notes in the treble clef: a half note, a quarter note, a quarter note, a dotted quarter note, and an eighth note. A bracket below the last three notes is labeled "Motif X + 1".
 - **Motif Y**: A triplet of eighth notes in the treble clef, indicated by a "3" above the notes.
 - **Motif Y1**: A sequence of four eighth notes in the treble clef.
 - **Motif Z**: A sequence of four eighth notes in the bass clef.

The occurrence of these motifs throughout the *Prière* is easy to map out. The first two motifs, X and Y, are used in section A of the piece. The triplet movement, especially when used to repeat the same chord, has the same effect as a slow tremolo and contrasts directly with the quaver movement of section B. The remaining motifs, Y1 and Z, are found in section B of the piece. Another version of motif X from section A is used in section B, and it is this that helps to unify the piece. The music moves from section A to section B with section A undergoing a series of modulations finally ending on the chord of V7 in A major with section B beginning on the chord of I in A major. This movement from section A to section B facilitates the *notated* key change from C major to A major.

This piece could also be viewed as being antiphonal but on a larger scale. Due to the harmonic relation between the two sections, due to the presence of an elided cadence, they appear to be answering each other, thus allowing for the idea of antiphonal writing to be considered. The following outline of the movement of sections allows for a greater look at the overall thematic structure:

Table 4: Sectional Divisions illustrating Dominant Motifs and Sectional Tonics in *Prière No. 7, Op. 64*

<i>Sectional Title</i>	<i>Bar Numbers</i>	<i>Dominant Motif(s) Used</i>	<i>Sectional Tonic (Notated Key Sig.)</i>
A	1-12	X (X+1) & Y	C Maj
B	13-30	Z, X fragment and Y1	A Maj
A1	31-42	X (X+1) & Y	C Maj – beginning on V
B1	43-65	Z, X fragment and Y1	A Maj – beginning on V
A2	66-79	X (X+1) & Y	A Maj – beginning on Ic
LINK	80-93	Y (liquidating to minims)	A Maj – unison repetitions of the note E. <i>Actual 'key' is ambiguous</i>
B2 Plus Coda	94-end	Z, X fragment and Y1	A Min (Plagal Cadence) Piece ends in a different key.

The occurrence of repetition in this composition is largely macro (partial macro repetition enduring as the rhythm is not identical per sectional repeat, with subtle rhythmic alterations appearing) by nature as the repeats are sectional. Despite the harmonic links that relate the two sections they are dichotomous in terms of their rhythmic language and thematic material.

Metric flow is principally positive for the duration of the piece, even though triplets are used in the opening section A and subsequent occurrences of repeated

section A. There are some rhythmic deviations from positive metric flow, and these will be looked at further on.

Illustrated below are the first two bars of *Prière* No. 7, outlining the usage of motifs X and Y.

Example 3.8.1: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 7 bars 1–2

The musical score for the first two bars of Alkan's 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 7 is presented in common time (C). It consists of three staves: Mains (Right Hand), Pieds (Left Hand), and a lower bass line. The Mains part is marked 'Maestoso' and 'f', with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The Pieds part is marked 'f' and 'Alla 8va bassa solamente', featuring a bass line with triplets. The score shows the first two bars of the piece, with a rest in the Mains part at the end of the second bar.

This example best represents the rhythmic content of section A and the melodic curve that is associated with its appearance throughout the composition. Interestingly, before the beginning of section B there is one bar's rest; this in spite of the obvious tonal link that exists between the last 'tonal bar' (that is, a bar that has music contained within it) of section A and the first bar of Section B. Alkan's use of the elided cadence is particularly evident in this composition. It is a tool that he uses to link sections together tonally that differ rhythmically – this will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

From the above example then, it can be seen that motif X is dynamic. The inclusion of a dotted rhythm coupled with the use of varying note values combine to make this motif rhythmically dynamic. Its tonal expression is also dynamic as it is used as part of the melodic line in both sections A and B.

Motif Y is static. The tonal motion represented in Example 3.8.1 is only seen in the first two bars of the A section (and this is also true for each repeat of section A). After this, it resorts to static repetitions of chords thus heightening the level of staticity and it is chiefly because of this that this motif is considered static.

Section B of this piece introduces a counter theme along with a different sense of rhythm and harmony. With the exception of the introductory two-bar pedal solo, there is an internal instance of macro repetition — the basic rhythmic and tonal (and harmonic) idea of section B is repeated. The ratio of repetition in this piece is 1A: 2B.

The main tonal difference between the two sections is the treatment of each sectional tonic. The first section introduces chromatic notes early on, suggesting modulations, while section B roots itself in its sectional tonic (A major) before very obviously facilitating a modulation to the relative minor (f-sharp minor) over a few short bars. The sense or perception of tonal ambiguity is dissolved in section B.

The following example is of the introduction of the second theme (the first bar of it) as outlined in section B of *Prière* No. 7:

Example 3.8.2: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 7 bar 15

The musical score for Example 3.8.2 consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, marked *pp* and *8va*, and contains a rapid sixteenth-note triplet pattern. The middle staff is in bass clef, marked *Cantabile et espressivo*, and contains a long, sustained note with a fermata. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a series of chords. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

The contrast between the two sections is obvious both from a rhythmic and tonal perspective. The disparity between the two is also apparent texturally: the chordal writing of section A, encouraging a closeness between the parts harmonically and also in the physical proximity of the hands, versus a more linear approach to the harmony in section B with the parts being more exposed and placed further apart in the context of the register.

From Example 3.8.2 it can be seen that both motifs Y1 and Z are static. Motif Y1 is directly related rhythmically to the triplet motion of motif Y and, as such, is considered to be a derivative of Y. They are also linked tonally as their tonal expression in both cases is static. The staticity associated with motif Z is again linked to the repetitious way in which the motif is used.

The simple but clever use of tonality in this composition cannot be ignored. The modulating pattern that Alkan uses to move between the alternate repetitions of sections A and B merits further discussion.

The harmonic link between the first statements of sections A and B is not particularly ambiguous, with section A ending with a chord of E major (minor) seven, resolving to the A major tonic of section B. Subsequent transitional modulations (that is, the modulation that helps one section end and the other begin) are more adventurous in both their harmonic language and their compositional execution.

With respect to the prevailing sectional key signatures (that of C major in section A and A major in section B) the second transitional modulation, that leads from the first statement of section B to the second statement of section A, sees section B end on a chord of D major — the chord of IV in A major. The resolution, however, is to the chord of G major thus implying a modulation to G major. Although Alkan goes to the trouble of negating the previous key signature of A major to that of C major, he implies the G major modulation by keeping the F-sharp for the first two bars of the section. The actual sectional tonic is now ambiguous: G major is the dominant harmony, but the actualising of the C major tonality is not done until the fourth bar of this section. Despite the written key signature of C major, the harmony never grounds itself in this key. The following example illustrates this:

Example 3.8.3: Alkan 13 Prières Op. 64 No. 7 bars 31–34

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system (bars 31-34) is marked *p, e Sostenuto.* and features a long melodic line in the right hand with a fermata over the final bar, and a triplet accompaniment in the left hand. The second system (bars 35-38) is marked *cres: poco a poco* and features a similar melodic line in the right hand with a fermata, and a more complex, rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand.

The next transitional modulation sees a chromatic modulation in the last bar of this section (first repeat of section A) from C major seven to e minor, to B major. The cadential resolution is an implied chord of E major; the chord of V in A major. The sectional tonic (A major) is not stated explicitly until the last beat of the section. Instead, this first repeat of section B is an elaborate elongation of the chord of V in A major.

This leads into an unstable episodic section which consists of fourteen bars of singular repetitions of the note E. This tonally-static episodic section, with the repeated note E, anticipates the major tonality of A major. This however does not actualise and instead of the now familiar motivic juxtaposition there is tonal

reversal: the tonality that was familiar to section A has now been imposed on section B. The negation of the key signature only serves to dispel the major tonality, as the sectional tonic is now A minor — with the composition ending in this key also. This is the first piece from this set that does not end in the key that it started in. The lengths to which Alkan goes to ensure that each section has a specific notated key signature, which at times appears to be at odds with the general harmonic palette of the section, merits further discussion. The ancillary observation of ‘Visual vs. Aural’ - that is, listening with knowledge of the score versus listening with no prior knowledge of the score, raises the following question: Are the changes in *key signature* perceptible to the listener who has no prior knowledge of the score? With the use of elided cadences Alkan secures the strong tonal link between sections, guiding the listener down a particular harmonic-road, making the notated key signatures seem tonally redundant.

When considering the question ‘Organ or Pedal-piano?’ this piece would sit firmly on the side of pedal-piano. The main reason for this lies in the expression marks and directions that underline this composition’s performance. If the first two examples above are viewed again, it can be seen that the crescendo and decrescendo marks would almost be impossible for an organist to execute with a swell-pedal considering the double pedalling that is evident in both examples. The touch-sensitive keyboard (and pedal-board) of a pedal-piano, however, would easily implement such directions. The frequency of these expressive directions, particularly in this piece, put forward a strong case for pedal-piano as the main intended performance instrument. However, the fact cannot be ignored that all

these effects can be achieved on the organ with a registrant assisting the organist. This instrumental ambiguity adds to the allure of these works and ties in with the composer's compositional ambiguities too.

3.9 *Prière No. 8*

In Prayer No. 8, each part has some input regarding the structure of the melodic line. The melody is thus intricately woven between the three parts (right hand, left hand and pedals) with the delayed imitative entries suggesting a fugato style of writing. Therefore there emerges a structural interdependency between the treble, bass and pedal parts of this composition due to the internal dialogue between the parts. This structural interdependency, however, does not jeopardise the level of melodic independence that is achieved by each individual part at one time or another during the piece.

It is also worth noting that this is the only piece from the thirteen that make up this set of works that carries a title, *Dieu Des Armées* (*Lord of Hosts* or *Armies*) which is written in three languages: Latin, Hebrew and French.

The fugato style employed in this composition makes the identification of rhythmic motivic material less difficult. In essence there are only two main rhythmic ideas that dominate the piece, each outlined as follows:

Motif X

Motif Y

Motif X1

Motif Y + 1

Motif X has a derivative attached to it that also plays a dominant role in the overall rhythmic (and tonal) structure of the composition. This rhythmic motif, with its triple quaver motion, is reminiscent of the strong leading rhythmic figure in the first movement of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Alkan admired the music of Beethoven, particularly the piano sonatas, and one could not rule out the possible 'ambiguous homage' that he is perhaps paying him in *Prière* No. 8.²

This particular rhythm is dynamic as it is part of a melodic line that is dependent on all the constituent parts. The second rhythmic motif is anticipatory in nature. It appears only twice, at bar 18 in the pedal part and bar 22 in the treble part, in the opening section of the piece but then goes on to become a dominant feature from bar 58. This motif takes on the role of being both dynamic and static at different stages. It is used in the treble part as part of a short melodic motif and used in the pedal part as both a melodic idiom and as a support to the harmonic progression.

Example 3.9.1 illustrates the fugato style of writing that is the main feature of this *Prière*, emphasising the delayed imitative entries of each part and also the first

² Alkan played some of the Beethoven Piano Sonatas in the *Petit Concerts* given between 1874 and 1880 in the Erard Studio (see William Eddie: *Charles Valentin Alkan, His Life and His Music*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007 pp. 22–23). Jacqueline Waeber also draws attention to Alkan's admiration of Beethoven (see Jacqueline Waeber, 'Searching for the Plot: Charles-Valentin Alkan's *Souvenirs: Trois morceaux dans le genre pathétique*, Op. 15', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 132:1 (2007), pp. 60–114. Tad Szulc, in his book, *Chopin in Paris* (Oxford: Da Capo Press 2000) mentions that Alkan and Chopin were part of a group that played an eight-hand transcription (by Alkan) of various parts of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony at a concert on March 3rd 1838 (p. 188).

rhythmic motif with the opening, using the three quavers followed by crotchets, and at bar 4 the three quavers followed by a minim.

Example 3.9.1: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 8 bars /1–6

The musical score for Alkan's 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 8, bars 1-6, is presented in two systems. The first system shows the initial four bars, marked 'Tempo giusto.' and 'f'. The 'MAINS.' part (Upper Part) is written in a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The 'PIEDS.' part (Lower Part) is written in a bass clef. The score includes dynamic markings like 'f' and 'L'8va bassa solamente' (8th octave lower, only). The second system shows bars 5-6, featuring a 'ten:' (tension) marking in the bass clef of both the 'MAINS.' and 'PIEDS.' parts.

The piece is through-composed, structured as a continuous musical unit. The musical ideas *are* developed, but not as part of a totally separate section, with the opening theme being heard either explicitly or partially throughout the composition. There are, however, occasional deviations from the opening material with the section from bars 50 to 57 acting as some sort of rhythmic climax, slowing the opening theme. The presence of quavers in the upper pedal

part keeps the opening rhythmic motif ‘simmering’ in the background. The following example helps to clarify this:

Example 3.9.2: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 8 bars 50–53

The musical score for Example 3.9.2 consists of three systems. The first system shows the piano accompaniment in G major, 3/4 time. The left hand plays a constant eighth-note rhythmic motif, while the right hand plays a series of chords. The second system continues the accompaniment, with the right hand moving to a more active melodic line. The third system shows the right hand playing a melodic line with a first ending bracket labeled '8va'. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff*, *e Sostenutissimo*, and *rf*.

Motivic juxtaposition plays an important role in this *Prière* and occurs with the first entry of motif Y. In this instance motif Y plays a supporting role that contrasts directly with the rhythmic structure of motif X1, with which it is juxtaposed. The staticism that is, at times, associated with motif Y can be seen in its use here. The following example helps to put these points into context:

Example 3.9.3: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 8 bars 18 and 19

The musical score shows two systems. The first system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the top line and a bass clef on the bottom line. The right hand (treble clef) plays a series of chords and arpeggiated figures. The left hand (bass clef) plays a rhythmic accompaniment of chords. A specific motif in the left hand is highlighted with a box and the dynamic marking 'ff'. The second system shows the continuation of the piece, with the left hand motif still present.

The notes boxed in the example above highlight motif Y's tonal staticism. Its appearance here, at bars 18 and 19, is anticipatory, as it does not actually become a dominant motif until bar 58. A closer look at Example 3.9.3 also reveals that there are elements of tonal staticism linked to motif X1 too, as it is playing the same chord only in different inversions.

The structural blueprint of this composition does not change even with the shift in motivic preference, with motifs X and X1 being overshadowed by motif Y+1. The fugato structure is still prevalent and the level of tonal dynamism in motif Y can be seen to rise with the addition of the extra minim and crotchet. The following example shows motif Y+1 being expressed dynamically and the imitative fugato style still present:

Example 3.9.4: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 8 bars 58–60

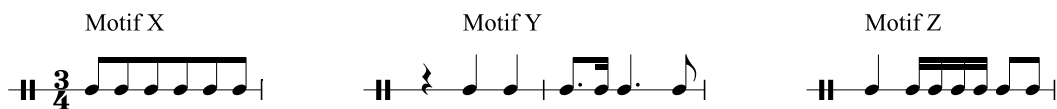
The harmonic rhythm moves at a much quicker pace in this piece than perhaps any other piece in the set. That, combined with the fugato style of writing, makes this piece stand out from the rest with the melodic curve swinging between all the parts. The rhythmic pattern of the piece is altered in the coda with the introduction of triplets. The final five bars, and the three-quaver-upbeat that begins it, are all statements of the chord of I, with the preceding four-and-a-half bars repeating a V – I cadence. Alkan makes great use of elongating his cadential patterns and instances of this are to be witnessed throughout the composer's works. This practice adds to the idea of musical perception, particularly when gauging the expectation and anticipation that is felt resulting from the tonal-strength of repeated statements of the chord of V.

A positive metric flow endures for the duration of the piece. The fugato style, with the delayed imitative entries, facilitates the perception of a negative metric flow but it never acquires any significant dominance throughout the piece.

3.10 *Prière* No. 9

The opening 16 bars of Prayer No. 9 serve as an ‘introduction’ to the remainder of the piece, hinting at a poly-thematic dialogue and outlining the main rhythmic motifs of the piece. The actual melodic themes are not explicitly stated until bar 17, and it is here that we can hear two clear melodic lines moving independently of each other. The first sixteen bars indulge in a sequence of modulations, starting in the tonic key of E major and modulating to B major, G major, e minor, C major and at bar 17 the music returns to B major which serves as the basis for a perfect cadence into the tonic. However, the dialogue between the melodic lines that really develops from bar 17 to the end, hints at an eighteenth-century contrapuntal style (similar to a three-part invention) while still incorporating small homorhythmic sections and supporting a melody-dominated homophony. These sections are brief, but must be considered in the interpretation of an overall style.

The composition is governed by three main rhythmic gestures that are all used in both a static and dynamic way. The primary rhythm, however, is that of continuous quaver movement. This, and the other motifs, can be outlined in the following way:



The first motif of running quavers is present throughout the whole composition and takes on the role of both melody and accompaniment. There is no rhythmic diversity attached to this motif and as a result it is a static rhythm. However up until this point all of the rhythmic motifs associated with the melodic line in the *Prières* have been dynamic — they all made use of either dotted rhythms or varying note values. Motif X can therefore be considered a static rhythm that is latently-dynamic. That is to say that while the rhythmic organisation of motif X is static, its tonal expression in this instance is dynamic. However, this is only a perceived dynamism as a closer look at Example 3.10.1 will demonstrate. The only line to exhibit the most rhythmic movement is the treble line and by virtue of this, its tonal activity is perceived as being melodic, or tonally dynamic.

The following example illustrates the first four bars of the opening section. Here the use of rhythmic motif X can be clearly seen and also visible is the dissimilation of rhythmic activity between the parts: from largest note values in the pedals (minims), smaller note values in the left hand part (crotchets) with the smallest note values in the right hand part (quavers). This ‘fanning-out’ of the rhythmic movement is something that Alkan does frequently in these *Prières* and, indeed, in other pieces that will be examined in succeeding chapters.

Example 3.10.1: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 9 bars 1–4

Doucement
Dolce e Legato
p
p
L'8va bassa solamente
sin' al fine.

After the opening section there is a shift in the seniority of the rhythmic functions and motif X truly assumes the role of a static rhythm. It is used in the pedal line in an accompanying role and supports the dialogue that starts at bar 17 between the left and right hand parts.

There are three distinct parts or lines that support the contrapuntal structure, while each has its own individual character. The right hand part uses rhythmic motif Y while the left hand part uses a similar rhythmic pattern that eventually uses all elements of motif Y but not in the same manner. It is this difference between the two parts that gives each line its independence. These contrapuntal sections, with each line achieving rhythmic (and tonal) independence, contrast directly with the homorhythmic sections that punctuate them. The punctuating sections are constructed using rhythmic motif X in all parts. The example below illustrates the use of motif Y in the right hand part and also the rhythmic independence that is associated with its use.

Example 3.10.2: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 9 bars 17–20

The musical score for Example 3.10.2 is presented in three staves. The top staff is the right hand, the middle staff is the left hand, and the bottom staff is a separate bass line. The music is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The right hand part features a dynamic marking 'Poco cres: ed espressivo.' and includes suspensions in the right hand starting on the last beat of bar 18 and again on the last beat of bar 19. The left hand part consists of a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The bottom staff is a separate bass line that mirrors the left hand part.

Motif Y (and Y+1) is dynamic and its tonal expression is also dynamic and this can be seen in Example 3.10.2 above.

The use of suspensions in this composition strengthens the link between it and eighteenth-century contrapuntal style. They appear frequently between bars 17 and 34 and in the above example they occur starting on the last beat of bar 18 and again on the last beat of bar 19. Alkan obeys the rules that govern the use of suspensions by preparing them, suspending them and resolving them. This explicit use and treatment of baroque techniques shows in Alkan an appreciation of early music.

The third rhythmic motif presents itself towards the end of the composition and dominates the rhythmic metre while also being used with the other two motifs. It is a dynamic rhythm, and is used by both the left and right hand parts in rhythmic unison. Its first statement is, however, used with motif X as an accompanying feature. When it is used to accompany itself (i.e., played in the left hand part too)

a layering effect begins to take shape eventually building up to both left and right hands playing the same melodic idiom. The following example illustrates these three effects.

Example 3.10.3: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 9 bars 57, 60 and 68

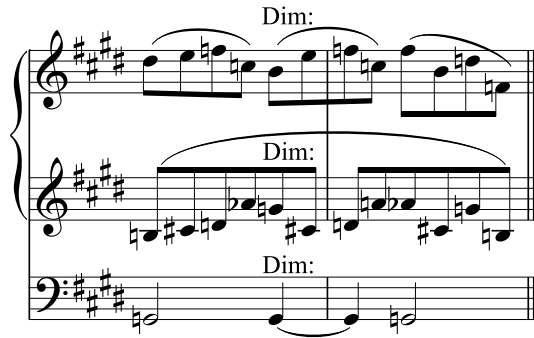
The image displays three musical examples from Alkan's 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 9, illustrating different textures and dynamics. Each example is presented in a grand staff format (treble and bass clefs joined by a brace).
 - The first example shows a melodic line in the right hand with a slur over a series of eighth notes, and a bass line with a similar rhythmic pattern. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#).
 - The second example is marked *(Dolce)* and features a melodic line in the right hand with a slur and a fermata over the final note, and a bass line with a similar rhythmic pattern. The key signature has three sharps.
 - The third example is marked *(Sempre.)* and shows a more complex texture with multiple voices in both hands, including chords and rapid sixteenth-note passages. The key signature has three sharps.

The main harmonic consideration in this *Prière* is Alkan's continuous use of consonant intervals. This is more apparent in the opening introductory section and from the first use of the third rhythmic motif. This can also be seen in the first and third musical examples from *Prière* No. 9. Both these examples are fair representations of the harmonic framework of the piece. In the first example there is almost always a consonant interval on the beat, in the third example that is taken further with a consonant interval being used on every note (from bar 59).

The rhythmic metre of this piece is grounded in a positive metric flow. The pedal always generates a clear three beats despite the presence of rests. In these instances (where there are rests in the pedal line), the positive metric flow is supported by the manual parts (seen in bars 67 and 68). There is, perhaps, just

one clear instance where Alkan tries to destabilise the metric flow by means of introducing a hemiola. This can be seen in the example below:

Example 3.10.4: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 9 bars 41 and 42



Both macro and micro repetition are to be found within the structure of this piece. The opening sixteen bars present an instance of partial-macro repetition, the rhythm remains unchanged but the tonality is different. These bars can be divided rhythmically into four four-bar phrases — tonally, however, if we base the phrases on the prevailing harmonic rhythm, the same sixteen bars can be divided into the following *tonal* phrases: two four-bar phrases followed by two two-bar phrases which in turn are followed by another four-bar phrase.

In spite of there being a heavy emphasis on the quaver motif, the way it is treated within the context of the composition prevents it from becoming insipid. There is a certain familiarity surrounding its appearance particularly when used in conjunction with strong dynamic rhythms (seen in motif Z above).

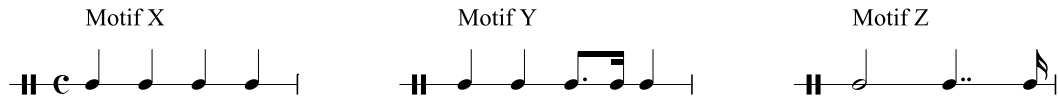
It is a unifying motif, and this is predominantly evident when used alongside new rhythmic material.

3.11 *Prière* No. 10

The first most notable feature of this composition is the use of a mock-Alberti Bass motif in the opening bars of the pedal line. The slow tempo coupled with the staccato markings gives the impression of a ‘walking’ pedal line and the pleasant major tonality seems to suggest a jovial mood. Whether it was the intention, or not, of the composer to actually convey this idea of a ‘walking motion’ at the start of the piece is practically impossible to tell, but there does appear in the music a rhythmic motif that is truly reminiscent of the rhythm used by Chopin in the *Marche Funèbre* movement of the B-flat minor piano sonata (Op. 35). The similarity between the two will be discussed further on.

This is the only *Prière* that specifically makes reference to having religious sentiments by marking one of its sections *Religioso*: a chorale-like tune that is played *Dolce e legatiss.* on the manuals in four parts. This is answered, with some changes to the harmonic progressions, *ff e Sostenuitissimo* adding a pedal line and augmenting the number of parts from four to nine and ten respectively. Describing this music as ‘religious’, is of course subjective. However, there is a majestic, triumphant tone to the progressions of harmony that could indeed be associated with liturgical ritual. This is partly due to the use of root position chords and the abrupt modulations to major keys that occur.

Reducing the rhythmic activity of this piece into motifs results in the following:



Motif X is static, as it does not have any rhythmic variation within the motif. This is evident in the opening bars of the piece, where the pedal line is supplying the ‘mock’ Alberti Bass. However it does appear later in the composition in a dynamic capacity, but is strengthened by the presence of motif Y as part of the melodic line. The second and third motifs are dynamic, containing rhythmic variations while also being part of the prevailing melodic line. However, the third motif has some static elements because its melodic usage is quite restricted, that is, its tonal expression is more static than dynamic. It falls better under the category of latently-static. The following example shows the mock Alberti Bass with a variation of motif Y being played by the left hand.

Example 3.11.1: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 10 bars 1–4

One of the main effects that Alkan successfully achieves in this piece is the gradual introduction of the various parts. This layering effect gives a greater depth to the music and, combined with imitation and answering figurations, conveys a sense of dialogue that runs through the piece up until the chorale section. The opening four bars have three parts, the staccato contrasting with the legato, and the addition of a fourth and then a fifth part, with an answering gesture in the right hand part, adds another dimension to the music. Example 3.11.2 demonstrates this layering effect.

Example 3.11.2: Alkan 13 *Prières* Op. 64 No. 10 bars 10–beat 1 of bar 12 and 14–15

Rhythmic motif Z is first used in its entirety at bar 17, and dominates the rhythmic plane by being used in almost all of the next seventeen bars; achieving the most prominence when played as block chords in rhythmic unison. The double dotted rhythm is thus intended to make an impact on the listener.

Being a latently-static rhythm its melodic significance is of particular importance partly due to the size of the rhythmic motif. Motif Z is a one-bar motif, which

makes the attainment of melodic independence quite difficult, but not impossible. There are instances where its tonal expression is dynamic, especially when used in a chordal context. By using a chain of Z motifs, outside of a chordal context, a melodic line is put together, but in order to consolidate its melodic dominance there is a contrasting counter-melody working in counterpoint with it. This counter melody, however, holds most of the main melodic interest and soon surpasses the original melodic line of the string of motifs.

The notion that the use of rhythmic motif Z in this *Prière* is a tribute to Chopin is one that cannot be overlooked. The *Prières* were written circa 1870, just over twenty years after the death of Chopin (who died in 1849). Chopin's death influenced Alkan deeply resulting in a period of reclusion for the composer. A pictorial or programmatic interpretation of this *Prière* can thus be undertaken resulting in the following:

The opening section of the piece, which appears to suggest a walking idiom, could represent the two friends walking. The appearance of rhythmic motif Z at bar 17 represents Chopin, the section marked *Religioso* represents Alkan (a fitting portrayal, given that Alkan was a staunch Jew). The final appearances of motif Z, beginning seven bars from the end of the piece, in B-flat minor signify the death of Chopin, with the piece ending in the tonic minor (B-flat minor) representing Alkan's sadness. Although this kind of interpretation is, of course, circumstantial

with little evidence to substantiate it, it cannot be entirely ruled out.³ In the example below, the two themes are placed side-by-side.

Example 3.11.3: Chopin Sonata in B flat Minor Op. 35 bars 1–2, Alkan 13

***Prières* Op. 64 No. 10 bars 80–81**

It could be said that Alkan’s version of the Chopin motif is an augmented idiom, and by using it in the same key, the same register for the melody and within the same harmonic context, lends credence to the this claim.

The section marked *Religioso* in the middle of the piece marks a change in the mood of the music. There is a solemn tone to the progression of chords and the homophonic writing is indicative of liturgical song. The rhythmic structure of the melody is a combination of rhythmic motifs X and Y, and as such is a dynamic rhythm. The section is made up of four four-bar phrases alternating between a soft and loud dynamic in an antiphonal way. The two progressions that stand out from the rest in this music are the progressions I – VII Major and I (major and

³ Elsewhere in Alkan’s *œvrue* he adds a programmatic title to his compositions. His *Marcia Funebre, sulla morte d’un Papagallo* (Funeral march for a Dead Parrott) from 1858 is an example of such. Other instrumental examples include the three pieces for piano from the Op.15 *Trois morceaux dans le genre pathétique* No. 1 *Aime moi*, No. 2 *Le Vent* and No. 3 *Morte* for piano.

minor) – VI Major. Both of these progressions facilitate abrupt modulation and allow the music to be carried far from the tonic key and back again with little difficulty. Alkan’s use of the elided cadence is typified in this *Prière* and this, along with the previously mentioned progressions, can be seen in the example below.

Example 3.11.4: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No 10 bars 53 to beat 1 of bar 56

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the right-hand piano part, starting with a fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic and a *Dolce.* marking. The middle staff is the left-hand piano part, also starting with *ff*. The bottom staff is the bass line, starting with *ff*. The score shows a progression of chords from bar 53 to the beginning of bar 56. The chords are: Bb: IIM7 V7, F: IV, I, VIM, and g: V i.

Bb: IIM7 V7

6	I ⁵
4	3

F: IV I VIM
g: V i

Alkan permits almost any chord to be used as a pivot chord allowing for abrupt modulation. This keeps the tonality unpredictable and even unstable by not allowing one key structure to become definitely established.

However, the rhythmic activity *is* stable and a positive metric flow is enforced in this *Religioso* section. The inclusion of the dotted rhythm from motif Y helps to add a sense of unity to the overall structure of the piece. The section is concluded with a cadence in C major. The succeeding bar is a link that serves to shift the rhythmic and tonal movements away from those present in the *Religioso* section

back to that rhythmic and tonal activity which is presented in the opening section. It is a bar of a written trill and triple-pedalling.

The following illustrates these points and also presents another instance whereby Alkan uses a series of unconventional cadential patterns to move from section to section:

Example 3.11.4: Alkan 13 Prières, Op. 64 No 10 bars 68–71

I
B-flat m: V

I

The presence of triple pedal notes in the third bar of the example above emphasises the technical difficulty that can, at times, be associated with these *Prières*. The implication to play the upper pedal notes *legato* (under the slur) adds to this technical difficulty.

The piece ends with a return to the opening idea and also includes two tonally-static statements of motif Z. The tone or mood of the piece changes at this point and the perception of jollity that began the composition is quickly worn away and replaced with a bleak and sparse minor tonality which leads to the composition finally cadencing in the tonic minor (B-flat minor).

3.12 *Prière* No. 11

The use of a quaver compound time signature in *Prière* No. 11 marks a departure from the previous prayers (*Prière* No. 5 used a crotchet compound time). At a glance, there appears to be many different and diverse rhythmic motifs but in essence they all stem from the basic metric component of the governing time signature: a dotted crotchet. The following outlines the main motivic movement that is associated with this *Prière*:

The image displays five musical motifs on a single staff with a treble clef and a 12/8 time signature. Motif X is a sequence of notes starting with a dotted quarter note, followed by eighth notes, and ending with a quarter note. Motif X-1 is a shorter sequence of notes. Motif X1 is a sequence of notes with a dotted quarter note at the end. Motif Y is a sequence of notes with a dotted quarter note at the end. Motif Z is a sequence of notes with a dotted quarter note at the end.

There are other rhythmic interests in this composition that are worthy of mention, and will be discussed later. Their exclusion from being classified as motivic is due to the fact that their appearance is not consistent throughout the piece or a main section of it.

The underlying fundamental rhythmic movement of this composition is the quaver-crotchet action that is found in motif X-1. This pulsing rhythm is present in the left hand part and the pedal line of the piece, or moving between both of them, in the first section. It is used in the second section also and is combined with motif X1 in the left hand part which has melodic dominance. Motif X and motif X1 are dynamic. They have significant rhythmic variation attached to their construction. Their tonal expression is also dynamic with both X and X1 used in the context of the prevailing melodic idiom. Motif X-1 is static and plays a more supportive role to the other motifs. The following example shows the significance Alkan places on motifs X and X-1:

Example 3.12.1: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 11 bars 1–beat 1 of bar 3

The musical score for Example 3.12.1 consists of three staves. The top staff is for the right hand (Mains), the middle staff is for the left hand (Mains), and the bottom staff is for the pedal (Pieds). The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 12/8. The tempo is marked 'Andantino' and 'Ingenuamente'. The left hand part is marked 'Dolce e Sostenuto.' The right hand part begins with a rest for two beats, followed by a melodic line. The left hand part begins with a rest for two beats, followed by a rhythmic accompaniment. The pedal part is a simple bass line.

Alkan preserves the integrity, and asserts the prominence, of motif X-1 by allowing three of the four voices in the above example to use it solely. In fact the first seventeen bars of the piece are controlled by the rhythmic regularity of motif X-1 as the accompaniment pattern, with motif X (and slight variants of it) dominating the melodic line up to and including bar 16.

Rhythmic motif X1 is similar in construction to motif X. The presence of the dotted rhythm in motif X1 breaks the repetitive cycle of motif X-1's usage in the left hand part and the rhythmic metre is slightly jilted by the use of syncopated staccato quaver chords in the right-hand part moving in rhythmic unison with the pedal line. The contrast here between staccato and legato emphasises the dotted rhythm further with the prolonged use of the syncopation (ten bars) destabilising the rhythmic metre and promoting a negative metric flow — as it is emphasising the second quaver in each group of three. This counter-rhythmic affect becomes more obvious when the two outer parts repeat the same chord/note over a two (or more) bar period. The following example illustrates this:

Example 3.12.2: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 11 bars 24 and 25

The musical score for Example 3.12.2 is presented in three staves. The top staff (treble clef) contains a right-hand part with staccato chords, marked with *poco cresc:*. The middle staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line, marked with *(Cantabile.)* and *(Legato)*. The bottom staff (bass clef) contains a left-hand part with a pedal line, marked with *poco cresc:*. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4.

The opening material returns by way of two four-bar phrases, with motifs X and X-1 being used in the same manner as they were in the opening. The structure here is of two four-bar phrases, the second of which ends on the chord of V (B major) with this forming the basis for a perfect cadence back into the tonic (E major) for the introduction of motif Y.

This motif is used to structure a melodic line that Alkan refers to as *Nobilmente* in the score. The style has changed from a chordal-based homophony to a melody-reliant homophony. The supporting accompaniment part moves in dotted crotchets in the pedal line, establishing a steady 12/8 pulse, with static quaver chords in the left hand part. As with some of the other *Prières*, Alkan presents the rhythmic lines in an organised manner from larger note values to smaller note values. This dissimilation of motion, from the pedal line upwards from largest to smallest note value, adds a rhythmic depth to the composition.

Motif Y, in the context surrounding its use and development, is a stabilising motif. The sustained structure helps to ground the rhythm and there is a general sense that the music has slowed down at this point. There is no direction to play any slower, however, the harmonic rhythm has changed and this helps in the perception of a change of speed. Example 3.12.3 outlines the use of motif Y, while also illustrating the singular occurrence of semiquavers in the pedal part.

Example 3.12.3: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No 11 bars 36–37 and 44

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The semiquaver movement seen in the above example, that is a part of motif Y, is anticipatory in essence. The actuality, or the rhythmic and tonal potential, of these semiquavers is seen with the introduction of motif Z. The final motif, Z, appears at bar 46 as part of a small four-bar section. At this point the familiar melodic idiom that has become associated with the use of motif X is now heard in the pedal line.

Motif Z adds a certain momentum to the rhythm of this particular *Prière* and, combined with its appearance in the upper register, shifts the focus away from motif X and also the staticism that was linked to motif Y of the previous section. The motif itself is rhythmically static as it does not diversify with regard to its structure (six semiquavers). The inclusion of a starting grace note does nothing to

decrease the motif's fundamental staticism. However, the motif's tonal expression is perceived to be dynamic as it utilises the entire upper register of the instrument in flurried step-wise runs and arpeggiated leaps while also being the only motif from which a sense of 'melody' can be gleaned at that particular time in the composition. This apparent paradoxical behaviour is something that Alkan promotes in this set of works and indeed in the other sets examined in chapters 4 and 5. This type of motivic behaviour can, therefore, be labelled as being latently-dynamic. The following illustrates this:

Example 3.12.3: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 11 bar 46

The tonal dynamism of the otherwise rhythmically-static motif Z can clearly be witnessed in the example above.

By way of total contrast the succeeding four-bar section halts all the flowing movement of motifs X and Z by reducing the rhythmic activity to continuous chordal repetitions of motif X-1. From bars 36 to 58 Alkan alternates contrasting sections but keeps at least one 'familiar' element of tonality or rhythm as part of

each in order to maintain structural unity. At bar 54 Alkan unifies all these compositional elements by way of introducing a section that utilises motivic juxtaposition. The following example illustrates this:

Example 3.12.4: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 11 bars 54–55

In the final ten bars of the piece Alkan uses motif X-1 in the pedals, playing octaves, repeating the tonic note, E. This is eventually stated seventy-one times in succession. This type of intense repetition is common in Alkan's works and is a feature of his harmonic style.

3.13 *Prière* No. 12

Prière No. 12 presents a composition that has three dominant rhythmic motifs at its core. The first rhythmic motif, motif X, is dynamic and forms the rhythmic structure of the dominant thematic material of this piece. Motif Y is a variation of motif X and as a result of this, and being part of a melodic line, it is dynamic.

Motif Z is a static rhythm, and is used to distort the rhythmic metre. It is a single triplet implying a shift in the rhythmic metre from a strong 2 beats, to a weaker pseudo-three beat pattern. Essentially, it is a counter rhythmic motif that is fighting the rhythmic supremacy of motif X in the final stages of the piece. The three motifs can be outlined as follows:

The image shows three rhythmic motifs on a staff with a 2/4 time signature. Motif X is a 4-beat rhythmic palindrome: quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter, quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter. Motif Y is a 2-beat rhythmic unit: quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter. Motif Z is a 3-beat triplet: quarter, eighth, eighth.

Motif X, as can be seen above, is part of a rhythmic palindrome that appears throughout this piece. The following example is of the opening four bars of this *Prière* and illustrates motif X and its tonal expression:

Example 3.13.1: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 12 bars 1–4

The image shows the first four bars of the piece. The top part is for the hands (MAINS) in 2/4 time, marked *Allegretto* and *p, e Sostenuto*. The bottom part is for the feet (PIEDS) in 2/4 time, marked *Sempre l'8va bassa solamente*. The piece is in B-flat major. The first three bars show the main part playing a rhythmic pattern of chords and eighth notes, while the feet play a simple eighth-note accompaniment. The fourth bar features a triplet in both parts, marked *ten:*.

The boxed notes highlight the rhythmic palindrome as outlined in the rhythmic presentation of motif X above. It can clearly be seen that it is also a partial *tonal* palindrome as the harmony is the same (when played/read forwards or backwards) but the *notes* are different in bar 3 — with the F major chord changing from root position to second inversion (in the manual part). The reason why the entire palindrome is not considered as a self-contained rhythmic (and tonal) unit is due to the rhythmic material that follows it. It can be seen that bar 3 and the first beat of bar 4 (the four semiquavers) are rhythmically identical to the palindrome's *foundation rhythm* which is bar 1 and the first beat of bar 2 (the four semiquavers). It is for this reason, and the repetition of this idea throughout the composition, that the rhythmic organisation of four quavers followed by four semiquavers is considered to be the fundamental structure of motif X.

Motif X's tonal expression is dynamic and the level of dynamism surrounding this motif is increased as a result of it being played in unison an octave apart (the right hand treble part and the left hand bass part in the example above). This type of tonal behaviour becomes a feature of motif X. From the second phrase of this composition Alkan introduces a chromatic element that attaches itself to Motif X tonally. It almost always appears 'under' this motif as a descending three-note (or sometimes four-note) figure. The following example outlines the use of motif X and the underlying chromaticism (bracketed) that is associated with it:

Example 3.13.2: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 12 bars 9–10

The musical score for Example 3.13.2 consists of three staves. The top two staves are for the right hand, and the bottom staff is for the left hand. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo/mood is marked 'Sempre.' above each staff. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth notes and rests, and a chromatic line in the right hand. The left hand has a simple rhythmic pattern with rests.

In the example above the low-level chromaticism has no real affect on the prevailing harmony and the B-natural in the first bar can be explained as an accented passing note. However, with the introduction of chromatic notes Alkan allows the music a greater tonal freedom and the ability to modulate abruptly.

The bars in Example 3.13.2 above begin a statement of the opening idea in the dominant (C major). The fundamental rhythmic structure of this tonal answer to the initial tonic statement is the same and in the bars that follow on from the example above a more abrupt form of modulation occurs to the mediant major (E major). This type of modulation is more prevalent in this piece than perhaps all of the others in this set and again there is another mediant modulation, to G major.

Motif Y is introduced at bar 19 and has a similar construction to that of motif X. The initial modulation here at the beginning of this section is ambiguous as the cadential pattern is chromatic resulting in a mediant major modulation from E major to G major. From bar 19 Alkan also eliminates the rests in the pedal part

and this has the perceived affect of destabilising the metric flow. The following example helps to contextualise these points:

Example 3.13.3: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 12 bars 18–21

The musical score shows three systems of music. The top system consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The middle system consists of a single bass staff. The bottom system consists of a single bass staff. The first system (bars 18-21) is boxed. Above the piano part, there are markings 'ten:' and 'Dolce e Sostenuto'. The piano part has markings 'ten:', 'Dolce e Sostenuto', and 'p'.

The perfect cadence in bar 18 (the first bar of Example 3.13.3 above) in E major is almost immediately negated with the mediant-major modulation across the barline, seen in the boxed notes. The modulation is executed via the shortest distance — chromatically. With the B natural remaining at the same pitch the G-sharp and E-natural just *slide* upwards to create an entirely new, unrelated key. The G major (dominant) seven chord however, suggests that the cadence is incomplete. Alkan adds an air of expectancy to the music by delaying any *perceived* resolution until bar 28 — with the statement of a root position C major chord. Until then, he facilitates tonal ambiguity by repeating the Gs in the pedal line, as they appear in the above example, over which the manuals supply contrapuntal patterns that sequentially ascend the instruments’ register. Example 3.13.4 below shows the rising tonal sequential pattern.

The note C then becomes the focus of this sub-section, being used in unison in all the parts doubled at the octave. This section is again similar to the one that preceded it by being used as an elongated chord of V facilitating a modulation back to the tonic (F major). This repeated use of a single-chord harmonic structure is a tool that Alkan uses extensively in his music, be it solo piano or pedal piano/organ.

The upward motion of the inner motif adds a ‘creeping’ effect to the music. Each of the three groups of double semiquaver–quaver starts higher than the preceding one, even though the actual motion of the three notes is stepwise downward. The example below illustrates the emphasis on the splitting of motif Y, and the other features that have been outlined.

Example 3.13.4: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 12 bars 29 and 30

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains two measures of music. The first measure has a dynamic marking of *f* and the second measure has a dynamic marking of *p*. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains two measures of music. The first measure has a dynamic marking of *f*. The music features a series of chords and melodic lines, with a focus on the splitting of motif Y.

The last motif to be used in this piece is the crotchet triplet gesture and it appears towards the end of the piece, in the coda. It has no great melodic significance with constant repetitions of the notes C D E over an F in the pedals and F G A in

the left hand part. The upper pedal notes are a perfect fifth higher than the lower left-hand part and the strong parallel motion is contrasted by the use of the opening motif in the right hand part.

The conflicting rhythms create a fresh tension in the music and the conflict between ‘new and old’ is very much apparent. The irregularity of the triplet motif automatically draws the listener’s attention to it, while also throwing the familiarity of motif X both rhythmically and tonally, in to flux. The triplet motif and its tonal expression create a sense of both poly-rhythmic and poly-tonal activity. This is mostly due to the constant repetitions of it in the pedal part. Alkan uses repetition to distort and sometimes confuse both the rhythmic and tonal planes of a composition. The following example shows the juxtaposition of the two motifs (X and Z).

Example 3.13.5: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No 12 bars 89–90

The musical score for Example 3.13.5 consists of four staves. The top staff is marked '8va' and contains a rapid, repetitive eighth-note pattern. The middle and bottom staves feature a triplet motif in the left hand, with the bottom staff also showing a single note in the right hand. The dynamic marking 'ff' is present in the first two staves.

Starting at bar 91 there begins a process of *textural* diminution. These final bars of the composition are dominated by the use of rests. Allowing the music to fade away, as opposed to ending abruptly, and coupling this with a very soft dynamic is one way in which Alkan instils a level of gentleness to the music. This strengthens the bond between title and piece.

3.14 *Prière* No. 13

The final piece from the set of prayers opens with a majestic fanfare that in-turn forms the basis for an opposing antiphonal section. The compound time signature of 12/8 is used in a dichotomous manner when faced with the counter rhythmic structure of the simple time signature of 4/4. Alkan structures the opening fanfare in compound time, and uses dotted notes and rests to construct a trumpet-like call with the semiquaver anacrusis that begins the fanfare motif adding credence to this idea.

The rhythmic structure, motivically, is centred around two basic ideas with each having secondary motifs to be considered also. The two main motifs, one from each section, are outlined as follows:

Motif X



Motif Y



These two motifs represent the main rhythmic interest that commands this piece. There are other motifs that are used in conjunction with the two motifs outlined above and these will be discussed later.

Motif X is dynamic. It is used in the opening fanfare, and subsequent repeats of this section, in rhythmic unison. Alkan adds textural interest to the opening section by expanding the ‘voices’ from four to five. The various voices in this section are considered as those notes/chords with ‘stems up’ or ‘stems down’. The inclusion of the fifth voice, in the pedal part, adds another dimension to the composition. Example 3.14.1 below illustrates the opening four bars of the piece. In the fourth bar of the example the introduction of the fifth voice can clearly be seen:

Example 3.14.1: Alkan 13 Prières, Op. 64 No. 13 bars 1–4

The musical score for the first four bars of Alkan's 13 Prières, Op. 64 No. 13, is presented in three staves. The top staff is for the right hand (Mains), the middle staff is for the left hand (Mains), and the bottom staff is for the pedal (Pieds). The piece is in 12/8 time, key of D major, and marked 'Largement et majestueusement'. The Mains parts are marked 'f, e Sostenuto'. The Pieds part is marked 'Sempre coll 8va bassa'. The score shows the introduction of a fifth voice in the fourth bar.

The importance of motif X is illustrated in the above example as it appears in every bar – either as homorhythmic chordal statements or in the pedal and lower manual bass part (notes with stems down). The chords that are utilised in bar 3 are the chords of I and V7, creating the idiom I – V7b – V – I. The above example represents the typical movement of both the opening fanfare and its reappearance antiphonally later on in the composition.

The opposing 4/4 section, using rhythmic motif Y, marks a change in the fundamental rhythmic pattern. It is also in this section that motif Z is introduced for the first time and this is outlined rhythmically as follows:

Motif Z

This motif is, in essence, a static rhythm and its tonal expression, in the context of the harmonic palette that is associated with motif Y, is also static. In spite of the lamenting tonal quality of motif Z, the real melodic interest is presented in the arrangement of motif Y. Motif Y is a dynamic rhythm and its tonal expression is

also dynamic. The following example illustrates the rhythmic movement of the 4/4 sections:

Example 3.14.2: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 13 bars 9–10

The musical score for Example 3.14.2 is presented in three staves. The top staff, representing the right hand, begins with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, and a whole note F#4. The middle staff, representing the left hand, features a continuous eighth-note pattern starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic. A staccato (*s:*) marking is placed above the first eighth note. The bottom staff is a separate bass line, also in 4/4 time, which remains mostly empty. Above the right hand staff, the tempo markings *Meme mouvement* and *Preghevole* are indicated. A piano (*p*) dynamic marking is also present above the right hand staff.

The example above also highlights the emphasis Alkan puts on ‘contrasts’ in this piece: the contrast between staccato and legato, very small note values and large note values, stepwise motion and leaps, clear phrasing and no phrasing, etc. This contrast is also seen on a larger scale within the composition as a whole. The antiphonal idea is strengthened further by having the opposing 4/4 section marked *p* contrasting against the *f* dynamic of the fanfare sections. Structurally, he maintains a sense of equilibrium by giving the 12/8 section and the 4/4 section eight bars each. This prevents either section from becoming structurally dominant.

In this composition Alkan demonstrates strict motivic loyalty by allowing the time signature to change on the last semiquaver of a bar of 4/4. The following example illustrates this:

Example 3.14.3: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 13 last beat of bar 15–bar 17

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is the treble clef, the middle is the bass clef, and the bottom is a separate bass line. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 12/8. The score shows the end of bar 15, bar 16, and the beginning of bar 17. A 'Dim:' marking is above the first staff in bar 15. A 'f' dynamic is marked in the middle staff in bar 16. The time signature changes from 12/8 to 12/8 (with a shorter first beat) at the start of bar 17.

Interestingly, the change of time signature to facilitate the up-beat into bar 17 is perhaps unnecessary. The compound fundamental of this 12/8 rhythmic motif is not actualised until the quaver movement is introduced later on.

Alkan's loyalty to motivic preservation is obvious from the example above and his decision to include the change of time signature to emulate the up-beat that was heard with the first instance of this motif is testament to this. The bar in which the change of time signature is introduced is shortened by a semiquaver; the rhythmic value by which motif X starts. By changing the time signature Alkan makes every effort to maintain the integrity of the motif by allowing the pace of the tripartite rhythmic beat, associated with the compound time signature, to be actualised from the first note of this motif's (motif X) reappearance. The rhythmic quality of the semiquaver therefore differs between simple time and compound time and Alkan acknowledges this. Again, this type of behaviour raises the question of listener perceptibility when considering the 'visual versus aural' dichotomy.

The motivic movement in the remainder of this piece alternates between motif X and motifs Y and Z. There is an episodic section that presents some developed elements of motifs X and Z. It shares a similar structure to motif X, seen in the repetition of the quaver chords in the example below. The link with motif Z is also based on a structural similarity, except in this instance it is an elongated version of the original Z rhythmic grouping. This too can be seen in Example 3.14.4 below.

Example 3.14.4: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 13 bars 39 and 40

The musical score for Example 3.14.4 consists of three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a melodic line of quarter notes and half notes, marked with a slur and a fermata. The middle staff is a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a quaver chord accompaniment, also marked with a slur and a fermata. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a simple bass line of quarter notes. The tempo/mood is marked 'Dolce, Cantabile e Sostentissimo' with an 8va dynamic marking. The music shows a clear polyrhythmic structure between the melodic line and the accompaniment.

This section leads back in to further statements of Y and Z together showing perhaps one of the only instances of explicitly-notated polyrhythm in Alkan’s musical output (bar 53). In the context of Alkan’s compositional style and method, this is significant as motivic juxtaposition is one of his favoured tools for unifying the various constructs of a piece. Here, he juxtaposes the rhythms

associated with the dominant motifs. The following example shows the bar with the written polyrhythm:

Example 3.14.5: Alkan 13 *Prières*, Op. 64 No. 13 bar 53

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It consists of three staves. The top two staves are in 4/4 time, and the bottom staff is in 12/8 time. The music is written in G major (one sharp). The top two staves feature complex rhythmic patterns with many sixteenth notes and triplets. The bottom staff has a slower, more melodic line with a large interval of a major sixth between the first and second notes. The overall texture is dense and polyrhythmic.

The final *Prière* is a fitting end to the set as a whole. The *majestic* feel to the tonality and rhythm from the opening (and ending) sections, sets the overall tone of this *Prière*. In its own right, this piece highlights the importance that Alkan places on repetition — both micro and macro — and his ability to combine ideas to create new structures in rhythm (polyrhythm).

3.15 Conclusion

The *13 Prières* are therefore a collection of pieces that are chiefly dominated by a distinct homophonic style of writing. Included in almost all of the *Prières* to some degree, is a reliance on melody-dominated homophony that, when placed beside other styles, works so well in the structural construction of each individual piece. It is this semi-reliance on homophonic writing that unifies the *13 Prières* and justifies their inclusion in one set.

The inclusion of certain modal⁴ episodic phrases within the compositional structure of some of the pieces that make up the Op. 64 *Prières* serves as a link between ‘Title and Piece’. They assert the transcendental impetus behind their construction, even if not all of the pieces are meditative or indicate a religious feeling or sentiment. The practice of elongating a cadential pattern is something that Alkan makes great use of both in these *Prières* and in his piano music generally. This contrasts directly with his avoidance to explicitly present the tonic key at the opening of a piece as in *Prière* No. 1.

From this analysis of the *Prières*, it can be seen that there are definite compositional practices used by Alkan in this set of works that act as a common denominator when considering the set as a whole. The use of repeated notes and/or chords in the accompanying parts of these pieces makes it a unifying

⁴ When referring to modal harmony I am not merely referencing the major mode or minor mode, instead, I am referring to the Gregorian Modes. For example, the progression I - IIIM is linked to the Dorian mode as the third and seventh degrees of this scale are flattened resulting in a major chord on the chord of III. In *Prière* No. 10, Alkan uses the progression I – VIIM – this progression can be related to the Mixolydian Mode.

feature too. One of the main elements of consideration that can now be seen is the novel use of rhythm that Alkan employs in the *Prières*. His predilection towards smaller note values in a considerable number of the *Prières*, coupled with shifting time signatures abruptly signifies a fascination with manipulating the rhythmic metre within a piece but without the need to use irregular time signatures.

The introduction of new motivic material that appears to have little or nothing in common with the established and developed motifs is something that Alkan does often in these *Prières*. Whether they are episodic insertions, as seen in *Prière* No. 10, or just foreign motifs that are introduced, Alkan seems to make this structural and thematic movement an actual feature of this particular set of works.

The tonal organisation of these *Prières* does not appear to follow a particular pattern. This perhaps suggests that a broad tonal/harmonic palette is what Alkan desired; partly borne out by the presence of tritonic intervals between the tonic keys of *Prière* Nos 8, 9, 10 and 11. However, the set are very definitely book-ended by *Prières* 1 and 13, with 1 acting as an introduction to the set and 13 acting as the finale or summary. It is this aspect of the *Prières* that suggests they may have been intended for performance as a set. This, however, does not detract from the fact that each *Prière* is an independent compositional structure and, as such, can be played in isolation from the set.

There are a number of extra-musical factors that also need to be addressed particularly that of *visual versus aural*. Sometimes that which is seen in the score

is lost in that which is heard via an interpreted performance. The visual elements of the score cannot transcend the homogenous affect of the aural pianistic *sound*.

These differences will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6 and will be broadened to include the findings of the pieces examined as part of chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4

An Analysis of the

Op. 66 11 Grands Préludes et 1 Transcription du Messie de Handel

4.1 Introduction

This set of preludes, with the Handel transcription attached, illustrates diversity in Alkan's compositional ability and style that perhaps best represents the composer's last creative period. The inclusion of the Handel transcription is another indicator of Alkan's appreciation of early music.

Alkan's ability to manipulate and develop small-scale motivic structures is again evident in this set of works. The analysis will focus on these motivic structures and examine their composition and their interaction and influence on the piece as a whole. Importantly, their function will be assessed and defined in consideration with the level of influence they exert on the overall structure of each individual prelude. This demonstrates how Alkan uses the various motifs to bring unity to his compositions.

Alkan's particular use of rhythm becomes more obvious in this set of works: from simplistic but forceful gestures, to strict adherence of governing time signatures resulting in rhythmic manipulation. Combining Alkan's rhythmic colour with his

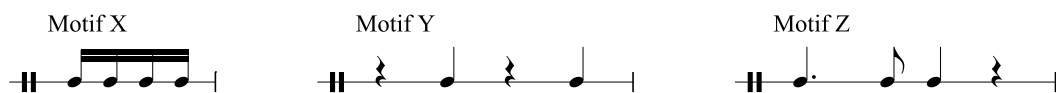
individual sense of tonality, points to a compositional originality that cannot be denied.

The tonal organisation of this cycle sees the *Préludes* presented in a descending cycle of fifths. This contrasts with Chopin's Op. 28 *Préludes* which are presented in an ascending cycle of fifths.

4.2 *Prélude* No. 1

Structurally, this first prelude presents few difficulties. It is the shortest of the set, at just thirty bars in length, and is reminiscent of a baroque style; beginning with a pedal solo and using multiple sequential patterns. The main focus of the piece is on the pedal activity or the motif that begins in the pedal line.

There are five basic rhythmic groupings present in this piece. Of these five, just three can be said to be motivic, and of these three motifs just one dominates the entire piece structurally. The three main motifs can be outlined in the following way:



Motifs Y and Z play a small role in the overall structure of this piece and it is really motif X that dominates throughout the entire composition. The following

example is taken from the opening four bars of the piece and highlights the importance placed on the first rhythmic motif:

Example 4.2.1: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 1 bars 1–4

Allegro (M. M. ♩ = 100)

Motif X is essentially a static rhythm which is latently dynamic. The continuous semiquaver movement is broken only twice throughout the piece: firstly, for one bar, at bar 19 and secondly for the closing cadential section. Another function of this motif is one of rhythmic distortion. This can be seen in Example 4.2.1, where the sequential pattern begins on the second beat of the bar, which becomes even more pronounced from bars two to five. Harmonically, this motif relies on the affects of the under auxiliary which is, for the most part, a chromatic inflection. This constant destabilising of the tonic due to the chromaticism adds tension to the music.

The sequential patterns that are observed in the opening bars of this prelude are worth mentioning in both a rhythmic and harmonic context. Firstly, the rhythmic meter is distorted from the very beginning of the piece; the opening two bars, from an auditory perspective, imply a five-beat metre or an upbeat plus four beats. This facilitates the sequence starting on the weaker second beat of the bar and finishing on the downbeat of the succeeding bar, which now appears to be neutralised. Secondly, it is the harmonic language involved in this opening section that facilitates the rhythmic distortion and in a very distinct way.

Each link of the sequential pattern begins with an octave leap, starting with the same notes with which the previous link ended. This clearly creates a perception of 'ending and beginning' — a musical full stop, followed by a new musical 'sentence'. In this instance, the rhythmic distortion that is experienced here is reliant on the tonality. As the piece progresses, however, this is less obvious as the rhythmic distortion becomes more autonomous relying less on the functioning tonality.

The latently-dynamic quality of motif X becomes more apparent when it is used in a supportive role to the episode occurring in the upper voices from bars 20 to 25 inclusive. It is during this episodic section that motif X is slightly repressed. Until this point, as a consequence of it being stated solely and used sequentially, a quasi-melodic line has been experienced. During the episode, however, the focus is shifted away from motif X and placed on the activity taking place in the upper voices, which is itself a sequential pattern.

The episode is structured in a similar manner to the opening, with the use of an ascending harmonic sequence. It can be seen in the example below that there is a certain play on the note values used; minim chords supported by the semiquaver movement of motif X, then crotchets supported by the same, and finally quavers with motif X accompanying still. There is a sense of the upper voices speeding up to meet the rhythmic demand of motif X. All parts achieve rhythmic (and harmonic) unison, ending the episode and reasserting the dominance of motif X. The following example is of the six-bar episode before the rhythmic unison is achieved:

Example 4.2.2: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 1 bars 20–25

The musical score consists of two systems, each with three staves. The first system is marked *Dolce e Sostenutissimo*. The second system is marked *Sempre*. The bass line features a continuous eighth-note pattern, while the upper staves play chords that change in each bar. The key signature has one flat (B-flat major or D minor).

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of three staves. The top staff is a treble clef with a melodic line. The middle staff is a treble clef with a harmonic accompaniment. The bottom staff is a bass clef with a rhythmic accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings 'Dolce' and 'p'.

The rhythm used in the episode's upper parts is fundamentally dynamic. The use of a varying rhythmic meter, combined with the sequential pattern in its first four bars, alludes to the emergence of an independent melodic line. However the reintroduction of motif X in rhythmic unison prevents the perceived melody in the episode from gaining any further opportunity for development.

The second motif is used in the opening eight bars, and serves to punctuate the rhythmic flow of the bass line, with chords marked *f*. It is a static rhythm whose appearance is limited to a maximum of four bars. From its first statement it generates a further distortion of the rhythmic metre. As with motif X, motif Y makes a point of emphasising the second beat of the bar and this is further exaggerated by the use of the loud dynamic.

The limited use of motif Y perhaps places some doubt on its consideration for inclusion as a dominating rhythm. However, the continuity that is achieved between motifs X and Y regarding rhythmic distortion resulting in a negative metric flow merits mentioning. The inclusion of motif Y as a dominating

rhythmic pattern within this piece is, therefore, justified. The following example illustrates the emphasis that motif Y places on the weak beat emphasising a negative metric flow:

Example 4.2.3: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 1 bars 5–6

The musical score for Example 4.2.3 consists of three staves. The top two staves are a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a forte (*f*) dynamic marking. The bottom staff is a single bass clef staff with a forte (*f*) dynamic marking. The music features a negative metric flow with a half diminished seventh chord on the fourth beat of each bar.

The negative metric flow is further exaggerated by the tension that is placed on the beat via the half diminished seventh chord (a diminished triad with a minor seventh) which occurs on the fourth beat of each bar of the above example. The combined effect of both of these rhythmic and harmonic elements, illustrates a simple but effective usage.

The third rhythmic motif is perhaps best described as a rhythmic gesture. The significance of this particular motif becomes more apparent as the set of works are analysed individually. This particular motif or gesture appears in almost all of the *11 Grands Préludes* and it is for that reason that it merits inclusion. In the first prelude it is stated only twice, and has a ‘calling’ quality, which is heightened by the octave leap. As if Alkan wishes to emphasis the Bachian style used in this first prelude he uses this calling octave leap to highlight or hint at a modulation to

the dominant. The harmonic movement that takes place from beat four of bar 14 to beat one of bar 15 is V7 – Ic in F major which negates the previous allusion that a modulation had occurred. The second inversion tonic chord prevents the occurrence of a complete perfect cadence in the tonic, adding impetus to the flow of both rhythm and harmony. The following example shows motif Z in its ‘calling’ role. Also illustrated in the example below is a Note of Rhythmic Anticipation (N.R.A.): a note whose value is used singularly and unrelated to preceding rhythmic activity but anticipates succeeding rhythmic activity. It is used as a ‘rhythmic cadence’ in relation to halting the activity of motif X.

Example 4.2.4: Alkan 11 Grands Préludes Op. 66 No. 1 bars 14–16

The musical score for Example 4.2.4 consists of two systems of three staves each, representing bars 14, 15, and 16 of Alkan's 11 Grands Préludes Op. 66 No. 1. The key signature is one flat (F major) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system covers bars 14 and 15. The second system covers bar 16. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a grand staff brace, and various musical markings such as dynamics (*mf*, *f*, *Cres.*) and articulation. A specific note in the first system is labeled as a 'Note of Rhythmic Anticipation' with an arrow pointing to it.

The anticipatory nature of this note is realised twice in the piece, its first realisation comes at bar 19 bringing to an end the rhythmic unison of motif X. Harmonically, this passage of rhythmic unison has a significant baroque influence as it is constructed on a chain of descending first inversion chords. The rhythmic cadence that is perceived by the realisation of the N.R.A. is strengthened by the harmonic language surrounding its usage.

This third motif attempts to re-establish the time signature by ending on the structural downbeat. However, it is not until the occurrence of the episode (which occurs later on in the piece but has been discussed previously) that a true sense of the 4/4 time signature is appreciated. A closer look at Example 4.2.2 shows the positive metric flow (i.e. adhering to the governing time signature) of the upper parts conflicting with the negative metric flow (i.e. placing a greater emphasis on the weaker beats of the governing time signature) of the pedal line.

The point of arrival for the chain of 6-3 chords is the chord of IVb (the first realisation of the N.R.A.) which in turn becomes the structural harmonic basis for an augmented sixth chord, the German sixth (the second realisation of the N.R.A.). The augmented sixth chord adds a certain degree of expectation to the composition concerning its resolution. It is here with the resolution that the episode begins, with motif X being repeated both rhythmically and harmonically as it appeared in the opening bars of the prelude. The resolution in the pedal part is, however, delayed, with the expected note C not being heard until the fourth semiquaver. The following example illustrates these points:

Example 4.2.5: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 1 bars 17–20

The second realisation of the N.R.A. occurs in the final bars of the composition. Here it serves as the rhythmic pattern for the piece's final cadence, this time preceded by motif X in rhythmic and harmonic unison.

This opening prelude from the set could itself be considered as a prelude to the remaining ten. It is structured in a Neo-Baroque style, reflecting the impact and influence of the early music revival. The busy pedal line is truly reminiscent of those employed by Bach in his organ music. The use of repetition is one of the main features of this prelude, accentuated by the use of sequences, and at just thirty bars' duration it is the shortest prelude of this set.

4.3 *Prélude* No. 2

The second prelude of this set marks an obvious departure from the structures that were laid out in the first. Rhythmically, it contrasts directly with the somewhat minimalist approach that is seen in the first prelude.

There are a number of important rhythmic (and harmonic) features in *Prélude* No. 2 that appear throughout the Op. 66 *Préludes*; the first bar of the composition contains the beginnings of three separate ideas. The rhythmic gesture *R* (see Example 4.3.1 below) plays a significant role in this composition, but because of its ‘size’ (a half beat with two grace notes), it will not be considered as a *motif*. This is also true of the gesture marked *B* (see Example 4.3.1 below) – which is a homorhythmic bass line that plays a supporting role to both the harmony and the rhythm, while also emphasising the positive metric flow of the piece. However, this motivic exclusion does not take from the prominent role that both *R* and *B* have on the overall flow of the piece. The remaining activity in bar 1 is the beginning of the first motif, motif X. The rhythmic outline of motif X is as follows:



Motif X is a dynamic rhythm incorporating, as it does, varying note values including a dotted rhythm. Its association is centred on a melodic line that is four bars in length, constructed with two statements of motif X: the first statement is a

descending scalar passage, while the second statement uses leaps and is generally ascending. This is then repeated.

Repetition plays an important role in Alkan's compositional method, and is a tool that he uses effectively and cleverly. Repetition in this piece can be considered on both levels; micro and macro. On the side of the micro level in this piece, there is the repetition of the *R* gesture. This type of repetition, as it appears in this prelude, is further exaggerated as a consequence of its tonality.

Macro repetition is an important concept in understanding Alkan's compositional process. There are few marked repeats in this set of preludes: the composer reserves or restricts actual use of the notation signalling a repeat to very large sections of a given piece. Instead, Alkan writes the repeats into the flow of the music. The opening eight bars of this prelude are testament to this, with the first four bars repeated identically. This practice is perhaps the best example of macro repetition.

The following example is of the opening four bars of the piece, and shows *R*, *B* and motif *X*. The dynamic quality of motif *X*'s rhythm is apparent, contrasting with the static homorhythmic pedal line and the repetitive rhythm of *R*. The micro repetition is visible in the upper treble part. As the entire four-bar phrase is then repeated, both micro and macro repetition occur.

It is also worth mentioning at this point that the second bar of motif *X* is identical to motif *Z* of the first *Prélude*. This particular rhythm appears again and again

throughout the set of *Préludes*, and its significance will be discussed at the end of the chapter.

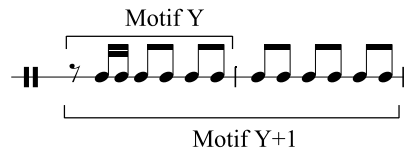
Example 4.3.1: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 2 bars 1–4

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff, labeled 'Mains.', is in treble clef and shows a repetitive rhythmic gesture (R) of eighth notes with rests, marked *mf*. The middle staff, labeled 'Pieds.', is in bass clef and shows a homorhythmic bass line (B) of quarter notes, also marked *mf*. A 'Motif x' is indicated in the Mains staff. The score is annotated with 'Energico' and 'mf' dynamics.

From this example, it can be seen that one fundamental compositional premise of this piece is contrary motion, particularly surrounding the usage of motif X. Harmonically, these early passages of motif X are structured on an intervallic relationship between it (motif X) and the homorhythmic pedal line (B).

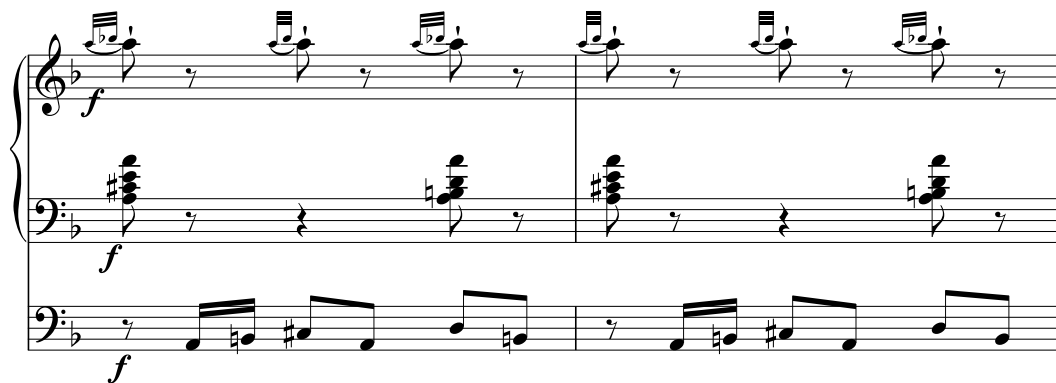
The second major rhythmic motif to be identified is marked Y. This rhythm is again dynamic, with its use of varying note values, and appears firstly in the pedal

line at bar 9, marking an end to the melodic line created by motif X. Extracting this motif results in the following:



While the note-grouping Y above is the fundamental premise of motif Y, the added bar to make $Y + I$ is necessary in order to capture the entire rhythmic nature of the motif. From the example below it can be seen that movement surrounding the use of this motif results in the following: $[Y + Y + (Y + I)]$. The eight bar statement of the motif, broken into two four-bar sections, is accompanied by *R*. This is structurally identical to the treatment of motif X, suggesting an antiphonal response. The following example helps to contextualise these ideas, while also bringing to light some possible internal relationships:

Example 4.3.2: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 2 bars 9–12





There exists a relationship between R in the treble and what can be labelled as the first derivative of $[Y + Y + (Y + I)]$, or algebraically $1 \rightarrow [Y + Y + (Y + I)]$, in the manual bass part. While the manual bass part is classified as the first derivative of the Y motif, it also has a harmonic link to R , insofar as they are both governed by the note ‘A’. While the ‘A’ is explicit in the upper manual part of Example 4.3.2, it is expressed in the manner of a chordal context in the manual bass part, providing the lowest and highest notes of each chord. Alkan’s ability to use a small idea and develop it both obviously and ambiguously plays an important role in these *Préludes* and in his *oeuvre* in general.

The harmony present in the above example is structured on a repeated progression of $V - vi7$ in D major, with the seventh of the $vi7$ chord (the note ‘A’) remaining at the same pitch in the manual bass part. This modulation to the tonic major is again ambiguous; with the section beginning on the chord of V it could be argued that the modulation was to the dominant major. However, this first section introducing motif Y is eight bars in length, and the second group of four bars begins on the chord of I in D Major, with the progression here being $I - V$. Taking the last bar of the above example and adding the first bar of the second

four bar section it can be clearly seen that the harmonic progression is Vb – vi7 – V // I – V7d/c grounding the modulation to the key of the tonic major, D Major.

The following example illustrates this:

Example 4.3.3: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 2 bars 12–13

D Maj: V (b) vi7 Vb V I V7d Vc

This eight-bar section of motif Y’s introduction exhibits partial-macro repetition: structurally, it is broken into two four-bar sections which are rhythmically identical, but harmonically different.

There is a rhythmic repeat of the opening section with the upper and lower manual parts exchanging roles; the *R* gesture in the lower manual part with motif X in the upper manual part. This time there is only partial-macro repetition: rhythmically the repetition is in groups of two bars (which is one statement of motif X), as was with the opening section, however, in this instance there is no harmonic repeat. Instead, the succeeding four bars are transposed up one tone from g minor to a minor. This leads into a quasi-developmental section involving a distorted occurrence of motif X. Here there is a heightening of both rhythmic and

harmonic tensions achieved by the use of triplets in the pedal part, which ornament the rhythm, combined with diminished chords on the manuals. The upper manual part makes use of both the harmonic and rhythmic tensions, with its chords occurring off the beat. This means that there are three different ‘rhythms’ occurring at the same time. The following example illustrates this harmonic and rhythmic tension and the distorted motif X.

Example 4.3.4: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 2 bars 25–26

From the above example, it can be seen that the negative metric flow that is being enforced by the upper manual part is a distortion of motif X. The accent on the crotchet chord in the second bar of the example reinforces this off-set rhythm. The diminished chords in the manual part in the second bar are ambiguous. When considering the bass line, they are in fact the remaining notes of the dominant chord – A major. The clash between the major seventh in the pedal line (the under auxiliary note G sharp) and the minor seventh (the G natural in the

‘diminished’ manual chords) adds a further sense of harmonic instability to this section.

This leads us to consider the use of chromaticism in Alkan’s music. The top notes of the first three chords in the upper manual part in bar 1 of the example above combine to form a descending chromatic pattern. When the upper notes of the corresponding chords in the lower manual part are considered along side of these, it is noticed that the movement here is in tones — contrasting directly with the semitonal chromatic movement in the upper manual part. This tone-verses-semitone movement, in the context of the governing chromaticism, adds to the destabilisation of the tonic harmony. These harmonic tensions are further heightened when the under auxiliary used in the pedal line is considered also; this being a chromatic inflection.

This seven-bar section throws the composition into a state of flux, with both rhythm and harmony affected. This section leads directly into a pseudo-climax that abruptly stabilises the rhythm and harmony through the use of rhythmic and harmonic unison, with the R gesture featuring in both manual parts. Despite the appearance of the R gesture, the composition regains a Positive Metric Flow, which is grounded by double-peddalling at the octave. It is in this section that a new rhythmic motif is discernable, motif Z. This motif is latently dynamic, as it is made up solely of quavers, but makes use of rests as rhythmic accent. The perceived melodic line here is best described as a melodic statement. It never quite gains any momentum, with it sounding somewhat disjointed. There is yet

another destabilisation of the structural downbeat with the presentation of this motif. The emphasis falls on the weak second beat of the bar. While the governing time signature is that of 3/4, the resulting tonal expression of this rhythmic motif creates the perception of 4/4. The motif can be outlined as follows:



The notes used in the tonal expression of motif Z are all diatonic (excluding the chromatic auxiliary notes seen in R) negating the preceding chromaticism. The final note in this section suggests a modulation to the dominant, ending on the note G-sharp. The following example illustrates the rhythmic and harmonic unison displayed in this section, and the suggested modulation:

Example 4.3.5: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 2 bars 32–33 and 39



Alkan develops the opening material by replacing R, in the upper manual part, with triplets grouped in sixes creating a tremolo or slow trill effect. This is further accentuated by restricting the movement to oscillations of a semitone, between the notes A and G-sharp. The pedal line is also developed a little here, with the addition of a second pedal line. The introduction of a lower pedal part, which is just repeated dotted minims of the note A, supports the upper manual part by allowing the dominant A major tonality to be constantly reinforced. The two static (both rhythmically and harmonically) outer extremes of this section control the basic harmonic language. The following example shows this:

Example 4.3.6: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 2 bars 40–41

The musical score for Example 4.3.6 consists of three staves. The top staff is the right hand, featuring a sixteenth-note triplet in the first measure, followed by a continuous sixteenth-note pattern. The middle staff is the left hand, starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic and playing chords. The bottom staff is a separate bass line, also starting with a piano (*p*) dynamic, featuring a dotted minim note and a long slur over several notes. The word *Dolce.* is written below the middle staff.

The development continues with the reintroduction of motif Y, this time in the manual bass part. The harmonic and rhythmic grounding in the pedal line is continued by the use of the dotted minim. The modulation this time is from the dominant major (A major) to the tonic major (D major). The major tonality here, coupled with the expression mark '*Dolce*', relieves any tension that was previously felt which is further reinforced by the Positive Metric Flow seen and heard in all the parts.

There is a sense here of being lulled into a false sense of security. The 'sweet' playing, the major tonality and the Positive Metric Flow add stability to the music and thus the sense of 'security'. Harmonically, the final bars of the development hint at a modulation, ending on the chord of V (A major), which leads into the climax of the composition. The example below shows these points:

Example 4.3.7: Alkan 11 Grands Préludes Op. 66 No. 2 bars 48–50 & 56–58

Bars 48–50

Musical score for bars 48–50. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass staff. The upper staff (treble clef) contains octave-doubled chords, with a dynamic marking of *Sustenutissimo e Dolce.* and a *8^{va}* marking above the staff. The middle staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p*. The lower staff (bass clef) contains a simple bass line with a dynamic marking of *p*.

Bars 56–58

Musical score for bars 56–58. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It consists of three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass staff. The upper staff (treble clef) contains octave-doubled chords, with a dynamic marking of *Poco smorz* and a *(8)* marking above the staff. The middle staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *Poco smorz.*. The lower staff (bass clef) contains a simple bass line with a dynamic marking of *Poco smorz.*

The climax of this composition uses the X motif and diminutions of it. In essence, it is a realignment of the distorted version of the X motif that began at bar 25 (see Example 4.3.4). The treatment it gets here is stronger, with a Positive Metric Flow being encouraged in all parts. The semiquaver movement in the upper pedal part (Example 4.3.4) gives this section its climactic edge, while adding a sense of tension to the music also. Stability emerges from instability: the static nature of the semiquaver under auxiliary movement suggests a certain instability in the lower register, while the octave-doubled chords on the manuals

‘rise’ out of the underlying instability to bring a perceived stability to the music. However, true stability comes in the form of motivic juxtaposition between motif Y and motif Z, and coupled with the dynamic marking of *fff*, it makes a very apt end to the composition, leading into a two-bar ascending flurry on the manuals played in triplets of sixes, a sixth apart. The tonality changes again, with a suggestion of poly-tonality in this final section. The prevailing key is now the tonic major, used in the manual part (motif Z) in statements of harmonic and rhythmic unison, against g minor in the pedal part (motif Y). The composition ends in the tonic major. The following example illustrates this:

Example 4.3.8: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 2 bars 67–73

The musical score consists of three systems of three staves each. The first system (bars 67-70) features a right hand with sixteenth-note triplets and a left hand with eighth-note triplets. The dynamic marking is *fff*. The second system (bars 71-72) continues this texture. The third system (bar 73) shows a change in the right hand's key signature to two sharps (F# and C#), while the left hand remains in one flat (Bb). The dynamic marking remains *fff*.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of three staves: a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and a separate bass staff for the pedal line. The first system begins with a circled number '8' above a treble clef staff, indicating a repeat or a specific measure. The music features a complex texture with sixteenth-note runs in the upper staves and a more rhythmic, chordal pattern in the lower staves. The second system continues this texture, showing a transition to a new section with a double bar line. The notation includes various accidentals (sharps and naturals) and dynamic markings.

4.4 *Prélude* No. 3

The opening section of the third prelude is reminiscent of the first prelude in its layout — opening solo statement on the pedals, answered by a chordal reply on the manuals. However, after the chordal answer, there begins a third section that brings together harmonic elements of the first motif and second motif, resulting in a two-part texture. Repetition of these three basic ideas forms the foundation for the entire composition.

The piece opens monophonically with a pedal solo of nine bars duration. These opening nine bars can be broken down into four phrases of varying length. As Alkan does not restrict phrase length by quantifying it as a certain number of bars, there is a need to find a common denominator in all four phrases to calculate their durational value. In this instance, as the governing time signature is 6/8, the lowest common denominator, durationally, is the quaver: therefore, phrase length (when it needs to be considered) will be calculated by the number of quaver-beats contained within them.

Accordingly, the first phrase contains a total durational value equal to ten quavers and despite the time signature being in 6/8, no real sense of it is felt and this is further solidified by the presence of fermata at the end of each phrase adding extra durational value to each phrase's final note. The second phrase from the opening section is an augmentation of the first phrase with its total durational value equal to thirteen quavers. The third phrase begins with another statement of the tonic triad arpeggiated and also contains a suggested modulation to either the relative minor (g minor) or to the subdominant: the absence of a supporting harmony creates an air of ambiguity concerning this. The fourth phrase from the monophonic opening starts, as the others do, with the tonic chord arpeggiated and it is the longest of the four phrases with a durational value of eighteen quavers – with the phrase beginning on a quaver rest. The rest adds to the rhythmic distortion, as does the quaver tied across the barline to a dotted minim to end the phrase. The constant affirming of the tonic key is stabilised even further due to the fact that the entire nine bars remain exclusively diatonic – using only notes

from the B-flat major scale. This also adds to the modulatory ambiguity that is felt in the third phrase, there being no chromatic note. The following example helps to put these points in to context:

Example 4.4.1: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 3 bars 1–9

Andantino (M.M. 54 = ♩)

MAINS.

PIEDS.

Legato.
Quasi ad lib:

m.v.

m.v.

In extracting a rhythmic motif from the opening pedal solo, consideration must be given to the similarities in rhythm apparent in all four of its phrases. The dominating pattern that appears in this section (and later on in the composition) is as follows, and will be labelled motif X:

Motif X

This first motif is dynamic; using various note values, with its dynamic quality further enhanced as a consequence of the line being stated monophonically. This can be seen from Example 4.4.1.

The first notable feature in the example above is the omission of rests in the bars above the pedal line. If it is taken that this omission is intentional, then it forces a re-examination of voice placement in Alkan's music. The exclusion of rests in the empty bars could signify that the voices of the composition are one; moving through the various lines — the 'silence' in the empty bars playing its part, thus essentially notated. This is substantiated by the music that *is* present in the example above. The placing of all the stems upward allows for the hypothesis that it is being supported by a *silent* voice underneath. The instruction to play *mezza voce* could further support this argument.

After the constant assurance of the tonic key in the opening solo section, the second section of the piece begins in the manual bass part on the mediant major chord (D major), introducing the piece's first chromatic note (F sharp). This seven-bar section moves in three-part harmony, but not always in full chordal statements, and makes use of mediant major modulations. While the tonality of the piece becomes unstable, the rhythmic pattern starts to stabilise encouraging a Positive Metric Flow. The familiar 6/8 pattern of crotchet-quaver-crotchet-quaver is emphasised and the second rhythmic motif reflects this, and is outlined as follows:



The second motif is also dynamic, as it too exhibits various note values and is part of a melodic line. It is the repetition of this particular pattern that allows it to be included as a dominating rhythmic motif. The following example shows the first four bars of the second section and the contrasting texture to that which was used in the first section:

Example 4.4.2: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 3 bars 10–13



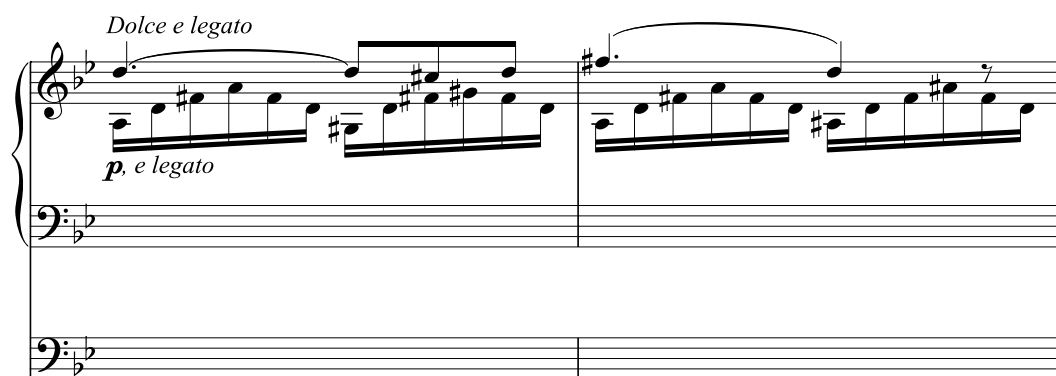
The third section is more contrapuntal by nature, with a two-part polyphony dominating the harmony. This section, appearing in the manual treble part, also builds on the chromaticism that was introduced in the second section. Rhythmically, there is the introduction of semiquaver movement as accompaniment in the lower of the two voices. These semiquavers, grouped in sixes, accentuate and promote a Positive Metric Flow, as does the rhythmic movement of the upper voice. Considering the similarities found in the rhythmic movement of the first section and the rhythmic movement of the upper voice in

the third section, the third rhythmic motif will focus instead on the semiquaver movement of the lower voice of the third section. This motif can be outlined as follows:



This motif is static, with the constant semiquaver movement adding to the perception of a faster tempo. The chromatic movement associated with this motif, coupled with the modulation pattern, creates a high level of tension in the music while also destabilising the tonic. The third section is the longest of the opening three at fifteen bars duration. The following example shows motif Z in its accompanying role, while also illustrating its chromatic feature:

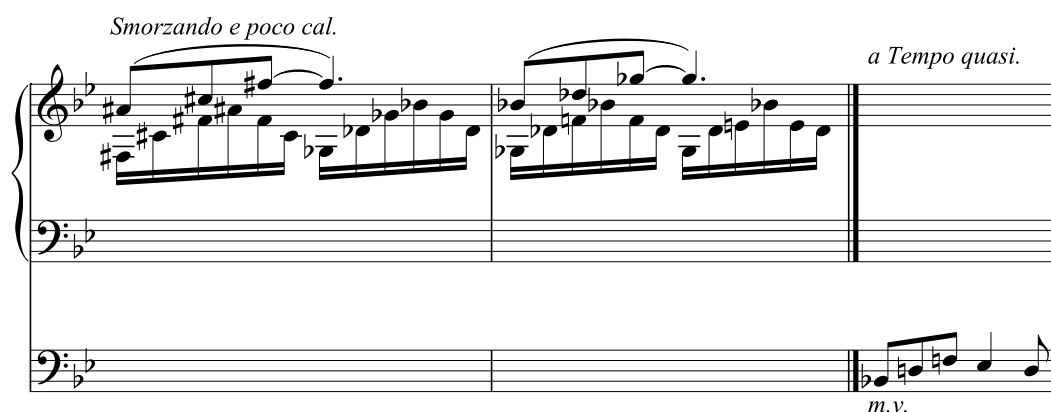
Example 4.4.3: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 3 bars 17–20





Alkan's clever use of tonality can sometimes be overlooked by only listening to his music. At times, what is heard is different from what is written, particularly in the case of enharmonic modulation. This clever use of tonality allows Alkan to re-establish the tonic key via the furthest possible harmony. The following example shows this enharmonic modulation, eventually leading back to the tonic key of B-flat major:

Example 4.4.4: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 3 bars 30–32



After all three individual sections have been heard, there begins a pattern of repetition starting with a repeat of the opening section. The following table

presents a summary of sections, bar numbers, the main motif in each section, and the key or prevailing harmony in each section.

Table 5: Sectional Divisions illustrating Dominant Motifs and Prevailing Harmony *Prélude No. 3, Op. 66*

<i>Sectional Title</i>	<i>Bar Numbers</i>	<i>Dominant Motif(s)</i>	<i>Prevailing Harmony</i>
A	1-9	X	B-flat Maj [Tonic]
B	10-16	Y	g min → c min → A-flat Maj → g min – ending on a chord of V7b in D Maj
C	17-31	Z	Melody in D Maj to bar 23 Melody in F-sharp Maj from bar 24 to 30 with an enharmonic modulation to G-Flat Maj occurring in bar 30-31 Accompaniment uses a rising chromatic idiom starting in D Maj at bar 17 and F-sharp Maj at bar 24
A1	32-38	X	B-flat Maj with two chromatic cords: dim7ths in RH, one at bar 35 the other at bar 38
B1	39-46	Y	Similar pattern as before except ending on V7c in c minor
C1	47-53	Z	Melody in c min with a more tonally stable accompaniment/less chromatic
D	54-65	Juxtaposition of X, Y & Z	Melody and accompaniment begin in c minor and from bar 60 engage in upward-sliding chromatics shift; with false relation establishing the tonal instability (g-flat in the RH against g-natural in the pedal)
A2 + Coda	66-end	X	Rhythmic and tonal unison in all parts in B-flat Maj

The intermittent chordal accompaniment in section A1 helps the transition from this section to B1, with the diminished seventh in the manual bass part (boxed notes in the example below) leading the listener inward to the D major chord, which can be seen in Example 4.5.5 below. As the entire nine bars from section A are not repeated, and the general harmonics are different, the repetition can be described as partial macro repetition.

Example 4.4.5: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 3 bars 37–40

The image shows a musical score for two systems. The first system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The bass staff contains a sequence of chords, with the final chord (a diminished seventh) enclosed in a box. The second system consists of a single bass clef staff with a melodic line and a 'Sostenuto.' marking above it.

Section B1 is almost identical to section B. This time, however, it is augmented by one bar and there are slight harmonic changes. The repetition is partial macro repetition, factoring in the changes in harmony and the augmentation. Section B1 ends with a diminished fifth, suggesting the chord of V in C major/minor, and facilitates a more subtle transition to the repeat of section C. In fact, the movement between the repeated sections is much smoother and less abrupt than the original statements from the opening thirty bars.

Section C1 again displays partial macro repetition, as the rhythm is the same but the governing harmony is different. Contrasting with its first statement, it is only seven bars in duration, after which point there begins motivic juxtaposition.

This concurrence of all the motifs brings together the three very separate sections that were initially outlined in the opening thirty-one bars of the piece and brings an element of unity to the structure of the composition: rhythmically, harmonically and motivically. The following example shows the coming together of all three motifs:

Example 4.4.6: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 3 bars 54–55

The musical score for Example 4.4.6 consists of three staves. The top two staves form a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The top staff is marked *Dolce.* and contains a melodic line of eighth notes with a slur. The bottom staff of the grand staff is marked *Sostenuto.* and contains a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The third staff is a separate bass clef staff containing a single melodic line starting with a *p* (piano) dynamic marking. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/4.

With all motifs now being stated at the same time, there begins a polarisation towards the piece's climax. Tension mounts in the form of chromaticism in all parts, but is particularly effective in the pedal where the repeated statements of the X motif end by rising a semitone each time.

Example 4.4.7: Alkan 11 Grands Préludes Op. 66 No. 3 bars 59–61

The musical score consists of three staves. The top two staves form a grand staff, with the upper staff in treble clef and the lower staff in bass clef. The bottom staff is a separate bass line in bass clef. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes performance markings: 'Cres - - - poco' and 'a - - - poco' above the grand staff, and 'p' below the bottom staff. The music features a semiquaver motif in the treble, a chordal motif in the bass, and a monophonic line in the bottom staff.

The first motif is ultimately the most dominant as the piece reaches its climactic end with both rhythmic and harmonic unison statements of the opening section. The final bars end with an implied Vc – I cadence, with the pedals remaining faithful to the original contour of the melody as laid out in the opening section. The implied chord of Vc here is again slightly ambiguous, as the chord is missing the third, A natural. The somewhat bleak sounding perfect fifths seem to complement the rich full texture of the final tonic chord.

This prelude is a ‘prelude of contrasts’. The most obvious contrasts lie in the differing harmonic sound or effect found in each individual section; the movement from monophony, to chordal homophony, to two-part polyphony. The clever outline of this piece is brought to light when the three major motifs come together and the realisation occurs that each motif is occurring in its original voice: the opening motif is still in the pedal part, the chordal motif is still in the manual bass part and the semiquaver motif is still in the manual treble part. These

strict treatments of motivic placement demonstrate clarity in Alkan's compositional process, assigning each viable part on the organ or pedal-piano a contrasting motif. The clever layering of motifs and their concurrent usage adds an interesting depth to this music.

4.5 *Prélude* No. 4

Prelude No. 4 of this set is structured on two main alternating, contrasting themes. Alkan makes these contrasts even more clear by assigning different traits to each of the two main themes. The first theme is centred on quick, 'punchy' chordal movement, with the music marked *mf*. The second theme is more sustained with a legato homophonic 'melody-and-accompaniment' style structure combined with a *p* dynamic.

Before attempting to identify the dominant motifs the following example should first be considered:

Example 4.5.1: Alkan 11 Grands Préludes Op. 66 No. 4 bars 1–4

Moderatamente. (M.M. 120 = ♩)

MAINS.

PIEDS.

In the example above Alkan creates the perception that there are two quasi-independent rhythmic lines present: that seen in the manual part and the other in the pedal part. On closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that the rhythmic movement outlined in the manual part is dependent on the rhythmic organisation in the pedal part for structural clarity. Therefore the rhythmic movement of the example above should be considered compositely. The example below illustrates this:

Example 4.5.2: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 4 bars 1 and 2

Composite Rhythm: exposing Motif X

Acknowledging *all* the rhythmic movement present in the opening two bars results in the exposition of motif X.

Motif X is a dynamic rhythm whose tonal expression is also dynamic. However the tonal dynamism is dependent on the pedal line as the melodic element that is attached to this motif is the music heard in the pedal line. It enforces a positive metric flow and despite the fuller-off beat chords in the manual part (which are tonally static¹), the predominating motion of the rhythm is still positive.

The opening twelve bars also engage in macro (partial) and micro repetition. The overall rhythmic structure of these bars is based on repetition: bars 1 and 2 are repeated *rhythmically* unaltered six times. The tonal structure of these twelve

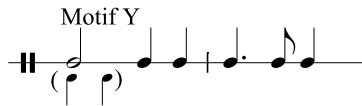
¹ The chords in the manual part are considered to be tonally static because the lowest note and highest note – octave Ds – are repeated at the same pitch despite the changing of the inner notes, *altering* the chord from G minor to D major.

bars is based on the tonic (g minor) and the relative major (B-flat major). The repetitious rhythmic structure, combined with the ‘familiar’ tonality, help to make motif X, and its tonal associations, memorable. This, in turn, makes the contrasting theme stand out — tonally and rhythmically. The relationship between the two is certainly dichotomous particularly with regard to articulation, texture and dynamic. The following example shows the opening bars of the contrasting thematic section:

Example 4.5.3: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 4 bars 13–16

The musical score for Example 4.5.3 is presented in two systems. The first system (bars 13-14) features a right hand (RH) with a melodic line starting on G4, moving to A4, Bb4, and C5. The left hand (LH) plays a rhythmic motif of eighth notes, with some sixteenth notes. The second system (bars 15-16) continues the RH melody and LH motif. The first system is marked *m.v. e Molto sostenuto* and *p, e legato*. The second system has a '6' under the first measure of the LH part. The RH part in the second system has a 'b' under the final note.

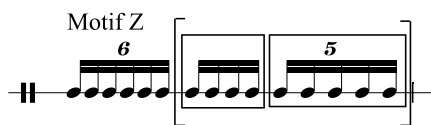
The rhythmic motif that can be extracted from the above example can be considered as follows:



Motif Y is also dynamic and enforces a positive metric flow. The presence of the dotted rhythm in motif Y, and the way in which Alkan treats it, is significant as he repeats it at bars 17 and 18 thus drawing emphasis to it. This section is of 18 bars duration and of these 18 bars the dotted motif appears in 8 of them either as part of the whole motif Y or independently. The two themes, although structurally different, are tonally related with each beginning on the tonic chord of G minor.

Also present in the example above (Example 4.5.2) is motif Z. This motif serves as the ‘unifying’ motif that links motifs X and Y and the sections concerned with their usage.

The following outlines motif Z:



The fundamental or basic unit of rhythm of motif Z is the semiquaver. The three varying portrayals of this motif are presented in the example above. The presentation of the rhythmic groupings in the example above (that is sextuplet, standard quadruplet and quintuplet) are mirrored to their appearance in the piece.

The first instance of the semiquaver motif is that of sextuplets and it is for that reason that this shall be considered as the primary rhythmic *grouping* of motif Z.

As can be seen from Example 4.5.3 motif Z plays an accompanying role in the contrasting B section. As the composition unfolds motif Z plays a melismatic role in the repeated A section. It is this act that allows the rhythmic organisation of motif Z to be called *unifying* as it binds the two contrasting sections together rhythmically even though the tonal function surrounding the usage of motif Z differs from section-to-section. The following example illustrates the use of motif Z in the third repeat of the opening A section:

Example 4.5.4: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 4 bars 62–63

The musical score for Example 4.5.4 is presented in two systems. Each system contains three staves: a right-hand staff (treble clef), a left-hand staff (bass clef), and a separate bass line (bass clef). The key signature is G-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The first system begins with a 'Sempre' marking. The right-hand staff features a melodic line with three sextuplets, each marked with a '6' and a bracket. The left-hand staff and bass line provide harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The second system begins with a circled '8' above the first measure. The right-hand staff continues with three more sextuplets, also marked with '6' and brackets. The left-hand staff and bass line continue their accompaniment. The score concludes with a first ending bracket in the final measure of the right-hand staff.

Alkan presents a strange arrangement of the sextuplet grouping in the second bar of the above example. This visual affect, which may be lost in both performance and an aural interpretation, sees the *tonal* idiom of three-note-chromatic-movement-plus-a-leap being preserved. The question must be asked, however; does this type of re-organisation have a general bearing on the rhythmic interpretation? The unusual re-grouping definitely affects the *placing* of the accent and serves to clash rhythmically with the positive metric flow that is being observed in the staves underneath. However the execution of such accent-altering measures is entirely dependent on the *performer's* interpretation.

Alkan's use of chromaticism in this *Prélude* is best illustrated by considering the following example:

Example 4.5.5: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 4 bars 42–45

The image shows a musical score for Example 4.5.5, consisting of three staves. The top staff is in the treble clef, the middle staff is in the bass clef, and the bottom staff is also in the bass clef. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The top staff contains a melodic line with a slur over three notes. The middle staff contains a sextuplet of eighth notes, indicated by a '6' below the staff. The bottom staff contains a single note with a slur underneath it.

Despite the inner part (the manual bass part) reciting around the note F in the above example, the outer parts use a descending chromatic movement. This can be seen in the pedal line where the tonal motion is exclusively descending-chromatic. Alkan makes an attempt to cover the same type of movement in the manual treble part by including leaps with the ‘up-beat-down-beat’ tonal motion across the barline descending-chromatic.

The notion of a ‘unifying’ motif (motif Z in this *Prélude*) is something Alkan uses again in the sets examined as part of this thesis. The growing contrast between visual and aural elements of this piece, and indeed other pieces, is something that will be discussed further in chapter 6.

4.6 *Prélude* No. 5

In the fifth prelude of this set, the overall musical ideas are concise: illustrating Alkan’s ability to focus on one musical idea and develop it into a coherent composition. The opening two bars introduce a motif that becomes the centre of this piece.

The motif, which will be labelled as motif X, can be outlined rhythmically as follows:



It is a dynamic rhythm and when viewed in its tonal context it forms the basis of a melodic line. Rhythmically, the opening four bars of the piece are split into two two-bar phrases of identical rhythm: repetition at a micro level.

Tonally, there is a layering of voices. The motif is stated monophonically in the first two-bar phrase which is then repeated, with the addition of a second part in

the next two-bar phrase. In the succeeding bars a third part is added giving a sense of musical depth to the opening section of the piece.

With the introduction of the third part, the original X motif is mutated: the minim replaced with a dotted crotchet and a quaver. The contour of the motif, however, is not lost and it is the homorhythmic crotchet support, supplied in the first and second voices, that reinforces the dynamic quality of motif X.

From the opening bars of this piece the rhythmic meter enforces a positive metric flow and this is maintained throughout. In this particular prelude Alkan avoids the intricate rhythmic manipulations that are seen elsewhere in these preludes, however, there are flares of Alkanian rhythms as the piece progresses.

The following example helps to contextualise the points raised above:

Example 4.6.1: Alkan *11 Grands Préludes Op. 66 No. 5* bars 1–6

Quasi Adagio. (M.M. ♩ = 69) *Dolce e Legato* *Dolce e Legato*

MAINS. *Dolce e Legato*

PIEDS.

From the example it is clearly shown that the layering of parts in the opening section is in fact intentional. The insertion of two full-bar rests in bar one implies the future existence of two more independent parts. While the integrity of these lines is preserved by the non-grouping together of the crotchets in bars 5 and 6 above, there is a question concerning the reasoning behind this.

Such strict voicing can be seen in the fugal writing of J.S. Bach (to mention an obvious example), affording each voice its own line in the exposition. However, the strict voicing in Alkan's music, and particularly in this instance, seems somewhat redundant as there are only two main rhythmic voices emerging: the lower two, in static rhythmic unison, accompanying the upper dynamic voice in bars 5 and 6. Why then imply that each voice is independent? This kind of voicing occurs further on in the piece, with the same effect.

Whether such occurrences are merely to present each voice as it unfolds or a hidden homage to Baroque writing remains unclear. They do, however, illuminate an area of Alkan's compositional technique regarding the development of subject matter.

A key to Alkan's compositional method is his use of repetition within both a tonal and rhythmic context. At bar 12 of this prelude there begins a rhythmic repeat of the material presented in the opening eleven bars. This section is more harmonically indulgent expanding on the delicate three-part texture of the opening bars. Fuller, rich harmonies take over with the introduction of both the left hand

part and the pedal line. It is interesting to note that another of Alkan's favoured compositional tools is employed here: doubling at the octave. The left hand part in this section is playing an almost identical line (with the exception of the odd extra note) to that which appears in the treble part. The following gives an example of the textural contrast between the two sections:

Example 4.6.2: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 5 bars 12–15



In this section the strict voicing of parts is dropped, which refreshes the question concerning its purpose, and from bars 12 to 16 inclusive the tonality is strictly diatonic, reaffirming the tonic key. The juxtaposition of dynamic and latently static rhythms also present in this section contrives to establish a positive metric flow, which can be seen in the previous example.

At bar 24 there is a return to the strict three-part voicing of the opening section. In this occurrence, however, the partial melodic line is passed between the second and third voices with the uppermost voice (voice 1) supplying a homorhythmic line reciting around the note B-flat. This four-bar section functions as a link

passage that leads to a section that facilitates a modulation to the mediant minor (g minor). The arrival at g minor is achieved through Alkan's use of chromaticism. The stabilising force of the repeated B-flats, heard as the highest notes in the upper voice, conflicts directly with the chromatic movement in the lower two parts. This inner tonal conflict between parts aids the perception that tonal stability is being lost.

The example below illustrates this four-bar link, highlighting the chromaticism and the tonal conflict described above. Interestingly, Alkan includes rests in the empty bars from this point to the end of the piece.

Example 4.6.3: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 5 bars 24–27

The structure of the repeat is slightly different to that seen in the opening material. Rhythmically, there is an augmentation of bars adding a sense of development to the composition. The same strict three-part voicing in the treble part is also present here, which adds a sense of compositional unity from a *visual* perspective.

What follows this section is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it links the g-minor section to an episode through three chromatically ascending phrases that, as seen with the previous link, contain a harmonic and tonal struggle that has no resolution, although one is expected.

Before going into further detail, the following example shows one bar before the link and the link passage itself:

Example 4.6.4: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 5 bars 40–48

The musical score is presented in two systems, each with three staves. The first system (bars 40-42) features a right-hand melody with a 'Poco Dim.' marking and a 'Sostenuto' marking above the staff. The left hand has a 'p' marking. The second system (bars 43-45) features a right-hand melody with 'Sempre p, e sosten.' and 'p' markings, and a left-hand melody with a 'p' marking. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

From the example it can be seen that there is a very definite attempt to re-establish tonic tonality despite the clever harmonic ambiguity. The last chord of bar 40, the

chord of V7d in g minor (if it is taken that the prevailing harmony of that particular section is g minor irrespective of the preceding chromaticism), does not resolve across the barline as expected. Instead, the repeated D in the pedal line that occurs across the barline at bar 41, beginning the link passage, implies that the resolution has occurred within the context of the chord itself. This in-turn ambiguously implies that a modulation to D major has taken place. The chromatic step from D to E-flat that takes place in bars 41 and 42 appears, to the listener, to be a continuation of the prevailing chromaticism. Harmonically, the first bar of the link passage should be contextualised not with the preceding chromatic flux, but rather in light of the tonality governing the downbeat of the succeeding bar. With this in mind, the repeated Ds in bar 41 can now be considered within the tonic harmony of E-flat major. The Ds are not part of a resolution but instead the result of a chromatic modulation from D major to E-flat major; via the chord of V in E-flat major, the composition's tonic key.

Furthermore, from the example above it can be seen that Alkan teases the listener by using a rising idiom in the uppermost notes of the manual bass part. This melodic idiom purposely misguides the listener by using notes from the E-flat major scale, assuming that the rising so-la-ti line (notes marked with an asterisk on the example) will end by rising a step to the tonic, E-flat, which it does not do. Instead there begins an episode that raises harmonic and rhythmic tensions.

It is instances like these that prove Alkan's harmonic ambiguity is not just the result of an unyielding adherence to the rudiments of harmony but a deliberate

effort to create a duplicitous tonality that implies one thing to the audience and another to the performer – the ‘visual versus aural’. This proves that *perception* plays a very important role when interpreting Alkan’s music.

4.7 *Prélude* No. 6

The compositional methods Alkan employs in this prelude are reminiscent of previous preludes, but more so of those seen in *Prélude* No. 5.

There are a number of striking features regarding tonality that appear in this piece from the start. The use of linear augmented intervals, vertical diminished intervals and apparent false relation are all demonstrated within a short number of bars (see examples 4.7.1 and 4.7.2). Tonal and harmonic boundaries are particularly wide, showing Alkan to be an adventurous composer.

As has been seen in the first five preludes of this set, Alkan favours the use of two contrasting themes playing opposing roles. This prelude also sees that structure being employed, although there is a considerable durational disparity between the two themes. The repetition seen in this prelude is also similar to that seen in previous preludes, and will be discussed in greater detail further on.

The first main identifiable motif is that rhythmic organisation contained in the first bar. It is repeated as an independent rhythmic entity further in the piece and is a dominant rhythmic configuration. The remaining rhythmic activity that is

seen in the opening four bars can also be classed as dominant. Motivically they are similar to X, and as such will be labelled as ‘X’ motifs.

The primary motif, motif X, and the two sub-motifs can be outlined as follows:



All three motifs are rhythmically dynamic. They all contain notes of various values and are used in ways that tie them into the melodic line. Motif X is perhaps the exception as its tonal expression struggles to be dynamic but it is essentially used in the same way each time it appears. The following example illustrates the opening four bars of the composition where each of the motifs outlined above can be seen clearly:

Example 4.7.1: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 6 bars 1–4

Andantino M.M. 60 =♩.

Sostenuto molto.

Piano, mais assez lourdement

p

From the example it can be seen that the manual bass part is in strict imitation (both rhythmically and tonally) of the treble part. The use of octaves to create ‘musical depth’ is again seen in this prelude. Further on in the composition these octaves are ‘filled in’, as is also seen in previous compositions in this set.

With regards to motif X, the following example shows its latent dynamic quality:

Example 4.7.2: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 6 bars 9–12

It can be seen then, that motif X is the most prominent motif, appearing in the manual treble part (RH part) and the pedal line. Its latent dynamism is experienced through the notes ‘stems up’ in the manual treble part as these can be considered as the section’s melody. However, this is the only instance in this composition whereby motif X is used to express a melodic line.

The second theme which begins at bar 18 introduces a new rhythmic motif, motif Y, which is latently dynamic. This motif, in the wider context of this section (and

generally in sections where it is the dominating rhythmic motif) is reliant rhythmically on rests — another instance where Alkan places equal importance on silences. This rhythmic affect achieved here is in stark contrast to that which was seen in the opening section. Contained within motif Y is motif Y-1. This sub-motif is arrived at through a process of motivic diminution: whereby the original motif is shortened by a rhythmic unit over a short period of time. This process is repeated until all that is left is motif Y-1. The similarity in structure that is seen between the treatment of motif X and motif Y adds a sense of motivic structural consistency to the composition. The following is the rhythmic outline of motif Y and motif Y-1:



There is a certain sense of expectancy surrounding the tonal realisation of this rhythmic motif (both in this section and in later sections where motif Y is the primary rhythmic motif). This is due to the combination of rests and staccato. The expectant air is heightened due to the positive metric flow that prevails here, and combining that with the rhythmic unison, the ‘silences’ become even more exaggerated. The interdependency, in this instance, between the fundamental rhythmic structure and musical articulation (staccato, marcato, rests, etc.) creates a simple but effective contrast to the opening section.

The following example helps to put these observations into context:

Example 4.7.3: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 6 bars 18–21

The musical score for Example 4.7.3 is presented in three staves. The top staff, representing the right hand, features a series of chords marked with a staccato effect and a pianississimo (*ppp*) dynamic. The middle staff, representing the left hand, contains a more melodic line with a staccato effect. The bottom staff, representing a single bass line, also features a staccato effect. The overall texture is characterized by the exclusive use of root position chords and abrupt modulations, contributing to a modal quality in the harmonic progressions.

From the example above, the general harmonic pattern of this section can also be seen. The exclusive use of root position chords and the abrupt modulations encourage the modal quality of the harmonic progressions which again help to relate back to the set's title.

Section B, introducing the second theme and motif Y, is significantly larger than the first. It also would appear to be structurally more 'self contained', that is, it has a definite beginning and developmental aspect attached to it. The opening A section, while it also has a definite beginning and a *perceived* developmental element, can almost be interpreted as an elongated introduction to the second section.

If the harmonic structure is examined a little more closely it can be seen that the last chord of section A is the chord of V7 in E-flat major: the first chord of the second section is the chord of I in E-flat major. This elided cadential pattern, allowing one theme to begin using the *perceived* cadential close of the previous

section, is something that Alkan uses to great effect and was seen in the *Prières* of chapter 3. Can the opening section, then, be labelled as an introduction? The following example shows Alkan's use of the elided cadential pattern (notes boxed):

Example 4.7.4: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 6 bars 16–19

Also seen in the example above is Alkan's penchant for enharmonics – allowing the F-sharp in bar 16 (the first bar of the example above) to be respelled as an G-flat to facilitate an enharmonic modulation.

With the ending of section B there begins a repeat of section A. In this section, A1, the harmonic language is richer as both manual parts and the pedal line are using chords (as opposed to the sparse octaves seen in section A of the piece). Despite the obvious harmonic-textural contrast with section A, the first seven bars of section A1 represent a chordal version of the opening seven bars from section A – preserving the integrity of motif X. The use of chords in the pedal part can be

considered as being quite progressive for nineteenth-century French organ music. The occurrence of this type of writing in Alkan's music again points to that (latent) progressive quality that, at times, can be obscured by the composer's use of simple forms.

The following example illustrates the use of chordal writing in the pedal line and the richer harmonic texture that contrasts with the texture of the opening:

Example 4.7.5: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 6 bars 49–50

The musical score for Example 4.7.5 consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle staff is in treble clef, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature is two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The music begins with a rest in the treble and middle staves, followed by a series of chords in the bass line. The dynamic marking is *ff* and the tempo/mood is *e Sostenuto*. The bass line is marked *Sostenuto, e pesantemente* and *ff*.

What follows the opening seven bars of this section (bars 49–55) is a developmental episode that sees the emergence of a derivative of motif X. This rhythmic motif, outlined as motif X2 above, can be seen here in the following example:

Example 4.7.6: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 6 bars 57–60

The musical score for Example 4.7.6 is presented in three staves. The top staff is a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef, marked with an *8va* (octave up) and the instruction *Sempre*. The middle staff is a grand staff with a bass clef and a bass clef, also marked with *Sempre*. The bottom staff is a single bass line with a bass clef. The music is in G-flat major (three flats) and 3/4 time. The top staff contains a complex texture of chords and some melodic lines. The middle staff contains a similar texture. The bottom staff is a simple eighth-note pattern.

The rhythmic repetition witnessed in this section sees the juxtaposition of motifs X1 and X2 from the opening section. In a general context, the repetition could theoretically be categorised as being partially micro, due to the inclusion of X2 and also motif X1 in the manual bass part and the pedal line. The motifs are repeated identically within the rhythmic sphere, but the organisation of the motifs is different from the opening section. These instances, where smaller motifs are unaltered off-shoots of the original rhythmic motif (motif X1), tend to add a sense of unity to the overall composition.

It is only in the first eight bars of section B2 (bars 75 to 82 inclusive) that partial macro repetition is seen: the use of rhythm and articulation identical to that seen in the opening eight bars of section B. Beyond this point there is a change to the rhythmic *expression*, that is, the rhythmic contour of motif Y is expanded, and there begins a rhythmic equivalent of the harmonic ‘filling out’ that was seen in the repeat of section A. This ‘rhythmic expansion’ negates the complementing

contrast that was observed between staccato notes and rests in section B by getting rid of all the staccato dots and augmenting the note values in section B1. This in turn changes the perceived rhythmic contour of section two, but it still remains familiar in an auditory context.

The following example shows this rhythmic ‘filling out’ and for clarity, should be viewed alongside the Example 4.7.3.

Example 4.7.7: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 6 bars 82–85

There is no doubt that this rhythmic augmentation and softening of the general rhythmic articulation, combined with the C major tonality (which begins at bar 74 and is signalled with a written key change), create a sense of resolution that is both rhythmic and tonal.

Present in this section is a syncopated pattern that sees Alkan return to rhythmic ambiguity. The upper-most voice in the treble part begins with a dotted crotchet on the second quaver beat of the 6/8 time signature; thus a series of dotted

crotchets begins. Alkan, however, begins the succeeding bar with a dot as opposed to tying a crotchet to a quaver over the barline. The overall effect here is one of rhythmic distortion and this can be seen in the following example:

Example 4.7.8: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 6 bars 89–92

The dichotomous relationship that exists in these bars between Positive Metric Flow and Negative Metric Flow is evident from the start. This idiosyncratic behaviour was also seen in the *Prières*. Alkan’s keenness to preserve the compound time signature, by allowing bars to begin with dots is interesting. This, again, highlights an important aspect of Alkan’s compositional technique and just how central musical perception is in gaining an understanding of his music. It also confirms the dichotomous relationship between visual elements and aural elements present in his music. This type of writing was also present in the *Prières* — *Prière* No. 1 bar 16 (see Example 3.2.2).

4.8 *Prélude* No. 7

The monophonic opening section of this piece is similar to that seen in the first and third preludes. Here, however, the monophonic opening is extended, lasting twenty-nine bars, and incorporates developmental subsections. This piece illustrates Alkan's ability to create a musical unit from seemingly limited thematic material. This will become clearer later on.

The opening section of the composition allows the main themes of this piece to be heard (and seen) uninterrupted. As was seen in the preludes up to this point, such behaviour served as introductory material. In this instance, however, Alkan is not merely using the monophonic opening as an introductory mini-prelude to the rest of the piece; he is actually outlining all the thematic material that is to be used in the entire piece.

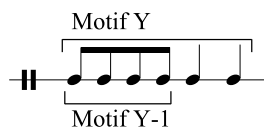
What makes this piece even more interesting is the fact that the second half of the composition presents a harmonisation of the same material outlined in the opening twenty-nine bars. The rhythmic contour of this harmonisation is almost identical to that presented in the opening twenty-nine bars, with minimal alterations (mainly isolated instances of durational diminution or augmentation) affecting this.

The composition is based on three fundamental rhythmic ideas each of which are outlined below:



This motif is dynamic and has contained within it many rhythmic variations. The main reason for it being considered singularly as a motivic unit is due to the repetition of it as a structural whole throughout the composition. Its contrast to the other motifs is also another factor for it being considered as a structural unit.

The second motif, motif Y, can be outlined as follows:



Here it can be seen that the predominant rhythmic movement is static. This motif is, however, more-correctly labelled as being a static rhythm that is latently dynamic. This becomes more apparent when the motif is considered within a tonal context. The governing monophony seen in the opening section of the composition contributes to the latently-dynamic quality of this motif: with the suggestion of a melodic line trying to struggle through.

The last dominant rhythmic motif is perhaps the most difficult to express. The difficulty lies in its singular usage — that is, it appears in three consecutive bars but with some degree of rhythmic variation. In order to ascertain the validity of

each variation it becomes necessary to consider other occurrences of these throughout the remainder of the composition.

This results in the following being considered as the third and final rhythmic motif:



This is the only variation of this rhythmic grouping that is not altered later on in the composition and, as such, is considered to be the more authentic version. Its significance within the greater context of the prelude's structure is that of a link, both rhythmic and tonal. It is a dynamic rhythm that is latently static, for, apart from the three bars in which it occurs consecutively, it is not developed tonally.

This motif is the only one out of the three to undergo notational diminution (in shorter note values) later on in the composition. Its context will be discussed further on.

The second section of this piece, the 'harmonic' repeat, is carefully constructed so as not to displace the thematic material seen in the opening section. The rhythmic motifs outlined in the opening section are always discernable throughout the second section. The following example shows the first two bars of motif X as seen in the opening section and the same two bars from the second section:

Example 4.8.1: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 7 bars 1–2 and 30–31

Andante (M.M. quasi 80 =>)
Alla giudeesca
Legato
p
Con divozione

8^{va}
 Original pitch and rhythmic pattern present
Dolce e Sostenutissimo

The textural difference between the two is obvious: the sparse monophony contrasting directly with the rich ten-note texture homophony. It is possible to see from the above example that the original motif is preserved throughout including the original pitching of the motif. The harmonic embellishment associated with the second rendering of this material does not detract from the original idea in any major way.

Alkan's treatment of motif Y and Y-1 is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, as a rhythm that has been labelled as being static but latently dynamic it pushes its dynamic quality to the limit. This is facilitated by the way in which this motif is expressed tonally. The following example helps to illustrate this point:

Example 4.8.2: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 7 bars 9–10 and 38–39

The image displays two systems of musical notation for Alkan's 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 7. The first system, covering bars 9–10, features a monophonic opening in the bass clef with the instruction *Dolce e sempre sostenuto*. The second system, covering bars 38–39, shows a more complex texture with *Sostenuto* and *Cresc.* markings in both the treble and bass staves, and a melodic line in the bass clef.

When viewed side-by-side in the manner presented above, the latently-dynamic quality of this motif becomes more perceptible. In the instance of the monophonic opening it (the dynamic quality) comes to the fore by virtue of there being nothing else sounded: it is perceived as ‘melody’. In the second instance Alkan cleverly maintains this idea by keeping the accompanying part firmly static. The repeated chords do not allude to a developing melody and play an obvious supporting role to motif Y in the pedals. This type of writing demonstrates Alkan’s ability to incorporate not only harmonic and tonal ambiguity in to his music, but rhythmic and motivic ambiguity also.

Motif Z is the only motif to be heard monophonically throughout the composition, with the exception of the arrival point (the note on which the motif finishes) which is a full statement of a diatonic chord. This helps to establish structural unity within the composition as a whole, by linking together the two parts of the piece. The inclusion of a homophonic element at the end of this motif, in the second half of the piece, also helps to link the two different sections together.

The following example places both statements of the same motif side-by-side:

Example 4.8.3: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 7 bars 20–/21 & 49–/50

Bars 20–/21

Bars 49–/50

The final bars of this composition engage in rhythmic distortion. The oscillation, at varying speeds, between two notes marks the beginning of the coda. As has been the case in other pieces in this set, and indeed in the previous set of pieces, Alkan's ability to manipulate rhythm is present here. In these final bars, illustrated in example 4.8.4, it can be seen that there is a distinct effort on Alkan's

part to create the illusion of speeding up and slowing down without changing the time signature.

Example 4.8.4: ALkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 7 bars 58–60

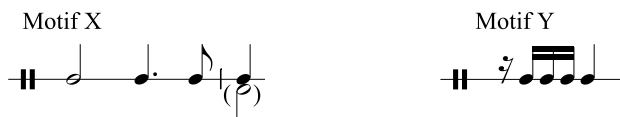
The musical score consists of three systems. The first system features two staves with sixteenth-note patterns, each marked with a '6' fingering. The second system also has two staves with similar patterns, including 'cres: molto' markings and fingerings '6' and '3'. The third system has one staff with similar patterns and fingerings '6' and '3'. The score includes dynamic markings like 'Starg.' and 'fff', and a '8va-1' instruction.

The type of repetition displayed in this piece can be described as partial macro repetition. With the exception of the ‘harmony’ that is utilised in the second statement of the opening twenty-nine bars, the repeat of the opening itself is ‘at pitch’ or at least uses the same note-names. Overall this composition reinforces

the main tools with which he structures his music (in this set of works) — repetition, rhythmic distortion and thematic/motivic contrasts.

4.9 *Prélude* No. 8

There are three main rhythmic patterns that dominate the rhythmic structure of this piece. It is in this *Prélude* that Alkan seems to develop his motivic material to the fullest in both a rhythmic and tonal context. The first two rhythmic motifs that can be identified are outlined as follows:



The first motif, motif X, is used in two distinct ways. It is used singularly (as the piece progresses) and also as a suffix to larger rhythmic passages. Overall, it is a dynamic rhythm but some instances of its tonal expression can be tonally static and this will be discussed further on.

From the opening bars of this piece, motifs X and Y can be seen and heard occurring together. The rhythmic contrast between the two motifs adds a sense of movement to the piece; the longer sustained durations of motif X being urged to move in time with the quicker more impatient pace of motif Y. This affect is further heightened by the durational difference between the two: for each

occurrence of motif X there are three occurrences of motif Y. The following example helps to contextualise these points:

Example 4.9.1: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 8 bars 3–4

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff (right hand) contains a melodic line with a bracket labeled 'Motif X' above it, covering the first two measures. The middle staff (left hand) contains a bass line with a bracket above it, also covering the first two measures. The bottom staff (bass line) contains a rhythmic pattern with a bracket labeled '3 Statements of Motif Y' below it, covering the first three measures. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 3/4.

There are some similarities between the rhythmic language that is used here and that seen in the first *Prélude*. The Y motif in this instance takes on a similar role to that of motif X from *Prélude* No. 1. The sequential patterns that are associated with such motifs, and their dominating appearance throughout each respective piece, adds a sense of structural continuity and/or unity to the set of works. The Baroque influence is thus visible here too, and the clever use of this rhythmic idiom is testament to that.

Motif Y is, in essence, a static rhythm that is latently dynamic. The rhythmic context in which it is used in the opening bars of the piece establishes it as a static rhythm. However, it develops into something more dynamic as the piece

progresses. The rhythm of this motif, even in the instances where its tonal expression is contextually melodic, remains fundamentally static.

Motifs X and Y take on different roles at various stages of this composition with regard to tonal function. While at the start of the piece motif Y clearly plays a static accompanying role, further on in the piece its latently-dynamic quality becomes perceptible (bar 29). As this is happening, motif X assumes an accompanying role, supporting motif Y and its subsequent expansion. The example below illustrates this:

Example 4.9.2: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 8 bars 29–30

This type of motivic versatility is something that Alkan reveals throughout his works for organ and pedal-piano. In this instance he does not allow one motif to be suppressed by the other, thus facilitating the very-obvious switching of functions. Alkan does not do this in an abrupt manner, instead he prepares this in the section marked *cantabile* beginning at bar 23. It is here that motif X is used in

the pedals, providing support to the upper parts. The treble line starting this section is slightly ambiguous in its function as it is really only suffixing motif X which begins two bars later at bar 25. Allowing motif X to be heard in both registers, the lowest and the highest — despite it being just one statement in the pedals — highlights this motivic ‘preparation’.

The third rhythmic motif that is identifiable is also present from the opening bars of the piece. Motif Z can be outlined as follows:



This rhythmic motif can be described as a static rhythm that is latently dynamic. Its primary function within the context of the opening section of the piece is that of a musical full stop: finishing one sub-section by arriving at motif X, which in turn begins another sub-section. Tonally, it is used in a quasi *fugato* manner, supplying an echo effect with itself. Further on in the composition motif Z becomes a little more prominent but in essence still fulfils the same role.

The following example shows motif Z:

Example 4.9.3: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 8 bars 9–11

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (bars 9-10) features a treble clef staff with a melody of eighth notes and a bass clef staff with a similar eighth-note accompaniment. The second system (bar 11) shows the beginning of 'Motif X' in the treble clef, which is a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note. The third system (bars 12-15) is a continuation of the bass clef accompaniment from the first system, marked 'mf'.

Repetition in this piece occurs on all four levels: Micro, Macro, Partial Micro and Partial Macro. The largest instance of Macro Repetition (where both rhythm and tonality/harmony are repeated identically) occurs at bar 38 and lasts until bar 57. Alkan uses the standard sectional repeat notation to indicate the repetition of this subsection. This is rare in these pieces, as he normally favours rewriting entire sections note-for-note.

Partial Micro Repetition can be seen in the above musical example. The rhythm of bars 9 and 10 are the same, but the *tonal expression* of this rhythm is different in each bar.

A Positive Metric Flow is maintained throughout the piece. There is no visible effort on Alkan's behalf to disguise the time signature or to manipulate it. The presence of the dotted rhythmic gesture that forms part of motif X, more specifically the 'dotted crotchet quaver crotchet' configuration proves to be a

popular rhythmic grouping, favoured by Alkan, in this set of works. It also appears in the other two sets that are examined as part of this thesis and its significance will be discussed further in chapter 6.

4.10 *Prélude* No. 9

The ninth *Prélude* primarily consists of repeated chords/notes that are presented, rhythmically and tonally, to the listener in two blocks of eight bars. Alkan, in these opening sixteen bars, affirms the rhythmic motion and the general tonal palette that are to direct the entire piece. A static rhythmic motif dominates the structure of this composition; however, it is the use of a contrasting stable dynamic rhythm that gives this piece its individual tone and style.

This *Prélude* begins in a similar fashion to others in this set: with an introduction. The opening sixteen bars present the main rhythmic gesture that is to be felt for the entire duration of the piece. The following outlines motif X:



Motif X is a static rhythm. The tonal expression of this rhythm is also, for the most part, static. In the opening bars of the piece the chord of D-flat major is spelled out, and while the tonality is changing (with the addition of a new ‘tone’ in each succession) the *fundamental* harmony implied is static. This is partly a by-product of the repetitious nature of this rhythmic effect.

The following example illustrates motif, X highlighting the points raised above:

Example 4.10.1: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 9 bars 1–2

Langsam (M. M. 60 =♩)

Dolce e Sostenutissimo

(Simple)

The second rhythmic motif, motif Y, can be outlined as follows:

Motif Y

This rhythmic motif is dynamic and its tonal expression (when viewed singularly, that is, without the chordal repetitions) is always dynamic. There is, however, some ambiguity regarding both the static nature of motif X and the dynamic essence of motif Y. This ambiguity becomes more obvious when viewing the activity of both and the relationship that is shared between the two.

The tonal expression of motif Y is exactly mirrored in the tonal expression of motif X. That is, the ‘melody’ that is being expressed by the dynamic rhythm of motif Y is occurring simultaneously with the static repetitious rhythm associated

with motif X. Is it possible then that motif X, as a static rhythm, can have a *dynamic* tonal expression? The following example should be considered:

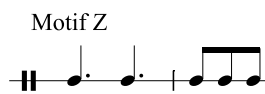
Example 4.10.2: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 9 bars 17–18

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef and contains Motif Y, which is a sequence of eighth notes with a slur over it and the instruction 'Legato'. The middle staff is in bass clef and contains Motif X, which is a sequence of eighth notes with a slur over it and the instruction 'Dolce'. The bottom staff is in bass clef and contains a static rhythm of eighth notes with a slur over it and the instruction 'Dolce'. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is labeled 'Motif Y: Dynamic Rhythm - Dynamic Tonal Expression' and 'Motif X: Tonal Expression Mirroring that of Motif Y'.

From the example above it would appear that Alkan destabilises the dynamic quality of motif Y by allowing its tonal expression to be mirrored by static motif X. However, the preoccupation is not with weakening the dynamic quality of the Y motif, but rather reinforcing the effects achieved by motif X: a quasi tremolo. The shadowing of motif Y by motif X, resulting in the same tonal expression in the upper treble part, is inconsequential. The important fact is that it is motif Y that is adding rhythmic stability to what is occurring through the use of motif X in the lower parts. Despite the static nature of the rhythm, motif X's tonal expression is, for the most part, *dynamic*.

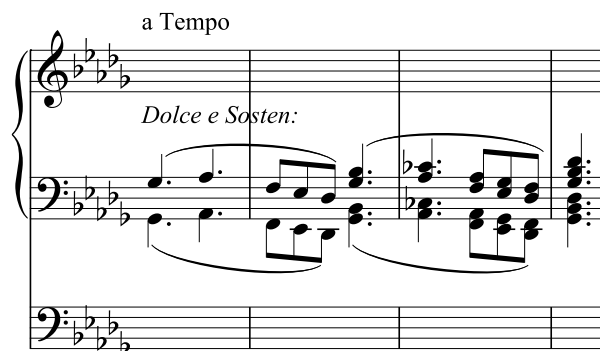
For the duration of the piece, where juxtaposition of both these motifs takes place, the tonal expression is the same for each, with each motif remaining true to its rhythmic structure.

As the composition progresses, there emerges a third rhythmic motif. This motif, motif Z, can be outlined as follows:



The two dotted crotchets in this motif act as a rhythmic cadence. They halt the previous (and up to this point continuous) quaver movement that has been felt since the opening bars of the composition. This motif also introduces new secondary thematic material, but the structure is similar to that seen in the opening bars of the piece where the introduction of voices is layered. The example below illustrates this:

Example 4.10.3: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 9 bars 65–beat 1 of 68



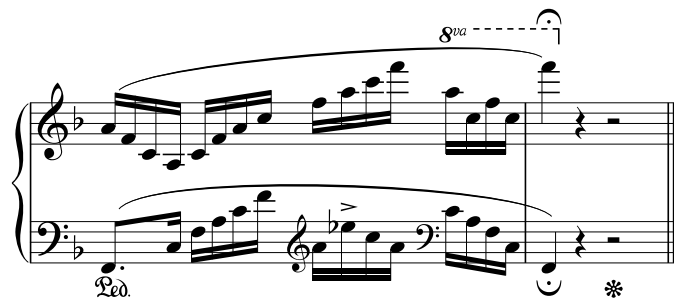
The layering of voices can be clearly seen in the above example. Also noticeable in the same example is the absence of rests in the empty bars. Here, it would appear to signify the merger of the manual parts – the rests are not absent *per se*, rather, the music from the bass clef is now present on the treble clef. This type of absence was also seen in the third piece from this set. The remainder of the composition is governed by the use of motifs X and Y with a large rhythmic repeat of the opening section beginning at bar 130.

In this *Prélude* a tonal link with Chopin can be made. In the final stages of the piece, at bar 164, Alkan introduces the flattened seventh (C-flat) within the context of tonic harmony (D-flat major). However, the C-flat does not resolve as expected – by either rising to C-natural or facilitating a modulation to G-flat major. The same tonal behaviour can be seen in Chopin’s *Prelude No. 23, Op. 28*. In bar 21 Chopin also introduces the flattened seventh (E-flat) within the context of tonic harmony (F major) and it too behaves in the same manner as seen in Alkan’s prelude. The following examples, 4.10.4A and 4.10.4B, illustrate this:

Example 4.10.4A: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 9 bars 164–165

The musical score for Example 4.10.4A consists of three staves. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in alto clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The key signature is D-flat major (three flats). The music features complex chordal textures and a melodic line. The instruction "Dim, e smorz." is written above the middle and below the bottom staves. A fermata is placed over a note in the bottom staff, with a "v" below it.

Example 4.10.4B: Chopin 24 *Préludes* Op. 28 No. 23 bars 21–22

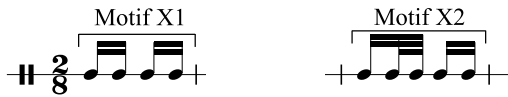


This *Prélude* presents some significant information with regard to Alkan and his attitude toward musical structure. The reoccurrence in this *Prélude* of bars with ‘nothing’ in them (first seen in *Prélude* No. 3) confirms that, for Alkan, the music written on each staff for the manual parts is not exclusive to that clef. The hands are free to engage with each other on one staff, governed by one clef.

4.11 *Prélude* No. 10

One of the most striking features of this *Prélude* is the use of a 2/8 time signature and the strict development of the fundamental rhythmical subject. Alkan’s ability to use tonality to influence rhythmic perception can be seen throughout the entire composition.

In this composition all of the major motifs derive from the same rhythmic source — X. It is for this reason that all these motifs will be labelled ‘X’ and numbered accordingly. The first two motifs can be outlined as follows:



Classifying both of these motifs as X is purposeful: their Tonal Expression forms part of the primary tonal/melodic phrase. They also appear as individual units later in the piece. The following example shows the two X motifs:

Example 4.11.1: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 10 bars 1–6

Both X motifs can be clearly seen in the example above. The primary tonal/melodic unit or phrase can also be seen, present from bar 3 to the dotted quaver in bar 6, with the semiquaver in bar 6 serving as an upbeat into a rhythmic repeat of this phrase.

Motif X1 as presented in the above example is essentially a static rhythm. Its primary rhythmic function is that of maintaining a Positive Metric Flow by using oscillating octave leaps. It does also form part of the main melodic line and it is

the difference in Tonal Expression that also allows this motif to be labelled as latently dynamic.

Motif X2 is fundamentally a dynamic rhythm. Its Tonal Expression also forming part of the primary melodic line allows it to be labelled thusly. However, like motif X1 this motif could also be considered latently static as it never gains rhythmic independence nor is it significantly developed as the composition unfolds.

The tonal texture seen in the example above is a good representation of the overall governing musical texture that prevails throughout the piece and the three-part voicing structure is seldom deviated from as the *Prélude* progresses. The homorhythmic movement that can be seen occurring between the manual keyboard parts is also a key feature of this composition. This homorhythm is echoed tonally in the piece with the manual keyboard parts shadowing each other at consonant intervals.

In this composition Alkan indulges his penchant for tonal ambiguities. The tonic harmony of B-flat minor is obvious from the opening bars of the work (this can be seen in the example above) and the underlying tonal structure of the first thirty-four bars can be approximately outlined in the following manner: tonic – dominant (major) – tonic – subdominant – tonic. This ‘standard’ progression of harmony helps in the formulation of musical perception, a perception that inevitably leads to musical *expectation*. The listener is guided, by the composer,

down a tonal path that leads to the listener expecting to hear a certain set of harmonies or tonalities to succeed what has already been heard and established. It is in these instances that Alkan's tonal ambiguity shines brightest.

At bar 35 there begins a pedal solo similar to that which began the composition. Here, in the context of the preceding harmony, it is the dominant in the pedal – the note F – that is ambiguous. The F is perceived by the listener as dominant harmony, however, Alkan uses this note as the leading note to G-flat major thus facilitating a chromatic modulation. The unexpectedness of the harmonic shift temporarily destabilises the overall tonality, but the familiarity of the melodic subject matter and the rhythmic language act as a counter-balance therefore restoring stability. The following example illustrates these points:

Example 4.11.2: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 10 bars 32–37

The image shows a musical score for Example 4.11.2, consisting of two systems of notation. The first system is a grand staff with a treble clef on top and a bass clef on the bottom. It contains two staves of music. The first staff has a dynamic marking of *f* and the second staff has a dynamic marking of *p*. The second system is a single bass clef staff with a dynamic marking of *f* and a *p* marking. The music features complex rhythmic patterns and chromatic modulations.

A closer look at the above example reveals that the modulation was actually anticipated in previous bars. In the second bar of the example it can be seen that the tonal movement of the lowest notes is F – G-flat, which is also mirrored in the

manual parts. Despite this, however, the suggested tonal/harmonic progression of the third bar in the above example (IV/iib – V – i) is what guides the *expectation* of the listener. The modulation to G-flat major is still not the expected outcome.

Alkan's tonal and harmonic language is, from a reading of the score, diverse and often prophetic. His predilection for enharmonic modulation is again present in this composition. However, in this instance he stretches the tonal boundaries to their limit with the obvious and intentional use of false relation, which hints at polytonality.

The following example illustrates the suggested polytonality and highlights Alkan's use of false relation:

Example 4.11.3: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 10 bars 52–53

False relation is clearly indicated (in the set of boxed notes) in the first bar, while the suggested polytonal activity (along with more instances of false relation) is evident in the second bar of the example. It is important to note here that while

introducing enharmonic equivalents may not necessarily impact directly on the aural rendering of the music, the visual reading of the same music is altered dramatically as a direct result, hence leading to the false relation and the suggestion of polytonality.

The two X motifs dominate the rhythmic activity of this composition explicitly up to bar 86. The use of Partial Macro Repetition and Micro Repetition plays an important role in the development of these motifs. The first occurrence of Partial Macro Repetition can be seen in the opening ten bars of the piece. Bars 7 to 10 are an identical rhythmic repeat of bars 3 to 6 with the tonal language being slightly different.

The next motif that enjoys some sectional dominance first appears at bar 87. This motif is derived from both motif X1 and motif X2 and because of this it shall be labelled motif X3. The motif, outlined below, appears in another form (that is, *notated* differently) and serves a set tonal and rhythmic function earlier in the composition. The following shows motif X3:



This motif is the main form of rhythmic movement to be used in a section of thirty-two bars duration, after which it is re-notated durationally again. The reason for considering this particular rhythmic grouping (as opposed to the other

‘spellings’ of it) is that of frequency and repetition. It appears more often than the other rhythmic versions of the same motif and its functionality is also different here.

The following examples should help to contextualise this:

Example 4.11.4: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 10 bars 80–87

Examining the example above it can be seen that the rhythmic action of each highlighted bar is the same; that is to say that if one were to tap out the *rhythm*, each bar would *sound* the same. The subtle variations that Alkan has in place to make these three examples different could in fact be lost to the listener - thus all three could be perceived to be the same *rhythmically*. This compositional behaviour again highlights the importance of the ‘visual versus aural’ aspect of Alkan’s music.

The Tonal Expression of each helps in distinguishing their individuality. The first highlighted bar sees the ‘rhythmic spacing’ of motif X3 used as a rhythmic and

tonal cadence. This cadential effect is further highlighted with the one bar rest that succeeds it. The arrangement of these notes, in particular the beaming, sees Alkan giving the same weight to each note. To emphasise this he groups all three notes together under the one beam. This sees an attempt on Alkan's behalf to momentarily shift the focus from 2 quaver beats to 1 crotchet beat.

The second highlighted bar sees the beaming structure of the same rhythmic spacing change. While the Tonal Expression is identical (using the same three notes as seen in the previous statement) the breaking of the beaming structure gives extra weighting to the third semiquaver making it the focal point of the bar – the point of arrival.

The third bar highlighted in the example above sees the same rhythmic spacing form motif X3. In this rhythmic configuration it is not just the difference in note values that differentiates between this motif and the other two similar rhythmic groupings, but also its tonal texture. With the absence of the staccato dots there is a relaxed and flowing characteristic to the music that, up to this point, was not present.

This motif is static despite it being the only motif that is used in this section. Its Tonal Expression is also static – that is to say that it is repetitions of the same type of tonal gesture. As the combination of these tonal gestures alludes to a melodic structure the motif would more correctly be labelled as latently dynamic.

Alkan destabilises the Positive Metric Flow further on in the composition with the introduction of a sectional hemiola before the recapitulation of the opening material. The following example illustrates this:

Example 4.11.5: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 10 bars 146–148

The definite manipulation of the duple time into triple time can be clearly seen in the above example. The use of the hemiola could represent a hidden *homagé* by Alkan to the composers from the Baroque era, perhaps even Handel specifically. The suffixing of the transcription from the *Messiah* to this set of works is important in this respect. The hemiola is a device that Handel used on numerous occasions in his music and is seen in the chorus *And the Glory of the Lord* from his *Messiah*. (Two obvious examples can be observed; at bars 9 and 10 and again at bars 100 and 101).

The piece then returns to material that was used in the opening section. Motif X1 is used exclusively in the coda albeit within the context of a fuller tonal and harmonic texture.

Absent from this composition is the layering effect that Alkan employs very frequently in his writing, normally resulting in motivic juxtaposition. The preference here appears to be for the delicate clarity of a three-part texture (for the most part) filling it out occasionally with the addition of multiple tonal voices (i.e. adding notes to chords).

4.12 *Prélude* No. 11

The final *Prélude* in this set is, perhaps, better linked with the Handel transcription that follows it rather than the ten pieces that preceded it. It is composed in the style of a *Recitative* exhibiting a melody-reliant homophony yet it maintains that ‘Alkanian’ quality that is a result of the rhythmic, tonal and harmonic language that the composer commands.

The identification of dominant rhythmic motifs in this composition is difficult due to the ‘recitative’ nature of its construction. The first motif to be identified can be outlined as follows:



It is a dynamic rhythm despite there being only slight rhythmic variation. Its dynamic quality is further enhanced by its tonal expression: it is stated in a solo capacity with crotchet chords punctuating it intermittently. This, coupled with the instruction *Quasi-Recitativo*, combines to qualify it as a dynamic rhythm. The following example illustrates the first phrase of the piece showing motif X.

Example 4.12.1: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 11 bars 1–4

The musical score for Example 4.12.1 consists of three staves. The top staff is the right hand, the middle staff is the left hand, and the bottom staff is the pedal line. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is common time (C). The tempo is marked 'Lento.' and the dynamic is 'p'. The instruction '(Quasi-Recitativo.)' is placed above the pedal line. The pedal line is marked 'm: v: e sosten.' and shows a melodic line with chromaticism and a pedal line marked 'm: v: e sosten.'.

From the example above motif X can clearly be seen in the pedal line. The presence of chromatic notes from the opening bars of this *Pélude* again highlights Alkan's penchant for key and tonal ambiguity. The suggested tonic key, from the governing key signature, is F-sharp major (D-sharp minor is not particularly possible due to the presence of a d-natural in the opening bar) but that chord (of F-sharp major) is not heard explicitly until the final two bars. This (apparent) contemptuous disregard for enforcing tonic tonality is epitomised in this, the final *Prélude* of this set.

The key the piece opens on is C-sharp major, the dominant, but the resolution to the tonic does not come. Instead there is a steady migration through flat keys leading away from the tonic which culminates at its destination: F major/minor. The level of tonal awareness that Alkan displays in these key episodes is admirable. Through the medium of enharmonic modulation he can go from a suggested flat key to a suggested sharp key without affecting the prevailing *tonality*. Therefore, the visual complexity associated with Alkan's key structures can be missed with an exclusive aural rendering. The following example illustrates this:

Example 4.12.2: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 11 bars 18–20

The musical score shows three staves. The top two staves are for the piano, with the right hand in treble clef and the left hand in bass clef. The bottom staff is for the cello/bass, in bass clef. The music features complex chordal textures and a melodic line in the lower register. Performance markings include 'A Tempo' at the top right, 'Sempre' in the piano staves, 'pp ten.' in the right hand piano staff, 'Cantabile' and 'Dolcissimo' in the cello/bass staff.

Instead of changing the key signature to indicate a change of key, Alkan seems to make an example of this composition by changing key(s) through the introduction of accidentals. Indeed there are accidentals present in almost every bar of the piece which obviously affects and destabilises the governing key signature. In fact the total lack of diatonic harmony/tonality in bars 18 and 19 in the example above is testament to Alkan's loyalty to the governing key signature – he would

rather see a proliferation of accidentals than signify a change of key with a written key signature change.

The example above highlights a few specific things with regard to Alkan's compositional style. The use of enharmonic modulations as seen in the third bar of the example above, the A-flat in the bass "falling" to G-sharp, raises the question of context, in particular from the perspective of the listener. Here again the importance of 'visual versus aural' is raised.

Structurally there are some interesting things present in this composition that are worthy of note. As with the loyalty surrounding key structure, the governing time signature is also maintained and is never changed throughout the composition even though there are structural changes of accent that lead the listener to believe a change in the time signature has occurred. One way Alkan overcomes this is by splitting the bar in two – which can be seen in the example above. Rather than reduce the time signature to 2/4 for two bars, he splits the bar in half and there are two downbeats perceived.

This type of writing raises some questions regarding Alkan's motive. Why compose in such a manner — particularly when structuring the composition so that the time signature/key signature never changes yet incorporates various rhythmic/tonal phenomena to give the perception of time signature/key changes — when the only person who will recognise these compositional feats is the person who is playing/interpreting them? To the audience, the great lengths to

which Alkan goes to maintain rhythmic and tonal order are indiscernible from a purely aural perspective. This is especially relevant when considering enharmonic modulations, so the question must be asked; why go to these lengths? The question of visual versus aural will be addressed in greater detail in chapter 6.

The second rhythmic motif is present in the manual part. It punctuates the *cantabile* pedal line melody at regular intervals and, because of this regularity, can be considered motivic.

Motif Y can be outlined as follows:



This motif is rhythmically static even though there is notational variety contained within it. Its tonal expression can also be considered as static as the motif tends to recite around a particular tone. The following example shows the static quality associated with motif Y:

Example 4.12.3: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 11 bars 21–23

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top two staves are for the piano, and the bottom staff is for the pedal. The music is in G major (one sharp). The piano part consists of three measures. Each measure starts with a quarter rest followed by a quarter note chord. The first two chords in each measure are marked 'ten.'. The pedal part consists of three measures. The first measure has a quarter note chord, a quarter note, and a quarter note. The second measure has a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note. The third measure has a quarter note, a quarter note, and a quarter note with a fermata. The score is written in a system with a brace on the right side.

The note that acts as the reciting tone for motif Y in the example above is C-sharp and the rhythmic and tonal static quality can also be clearly seen.

The two motifs, X and Y, represent the main rhythmic movement found in this *Prélude*. Alkan achieves different affects by presenting the music in different ways, for example, the tonal similarities that exist between the pedal lines of the three examples above (intervals, melodic curve, note values etc.) are *aurally* obvious but the structural differences, depending on the interpretation by the performer, may go undetected or indeed unappreciated aurally by the listener. The detachment of the quavers as seen in the first example (Example 4.12.1) is not present in the next two, despite the similarities in structure. Alkan embellishes the music with the instruction *Quasi-Recitative* (Example 4.12.1) and allows the music to engage with that by writing in the style of a recitative. These subtle nuances undoubtedly go unnoticed by those unfamiliar with the score but are very important in understanding Alkan's compositional process.

The melodic emphasis up to this point has been focused on the pedal line. From bar 30, however, the focus shifts away from the pedal line (and from a ‘recitative’ melodic structure generally) to the manuals and a fuller chordal melodic structure begins. From this point in the music there is a very definite working towards a climax, which in the case of this *Prélude*, is the end of the piece. There is one remaining significant rhythmic motif that emerges in these final bars of the composition. Motif Z can be outlined as follows:



This motif forms the basis of a larger rhythmic (and tonal) unit that can be seen to take place from bar 34. This part of the unit (i.e. motif Z) is the only section of the unit that is stated constantly. The process is diminutive; shortening the phrase until all that remains is motif Z. It is a dynamic rhythm and when considered against the backdrop of the prevailing pedal-line its Tonal Expression can also be called dynamic. In the following example motif Z can be seen in the manual parts against the static rhythm of the pedal-line:

Example 4.12.4: Alkan 11 *Grands Préludes* Op. 66 No. 11 bars 41–44

The ability to label motif Z's Tonal Expression as being dynamic becomes apparent when considering the above example. The contrast between the manual part and the pedal part is even more exaggerated when taking in to account the conflict that is present between Dynamic and Static movement, both tonally and rhythmically.

The 'static-ness' of the pedal line is a functional 'static-ness'. By allowing the pedals to engage in static behaviour both tonally and rhythmically, Alkan makes the bars succeeding this section have a greater impact. The rhythmic and tonal unison gives the composition a sense of unity, as if the primary goal of each part of the piece was to arrive at this point.

4.13 Conclusion

These eleven *Préludes* demonstrate Alkan's ability to manipulate forms and structures to suit his need. Presented in these *Préludes* is a wealth of Alkan's stylistic compositional idiosyncrasies that reveal the composer to be astutely aware of the harmonic and tonal developments of the era. It has also been shown that his music can, at times, look to the future with the suggested poly-rhythmic and poly-tonal episodes that are displayed in his music.

This set of *Préludes* satisfies a number of criteria that justifiably places all eleven pieces in the context of one set. The first composition of the set sets the tone: that these compositions are influenced by Baroque composers (a distinct Bachian influence is at play in the first *Prélude*). This, however, must be understood in its broadest sense — the investigator is not necessarily looking for strict baroque idioms and forms — the overall presentation and 'flavour' of the compositions can be linked to baroque composers. This, by no means, diminishes the compositional individuality that is felt when listening to these works or examining the scores rather, the baroque influence is an enhancement.

The final *Prélude* rounds the set off with another *homagé* to early music: its influence clearly linked to the aria transcription that is attached to these *Préludes* by another Baroque great: Handel. Indeed, on closer examination it can be seen that this transcription is abounding with enharmonic spellings. Handel keeps the tonic key of this movement ambiguous, with no particular key being firmly

established in the first 17 bars; a by-product of quick enharmonic modulation. The same behaviour can be seen in some of the *Préludes* that form this set. Handel can therefore be named as having a direct influence on Alkan in the composing of these *Préludes*.

Chapter 5

An Analysis of the Op. 72 11 *Pièces dans la Style Religieux et 1 Transcription* *de Messie de Handel*

5.1 Introduction

This set of works presents a different aspect of Alkan's writing for keyboard. They are scored for either piano or harmonium, but the overall structure and title of the set are closely linked to both the Op. 66 *Préludes* and the Op. 64 *Prières*. The religious implication from the title of the set also allows for it to be considered here alongside the Op. 66 and 64 sets.

This set of works is dedicated to Simon Richault.

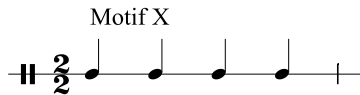
5.2 *Pièce* No. 1

The most striking rhythmic feature of this first *Pièce* is the continuous crotchet movement that is maintained throughout. The music itself has a 'processional' air to it, which ties in very well with the title of this set of works.

Motivically, there appears to be an exacting use of the same rhythmic material giving the composition a sense of structural cohesiveness. Alkan's developmental

process in this piece sees him use elements of existing motifs to create new effects that suggest the presence of new motivic material.

The first and perhaps most dominating motif can be outlined as follows:



The regularity with which this motif is heard (and seen) actually makes it difficult to capture motivically especially while trying to quantify the motif durationally. It is for this reason that it is presented as one bar's duration. The rhythm itself is static, and is constant throughout the piece, with the exception of four bars towards the end.

The opening bars of this composition use rhythmic motif X, and despite there being no deviation from the crotchet rhythm, there is the suggestion of a melodic line, thus in turn suggesting a level of dynamism. The motif, however, is not classed as being latently dynamic as the four-bar bass solo that begins the composition is tonally *introductory* in nature: therefore, whatever level of perceived dynamism that exists in these four bars is soon overshadowed by the melody that begins in the treble part at bar 5.

With the introduction of the treble part a second motif becomes apparent. Motif Y can be outlined as follows:



This motif is extracted from a larger section that is rhythmically dominated by minims. The rhythm outlined above emphasises the deviation from the minim movement, and because there is more (albeit very slight) rhythmic variety, it is classed as a dynamic rhythm.

The following example shows motifs X and Y in their tonal context:

Example 5.2.1: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 1 bars 1–7

Tempo *guistissimo*

f, et soutenu.

Motif Y

Toujours Fort, et aussi soutenu que possible.

The Tonal Expression of motif X is *not* as static as the rhythm, the same (but opposite) is also true for motif Y's Tonal Expression. However, as the composition develops, this apparent paradox is rectified.

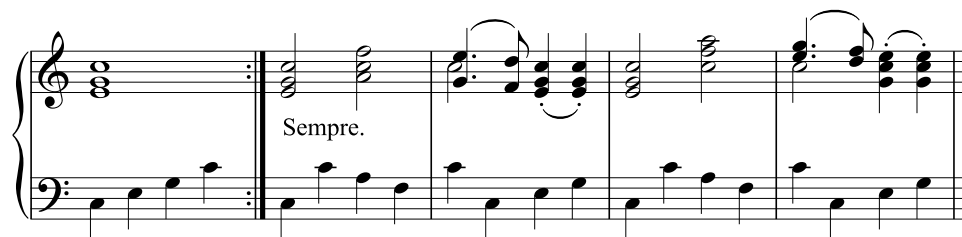
The third motif identified, motif Z, appears as follows:



This motif is a combination of motifs X and Y and brings together the dynamic elements (perceived or otherwise) from these two motifs. This motif, and derivatives of it, and motif X are the two motifs that dominate the entire composition with both motifs occurring together, for the most part, in juxtaposition.

The following example illustrates this motivic juxtaposition:

Example 5.2.2: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 1 bars 20–24



Previous instances of motivic juxtaposition in Alkan's music suggested two opposing or dichotomous factors almost being forced together. In this example (above) the motifs that have been juxtaposed are complementing each other. This is due to the fact that motif X has been playing a supportive role from the start of the composition and is not in direct conflict with any of the other motifs present.

The rhythm outlined in motif Z is dynamic and its tonal expression is also dynamic. As the section develops it can be seen that the tonal expression of motif X becomes tonally static, by repeating the same pitches. The following example shows this ‘tonal correction’ of motif X’s tonal expression:

Example 5.2.3: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 1 bars 37–40



The repeated Gs in the treble part actualise the tonal staticism that is often associated with rhythmic staticism in Alkan’s music. The integrity of the juxtaposition is maintained as the rhythm of the motif has not changed.

The three motifs each enforce a Positive Metric Flow, although the opening bars of the composition with the introduction of motif X perhaps gives a false sense of 4/4. It is with the introduction of motif Y that the actual 2-beat metre is properly established, with motif Z facilitating this also.

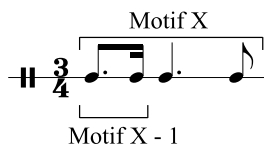
Total Macro Repetition occurs in the first section of this *Pièce* with instances of micro repetition also present. The treble section in the above example sees micro repetition take place through the repeating of the same note at the same pitch (the Gs in the upper treble part).

This *Pièce* has a tightly woven structure that helps it to achieve greater structural unity. The use of the three motifs outlined, and the interaction that exists between them, help in achieving this. This composition serves as an introduction to the remaining pieces in the set.

5.3 *Pièce* No. 2

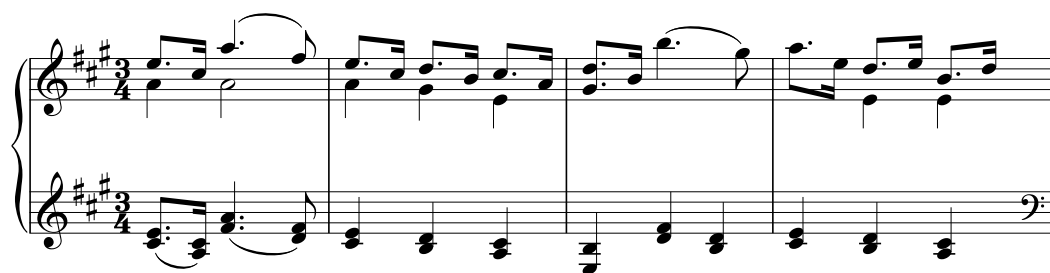
The second *Pièce* contrasts directly with the first one, and can be viewed as an introduction to the third. It is contrapuntal, with flowing independent lines, while also suggesting a fugato style of writing at times. Alkan, in this composition, keeps his main sectional modulations simple (that is those sections where a *key signature* is changed): modulating from the tonic major to the tonic minor and back to the tonic major. The closeness of the tonality/harmony in these sectional modulations might imply a certain level of banality to the piece but it is the chromatic shifts, that facilitate the move from major to minor, that add to this composition's allure. This, however, is not suggesting that there is blandness to the modulating structure; on the contrary, there are further modulations within these larger sections that add even more tonal colour to the piece. This will be discussed further on.

The variety of rhythmic movement that is presented in this composition makes the reduction of motivic material a little more complex. However, the following can be considered as the basic structure of motif X:



This motif appears frequently throughout the composition but it is the sub-motif X-1 that is perhaps more readily identifiable as the composition develops. The motif as a whole is dynamic, including a variety of note values. The following example shows motif X (and sub-motif X-1):

Example 5.3.1: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 2 bars 5–8



From this example it can be seen that motif X's Tonal Expression is also dynamic; incorporating leaps and avoiding tonal repetitions. The dynamic quality of X is further enhanced by the static rhythm of the continuous crotchet movement seen in the lower treble part. The rhythm of this lower treble part enforces a positive metric flow thus facilitating the dominance of the 'dotted' gestures contained in motif X.

The second motif, motif Y, can be presented as follows:



Motif Y is a static rhythm. The repetition of quavers qualifies it as being so. However, its Tonal Expression exhibits both dynamic and static elements. Such treatment has already been witnessed in Alkan's works, but the way in which it is achieved in this instance is quite different. Motif Y highlights Alkan's creative diversity when dealing with certain rhythmical structures.

The following example shows motif Y on three occasions of its usage in the composition:

Example 5.3.2: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 2 bars 9–10 & 12



From the three bars illustrated in the example above, the tonal expression of motif Y can be seen to vary from static (in the first bar with just exact quaver repetitions) to latently dynamic in the second bar (with the descending melodic feature). But it is perhaps most interesting to see Alkan divide the fundamental rhythmic structure into two groups (as seen in the third bar above) thus altering or suggesting a compound time signature. It is in these subtle *visual* changes that

Alkan demonstrates his creativity: the basic unit remains the same but the way in which it is interpreted has now been altered. In this bar (the third bar of the above example) it can also be seen that tonally the motif hints at some level of dynamism but quickly reverts to static chordal repetitions. This criss-crossing of motivic function helps to keep the idea original and prevents it from becoming over-played and stale.

There are other instances in this composition where Alkan purposefully maintains the integrity of his prevailing rhythmic language that seems to run contrary to the governing metric flow. The following example illustrates Alkan's use of the hemiola. This is a classic example whereby rhythmic integrity is preserved while suggesting a change in time signature:

Example 5.3.3: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 2 bars 22–23



This raises again the important role that musical perception plays in this analysis and in analysis in general. Considering the example above, the question has to be asked: is the presence of the hemiola intentional or an accidental by-product of Alkan's rhythmic sensitivities? Aurally, these few bars may suggest a change of time signature from 3/4 to 2/4 with beat three of bar 22 (the first bar of the

example above) being perceived as a downbeat – which in essence is the purpose or structure of the hemiola. The visual structure, however, contradicts or overrides the perceived structure as no such change has actually occurred.

Of the remaining rhythmic movement little of it could be classified as being motivic. However, there are some *gestures* that are worthy of note, and their interaction with, and influence on, the existing motivic material merits further discussion. The use of trills is introduced at bar 60 and can be classed as an Action of Rhythmic Anticipation¹ (A.R.A.). No trills have been heard up to this point, and from bars 61 to 64 inclusive the trill becomes a rhythmic (and tonal) feature. The main reason for referring to it as anticipatory is that it appears in the upper treble part in the first instance but then becomes a feature of the lower treble part and this can clearly be seen in the following example:

Example 5.3.4: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 2 bars 60–64

The musical score for Example 5.3.4 consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system shows bars 60 and 61. In bar 60, a trill (tr) is marked above the final note of the upper treble part. In bar 61, trills (tr) are marked above notes in the lower treble part. The second system shows bars 62 and 63. In bar 62, trills (tr) are marked above notes in the lower treble part. In bar 63, trills (tr) are marked above notes in the lower treble part. The score is in 2/4 time and features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some chords and trills.

¹ This is similar in definition to Note of Rhythmic Anticipation.

From this example it can clearly be seen that the hemiola is prepared or anticipated in the bars leading up to its occurrence (bars 60-62). A similar hemiola occurs at bars 71 and 72. The anticipatory trill can also be seen in the upper-most voice bar 60, with it becoming a feature of the lowest voice from bar 61.

5.4 *Pièce* No. 3

The third *Pièce* from this set sees Alkan moving away from the forms and styles that he has employed in the music examined thus far. This work begins as a four-voice fugue following the structure of fugal exposition closely, both tonally and thematically. This fugal form presents a dilemma when categorising motifs particularly due to the contrapuntal texture of the music, where the juxtaposition of motivic material is part of the overall form: subject and countersubject.

This piece uses an abundance of dissonance, perhaps more than any of the other pieces examined and at times can sound like a composition that dates from the twentieth century. The quick chromatic shifts that change the sectional tonality to minor from major (and vice versa) add a greater tonal depth to the composition. The use of diminished chords and augmented intervals (both linear and vertical) feed in to the *pathetic* sentiment that comes through in this piece. The baroque influence is apparent from the opening bars of this composition; the flowing counterpoint and the rich layering of the parts confirm this. The *Tierce de Picardie* at the end of the *Pièce* (the second instance of this harmonic idiom in

this set of works so far) is a bold ‘Baroque full-stop’ — clearly indicating the piece’s influence.

Rhythmically, there is little sense of the 6/8 time signature that is outlined; instead it tends to feel more like 3/4: this, a by-product of the instruction to play the piece *Quasi-Adagio*.

The first most prominent rhythmic motif that emerges can be seen extensively in the opening fifteen bars of the composition. It can be outlined as follows:



This motif is used at the beginning and the end of the subject and is also used in link passages. It is a dynamic rhythm and as the composition progresses it becomes the principal rhythmic motif. The following example shows motif X as used in the opening five bars.

Example 5.4.1: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 3 bars 1–5



From the example above Alkan's use of tonal ambiguity can be observed. The obvious question that arises is whether the composition is in a major key or a minor key. The tonal organisation of the first five bars does not help greatly in answering this question. Alkan avoids using any of the chromatic notes that are associated with minor keys. Instead, he alludes to the descending melodic minor scale (bars 2 and 5 in the example above, suggesting d and a minor respectively) to avoid chromatic notes which results in tonal/key ambiguity. Evidentially the argument can be made that, in spite of the aural perception of a minor tonality, the visual elements in the score (that is, the *tangible* elements) do not entirely support this. It is perhaps with the statement of the *Tierce de Picardie* that the tonality (and key) in the opening section is 'confirmed' as being D minor.

The second rhythmic motif, motif Y, comes from the countersubject. It can be outlined as follows:



This motif is essentially a dynamic rhythm that is latently static. Even though it contains notes of varying durational value, its tonal expression can be considered static. It appears sequentially and, as such, can be considered fundamentally static as tonally it does not develop into a purely melodic idiom. The following example helps to put this idea into context:

Example 5.4.2: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 3 bars 36–38



The considering of this motif as being static with latent dynamic tendencies is quite justifiable. From the example above it can be seen that the motif's tonal expression in this particular instance is similar with each statement: the sequential pattern is both 'harmonic' and 'rhythmic' with both components behaving in the same fashion with each statement of the motif.

Partial Macro Repetition is also prevalent in the example above as the rhythm is identical in the last three bars of the example, while the harmony changes (thus described as partial and not total repetition). Repetition will be discussed in greater detail further on.

Because the method for motivic selection is primarily based on repetition, the remaining rhythmic movement to be found in this composition can be labelled as rhythmic gestures and as such will not be considered here. The motifs that have been outlined above appear throughout the piece and can be considered as independent entities despite their original association as part of the fugal subject and countersubject respectively. The remaining rhythmic movement does not.

In the final stages of a composition, Alkan often takes the opening theme and begins a process of thematic or motivic liquidation. The final fifteen bars of this piece reflect this with the fugal subject being liquidated to just statements of motif X being used before the final cadence. Alkan ends this *Pièce* with a *Tierce de Picardie* and the following example illustrates these points:

Example 5.4.3: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 3 bars 50–59 (last bar)

The musical score for Example 5.4.3 consists of two systems of a grand staff. The first system contains bars 50 through 54. The second system contains bars 55 through 59. The music is in a minor key, indicated by one flat in the key signature. The first system begins with a series of chords and rests, followed by a more active passage starting at bar 52. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *rf* (ritardando forte). The second system continues the active passage, leading to a final cadence in bar 59, which is a Picardie cadence (a major triad in a minor key). The dynamics include *p* (piano).

5.5 *Pièce* No. 4

In this fourth *Pièce* of the set there is a sometimes-experimental aspect to the harmonic palette. As a result of this, there is a high proportion of dissonance used and, at times, there is the suggestion of polytonality and polyrhythm.

Identifying motifs in this piece presents a few minor problems, but ones that need to be addressed. The first, and perhaps the one that merits most consideration, is that of ‘theme’ versus ‘motif’. A full statement of the first main theme, Theme A, is only 2 bars in duration. However, classifying it all as a motif weakens the overall understanding of the term. The following example is of the opening three bars of *Pièce 4*, showing Theme A in its entirety and motif X:

Example 5.5.1: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 4 bars 1–3

The image shows a musical score for the first three bars of Alkan's *Pièce 4*. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The tempo marking "Assez doucement" and the dynamic marking "p" are present. A bracket above the first two bars is labeled "Theme A". A bracket below the second bar is labeled "Motif X".

The labelling of the middle bar of the above example as motif X comes retrospectively. This can be outlined rhythmically as follows:

The image shows a rhythmic outline of Motif X, consisting of a sequence of notes on a single staff. The notes are: a quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, and a quarter note.

The rhythmic movement that is present in that bar is the only movement that endures from Theme A and it emerges in small sequential patterns throughout the piece. The first of these sequences starts at bar 18 and can be seen in the example below:

Example 5.5.2: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 4 bars 18–20



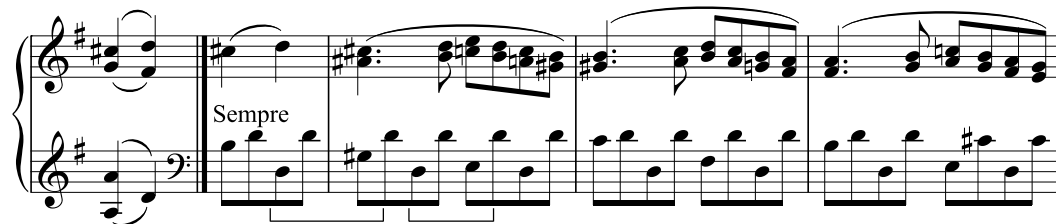
A similar pattern can also be seen at bar 22. It is for this reason that this particular rhythmic grouping will be considered as motif X — despite the tonal association that ties it to Theme A. It is a dynamic rhythm, even though the predominant movement is quaver-movement. The bass line in the example above exhibits a static quality, both tonal and rhythmic. It is this static use of quaver movement that aids the perception of ‘dynamism’ seen in motif X. The rhythmic similarities are negated by the tonal contrasts.

The high level of dissonance can also be seen in the example above. The use of major and minor seconds in particular stands out most vividly, A-sharp clashing with G-sharp (bar 18), C-sharp clashing with C-natural (bar 20) with a leap of a diminished fifth (bar 18) also sounding discordant. The overall tone and timbre of this Theme A developmental section, from which the example above is taken, is analogous to distorted fairground music. The twisted mock-Alberti Bass² begins in the previous bar, as an up-beat, while motif X begins on a structural downbeat in bar 18. The difference between the *perceived* downbeat and the *structural* downbeat gives the music an aural polyrhythmic quality that may perhaps be

² It is the succession of notes in the configuration of ‘lowest-highest-middle-highest’ and not necessarily the note names that are of concern here, hence the word ‘mock’.

missed from a reading of the score. The following example adds bar 17 to the existing example above:

Example 5.5.3: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 4 bars 17–20



The presence of a double barline mid-bar (in the first bar of the example above) is not uncommon in Alkan's music. The significance is often structural and may go unnoticed but the effects are obvious especially when considering both an aural and visual reading simultaneously. It also marks a natural close in the music up to that point: the composition opens with a two-beat up-beat therefore the sectional end should end with a bar of two beats to balance the opening. The double barline in bar 17 represents a sectional close.

The bass line in the example above illustrates the mock-Alberti bass. The 'lowest, highest, middle, highest' configuration is out-of-sync in the music that Alkan presents which portrays a Negative Metric Flow. The irregular grouping that Alkan suggests distorts the rhythmic metre (when considered with the treble part which is enforcing a Positive Metric Flow) aiding the suggestion of polyrhythm. The brackets underneath suggest the 'correct' configuration for the Alberti bass – one that would enforce a Positive Metric Flow.

The second, and contrasting, section is smaller and outlines the second main theme (Theme B) that is used in this piece. The tonal and rhythmic originalities that were seen in the first section are continued on in this section.

There is a conscious effort on Alkan's behalf to distort the rhythm further in this section. The following example should be considered first:

Example 5.5.4: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 4 bars /52–54

Mineur.

p

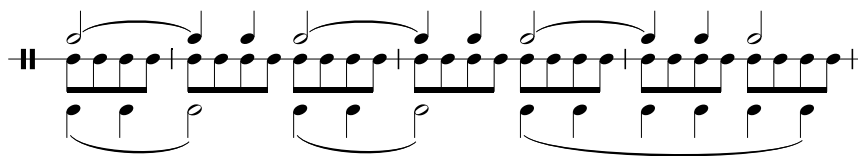
A number of rhythmic movements can be determined from the example above. The struggle that has been seen in previous compositions, both from this particular set and from those examined as part of this thesis, between aural and visual perception is present here.

Visually, the link between the upper treble part and the bass line is obvious: notes of similar values being used and the general rhythmic movement between the two parts are similar. The repetitious quaver movement that 'separates' the two parts betrays its simplicity by destabilising the rhythm. While this repetitious quaver

movement itself is contextually positive, that is promoting a Positive Metric Flow, its affect on the surrounding rhythmic movement highlights the Negative Metric Flow of the upper treble part.

The melodic interest in this section is found in the bass part. The contrapuntal dialogue that is alluded to tonally in the opening bars of the section between the upper treble part and the bass part is never actualised. However it is possible to perceive a *rhythmic* counterpoint existing between the same two parts that endures to the section's end. The following example illustrates this:

Example 5.5.5: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 4 bars /52–54



The basic principal of eighteenth-century counterpoint of having one voice 'active' while the second is 'stationery' can be seen in the example above. The minims, being the periods of motional stacticism, are 'counteracted' by the crotchet movement. Also, the beat stresses of the basic minim-crotchet-crotchet idiom are different in the upper voice than those in the lowest voice.

The presence of a sectional up-beat remains true, at least rhythmically, to the composition's beginnings. The change of key for this section comes as somewhat of a surprise partly due to the fact that all three parts are sounding the tonic note

(G) at the section's beginning. Despite the presence of a new key signature (C minor) at the beginning of this section, the overall tonal language in these twenty-six bars is diverse and typically ambiguous.

Repetition in this section is on a micro level. Its usage is particularly obvious in Example 5.5.4 above. The repetitions of the note G in the lower treble part are incessant for the duration of this 'B' section of twenty-six bars. This type of repetition tends to blur the metre presented by the time signature.

Although Alkan employs the use of baroque compositional models and tools, he manages to keep his music fresh and individual by way of his harmonic language. His use of false relation and linear augmented intervals in this piece, particularly in the 'B' section, (and indeed in nearly all of the compositions examined as part of this thesis) add a very contemporary air to the tonality.

The piece ends with a full bar of 4/4 despite having opened with a two-beat anacrusis. Alkan's interpretation of rhythm, and the way in which he scores it, demonstrate his ability to present ideas within self-contained rhythmical units. Section B, for example, opens with a two-beat anacrusis and ends with a 'half bar' — the remaining half of the bar beginning the next section as a two-beat anacrusis. After careful consideration, it becomes clear that the composition ends two beats short.

5.6 *Pièce* No. 5

The fifth *Pièce* of this set is a prime example of Alkan's ability to develop the smallest of motivic material without it becoming stale either rhythmically or tonally. The composition opens with a four-bar introduction. Here the main rhythmic ideas are presented, as is the style that the melodic curve is going to take. The 2/2 time signature is nicely established with the help of a dotted rhythm in the treble part. The following example illustrates that four-bar introduction:

Example 5.6.1: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 5 bars 1–4

The musical score for Example 5.6.1 shows the first four bars of Alkan's 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 5. The piece is in 2/2 time, marked "Lentement." and "f" (forte). The treble clef part begins with a dotted quarter note followed by an eighth note, then a series of chords. The bass clef part begins with a "Sostenu." (sostenuto) marking and a series of chords and eighth notes. The key signature has one flat (B-flat).

This introduction becomes the foundation for a melody-reliant homophony for which the above rhythmic configuration becomes the accompanying feature.

The first dominant rhythmic motif, motif X, can be extracted from the example above and outlined as follows:

Motif X is a rhythmic motif in 2/2 time, consisting of a dotted quarter note, an eighth note, a quarter note, and a dotted quarter note.

It is a static rhythm that is latently dynamic. The dynamic potential of this motif is suppressed. It is not uncommon for Alkan to purposely suppress motifs. It is in these instances that motivic perception plays an important role. The melody, beneath which this rhythmic organisation becomes the accompaniment, is introduced at bar 5.

It becomes apparent that, within this section, there are contrasting rhythmic and tonal forces employed. The long, arcing, legato melody contrasts directly with its staccato/tenuto accompaniment. In spite of the obvious contrasts, it is possible to see some rhythmic elements of the accompaniment in the melodic line.

Alkan gives melodic dominance or independence to the rhythmic and tonal structure set out in the opening four-bar introduction. This he does by using dynamics in a subtle manner. The opening dynamic of *forte* gives the aural impression that it's going to be a developing melody. However, with the introduction of the melody at bar 5 Alkan reduces the dynamic to *piano* thus removing (at least in this initial instance) any melodic development that this rhythmic and tonal idiom may indulge in.

The following example illustrates the long, arcing melody.

Example 5.6.2: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 5 bars 5–14

On closer examination of the above example, it can clearly be seen that Alkan does not in-fact introduce ‘new’ material to that which was presented in the opening four-bar introduction. The marked originality is evident in the clever positioning of the parts. The three basic rhythmic and tonal entities are: the semibreve movement and the tonal palette associated with that, the dotted-quaver-semiquaver movement and the tonal palette associated with that and finally the minim movement and the tonal palette associated with that.

Perception plays a very important role in this particular *Pièce*. The basic three-part rhythmic structure does not change from that mentioned above, however, the alignment of these three constituent parts influences the way in which they are *perceived*.

When the opening four bars are viewed contextually with the succeeding four bars the rhythmic differences are minimal. The same is true, for the most part, of the

tonal differences. The hierarchical way in which Alkan treats the individual parts in each of the examples above illustrates the important role perception plays in defining that which is considered ‘melody’ and that which is considered ‘accompaniment’ and the interchangeability that exists between the two.

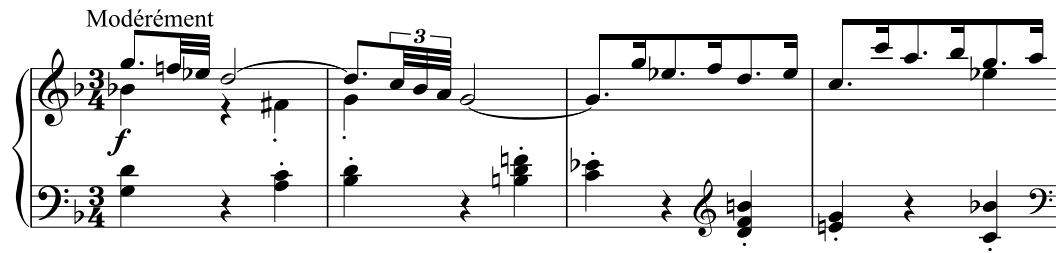
The differing tonality between the two sections can be focused on the use of a pedal-note in the bars that contain the arcing melody. This pedal-note has the effect of making the dotted rhythm somewhat contradicted, as it draws the focus away from that particular motif and re-focuses it on the long, legato, arcing melodic structure. It also suggests a slowing of the harmonic rhythm: the structure of the four-bar opening (and the sub-sections that are modelled on it) suggests a quicker harmonic rhythm. This can also be seen in the two examples above.

This arrangement of rhythmic and tonal activity dominates the first thirty-eight bars of the composition and it is at bar 39 that new material is introduced: beginning a B section via an elided perfect cadence in g minor — the chord of V ending section A with the chord of I beginning section B.

Section B contrasts directly with section A on all levels: rhythmic, tonal and structural. Alkan uses rhythmic diminution in its truest format in section B by halving the rhythmic values of the dotted rhythmic motif heard in section A. He also expands the tonal and rhythmic dynamism associated with this motif in section B, freeing it from the suppressive staticism that was witnessed in section

A. The following example is of bars 39–42 and illustrates the new thematic material.

Example 5.6.3: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 5 bars 39–42



The example above represents the principal four-bar rhythmic and tonal idea that Alkan uses to structure this section. Developmentally, he takes the movement of the second two bars to create a melodic line that is centred on repetition both rhythmically, tonally and structurally with the use of sequential patterns. More about the sequential patterns will be discussed further on.

The increase in tempo (from *Lentement* to *Modérément*), combined with the tuplet movement and the use of smaller note values, adds impetus to the music. The rhythmic movement as seen in the example above best represents that which dominates the rhythmic structure of section B. From the example above, the following rhythmic motif can be extracted:



The similarity between this motif and motif X is obvious and it is this similarity that helps unify the composition: its constituent parts sharing a similar trait. However, the context of usage is very different and the *quality* of the motif is also different.

This motif is rhythmically static. The continuous dotted-quaver semiquaver movement attests to this, however, its tonal expression is dynamic: it is the main motif which forms the fundamental structure of the melodic line. Therefore motif Y can be more correctly described as being static but latently dynamic.

The demisemiquaver movement and the semiquaver tuplet movement that precedes the appearance of motif Y can be considered as elongations of the Y fundamentals (that is, the dotted quaver semiquaver motion that motif Y is constructed on), with the addition of the extra rhythmic values (that is the semiquaver being divisible into demisemiquavers or a demisemiquaver tuplet) not exceeding the basic fundamental unit of motif Y.

Repetition plays a major role in the overall structuring of section B. Partial Macro Repetition occurs within the first eight bars — with the opening four-bar idea being repeated in its entirety rhythmically after the initial statement. The level of repetition is more obvious with motif Y forming the basis of the rhythmic movement of the section. Alkan, in section B, uses two rhythms that are *fundamentally* static to form a melody-reliant homophony. The following example helps to contextualise this:

Example 5.6.4: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 5 bars 47–50



The level of staticism is apparent in both the upper and lower treble parts of the above example. The static crotchet rhythm plays a supportive role in accompanying the more dominant dotted rhythm.

Alkan, in this *Pièce*, pushes the boundaries of tonality with the inclusion of linear augmented intervals, false relation and a chromaticism that serves to add an extra dimension of tension to the music as a whole. The chromatic tension is evident from the opening bar and there is a deliberate attempt by Alkan to destabilise the tonality by moving away from the tonic (D minor). The myriad of keys which he implies, and the sliding chromaticism present in the opening four bars, acts as a harmonic haze, clouding the tonality. However, the point of harmonic arrival is not some far, unrelated tonality — but the dominant: A major. Examples of this can be seen in the first two examples of this *Pièce* above.

The final section of the piece, beginning at bar 85, sees Alkan returning to the long, arcing melodic structure seen in the A section. However, in this section he interrupts this with the rhythmic feature seen in the first two bars of Example

5.6.3. Alkan reuses one of his favoured compositional techniques; that of combining the main dominant themes together in the final section of a composition. Alkan always exercises caution when using this technique by including those rhythmic and tonal organisations that are perhaps *perceived* to be the most memorable.

Despite the chromaticism, dissonances and tonal ambiguity Alkan uses older compositional techniques in the structuring of this composition. The use of the sequence, for example, sees Alkan almost honouring the techniques of the ‘great masters’ of composition, namely J.S. Bach and G.F. Handel. The attachment of the Handel transcription to these *Pièces* is testament to that.

5.7 *Pièce* No. 6

The almost-perpetual quaver movement that dominates this composition is perhaps the most obvious feature, rhythmically, that is presented in this piece. The creative ways in which Alkan treats this static rhythmic motif are testament to his ability to develop small motivic material. The mock-fugato style, which is suggested at the beginning of the piece, is another acknowledgement of baroque idioms.

The sixth *Pièce* starts off tonally unambiguously, and the tonic of B-flat major is established explicitly within the opening eight bars. However this only serves as

the constant to which the tonal distortion that follows can be compared, as the composition indulges in high levels of chromaticism.

There is a structural similarity between this *Pièce* and *Pièce* No. 5. The following example shows the opening six bars of the composition:

Example 5.7.1: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 6 bars /1–6

Majestueusement

The double barline in Alkan’s music signifies the end of a section. In the instance presented in the example above, it would hint that the material is introductory by nature. The same characteristic was presented in the previous *Pièce* and, as with the previous *Pièce*, the rhythmic and tonal content formed the basis of thematic material. From the example above the following can be determined as motif X:

Motif X

Motif X - 1

It is in essence a dynamic rhythm, with the sub-motif X-1 being a static rhythm. Another similarity with the previous *Pièce* is that elements of motif X (in this case motif X-1) form the basis of an accompanying feature. The opening six bars present the tonic key, B-flat major, and it is from bar seven onwards that Alkan introduces chromatic notes which begin to destabilise the tonic harmonies.

The level of dissonance (both harmonic and chromatic) also intensifies as the composition progresses. It is in the accompanying quaver part, however, that the chromaticism is most prevalent. As a result of this, there is a suggestion of polytonality.

The following example shows the sub-motif X-1 in its accompanying role and also the polytonal suggestions.

Example 5.7.2: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 6 bars 13–15

The musical score consists of three bars. The first bar has a treble part with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5 and a bass part with notes Bb3, C4, D4, E4. The second bar has a treble part with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5 and a bass part with notes Bb3, C4, D4, E4. The third bar has a treble part with notes G4, A4, Bb4, C5 and a bass part with notes Bb3, C4, D4, E4. The second bar features a false relation between the E-natural in the upper treble part and the E-flat in the bass part. The third bar features a triplet in the bass part.

The presence of false relation in the second bar of the above example (between the E-natural in the upper treble part and the E-flat in the bass part) is a favoured ‘dissonance’ of Alkan’s. It also helps in hinting that the two parts are pulling

away from each other tonally. Alkan, in this instance, cleverly restates the note name at the same register so its aural rendering is not strictly false relation but rather a succession of notes *perceived* to be in the same voice as follows: E-Natural – F – E-Flat.

The suggestion, or question, of polytonality arises when the parts in the example above are viewed as two separate entities interacting with each other. It is here that music perception plays an important role: visual versus aural. This type of tonal and compositional ambiguity is very common in this set of works and in Alkan's music in general. In this *Pièce* the dichotomous relationship that is witnessed between diatonic tonalities and chromatic tonalities occurring together adds to the perception of motion on the rhythmic plain also. The sub-motif X-1 although being a static rhythm has a dynamic tonal expression; this dynamism being the result of a constantly changing tonality. The following example helps to put this in to context:

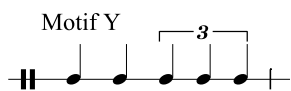
Example 5.7.3: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 6 bars 10–12



The two-part texture is both tonally and rhythmically exposed. The presence of linear augmented intervals in the bass part of both the second and third bars of the

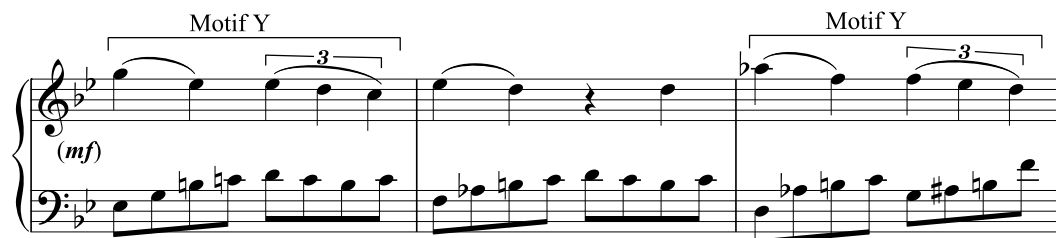
example above cannot be disguised. The rising chromatic bass part clashes with the diatonic treble part and it is this type of writing that fuels the perception of polytonality. The rising chromaticism in the bass part gives the rhythmic movement *direction* and thus gives this static rhythm a sense of dynamism qualifying its tonal expression as being dynamic.

The second motif to be identified is already presented in Example 5.7.2 above – the triplet motion. Here, the triplet movement and can be referred to as anticipatory in nature as it does not becomes a dominant feature until bar 28. The following illustrates motif Y:



The rhythmic configuration that is presented in motif Y can be seen tonally in the following example:

Example 5.7.4: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 6 bars 28–30



The section of the composition in which motif Y appears as the dominant motif is actually quite small in comparison to the sections where motif X is predominantly active. Its inclusion here as a main motif is based on two things: firstly, rhythmic diversity — the triplet — and secondly, repetition. It is a dynamic rhythm that is latently static. Its use quasi-sequentially restricts it from gaining tonal independence and developing into a dominant melody. The dissonant chromatics that occur in the accompanying role distract from motif Y's potential dynamism.

Motif Y forms part of the opening section and the main eight-bar section of the opening that uses this motif can be described as transitory. This sub-section of the main opening thirty-four-bar section forms the basis of a transition to a developmental section. It is for this reason that these bars, along with the actual Y motif, can be called transitory. It is not heard again after this sub-section ends at bar 34.

The textural change that begins in the developmental section, starting at bar 35, sees a departure from the delicate two-part texture to a fuller chordal texture. The prevailing rhythmic motif is sub-motif X-1 and there is also a tonal shift to the subdominant via an augmented ninth chord.³ This type of 'harmonic' chromaticism sees Alkan using chromatic notes cleverly and not just in the name of 'progression' or modernity. The following example shows the last bar of the opening section where he uses the augmented dominant ninth chord as the basis for an elided cadence into the developmental section.

³ Chopin uses this chord in some of his Nocturnes also.

Example 5.7.5: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 6 bars 34–36

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system (bars 34-36) is in E-flat major (one flat) and 3/4 time. The right hand has a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes (F4, G4, A4) and a slur over a quarter note (Bb4). The left hand has a descending eighth-note scale: G3, F3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2. The second system (bars 37-40) begins with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. The right hand has a chordal texture with a half note (F4) and a quarter note (Bb4). The left hand has an ascending eighth-note scale: G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3. The score is labeled with 'Eb: Vaug9' and 'I'.

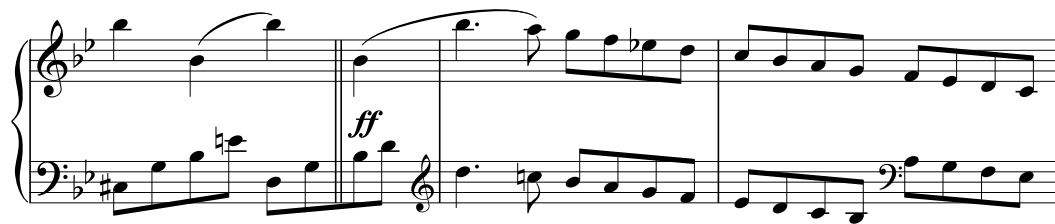
Alkan, perhaps now somewhat predictably, uses his own formula for ending one section and beginning another: using a perfect cadence in the new sectional tonic, in the case of the example above, E-flat major.

In the developmental section Alkan takes the descending scalic passages, seen at the beginning of the composition, and reverses them to form ascending scalic passages that now support the chordal texture of the upper harmonies. There is a notable shift away from the chromaticism associated with sub-motif X-1 and the dynamism that was perceived in the opening section is now lessened here. This is due to the staticity and tonal predictability associated with scales.

The structure in the developmental section is based on sequential patterns and motivically there is no new material introduced. However, tonally, the scalic pattern is corrupted with the introduction of linear augmented intervals in the ascending passages.

As the section concludes there is a return to the elements that were seen in the opening. The texture reverts back to a light two-part voicing, with the eventual reintroduction of motif X at bar /60. The following example shows the reintroduction of motif X:

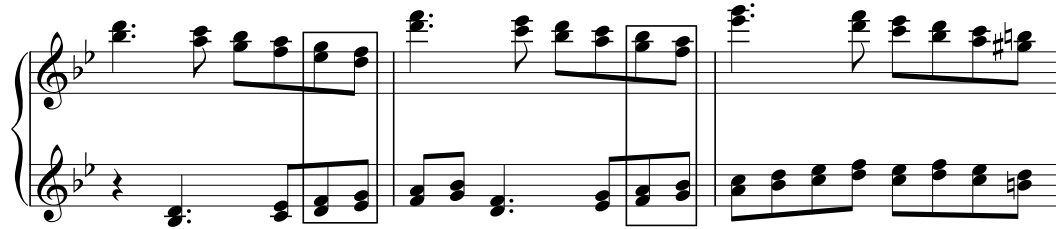
Example 5.7.6: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 6 bars 60–62



Motif X dominates the remainder of the composition and from this it is clear that repetition plays an important role in the overall structure of the sixth *Pièce*. Before the final cadential pattern there are two further compositional episodes that stand out and merit discussion.

The first, which begins at bar 89, focuses on the first portion of motif X. It is with the use of this portion of motif X that the first effort to distort the rhythmic flow is made. The mock-fugato style aids this with the contrary motion between the upper and lower treble parts. The motion is dynamic, the tonal expression is dynamic, and partial macro repetition is at play, all combining to create a strong episodic departure from the compositional ‘norm’ of this piece. The following example can be considered:

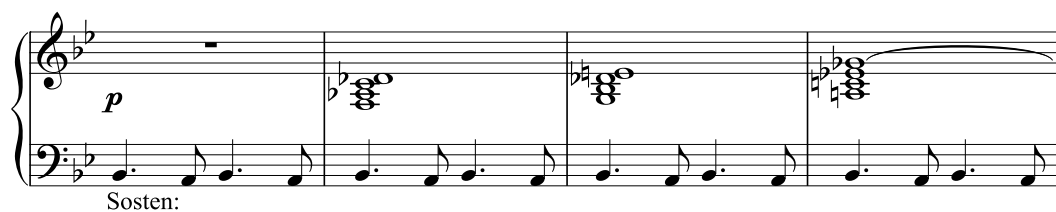
Example 5.7.7: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 6 bars 94–95



In the lower treble part the crossing of the idiom across the barline serves to destabilise the prevailing Positive Metric Flow. The tonal and harmonic consequence of the mock-fugato style combined with the contrary motion can be seen in the boxed notes above; the same four notes are struck in succession in an example of ‘voice exchange’ which, in turn, creates an obvious dissonance each time (the boxed notes above). This type of tonal motion results in tonal staticity.

The second episodic section that merits mention sees rhythmic elements of motif X (and sub-motif X-1) used in a strictly static manner. The episode has an air of tonal agitation about it, with the bass line repeating the leading note (A) and tonic (B-flat) in succession. The following example illustrates this:

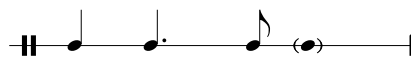
Example 5.7.8: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 6 bars 119–125





The first four bars of the above example show the opening rhythmic feature of motif X. Here it is both rhythmically and tonally static as it is just continuous repetitions at the same pitch. The same is true for the sub-motif X-1. It too is now tonally and rhythmically static and, in contrast to its previous chromatic function, now plays a diatonic role.

The motivic material in this *Pièce* is minimal but Alkan keeps it from turning musically stale through a process of development. The presence of a dotted idiom as part of a dominant motif can now be said to be a trait of Alkan's compositional style. In particular the following arrangement, as it appears in a considerable number of the works examined in this thesis:



Its importance will be discussed further in chapter 6.

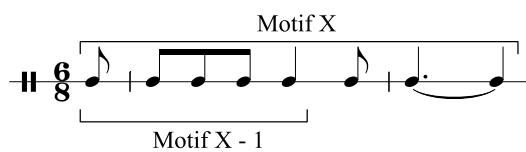
5.8 *Pièce* No. 7

The seventh *Pièce* in this set marks a departure from the compositional styles employed in the previous two *Pièces*. While there are some similar elements, in

particular the fugato-style of writing seen in the opening of this *Pièce*, there is a general sense that the composition is more contrapuntal with delayed imitative entries in the various voices. Its texture is chiefly four-part.

Tonally, the composition is centred on the contrasts between major and minor keys. Alkan draws attention to this in the score by labelling various sections *Mineur* and *Majeur* and by also using notated key signatures to consolidate changes in tonality.

The main rhythmic motif that is presented in the opening section can be outlined as follows:



Motif X is a dynamic rhythm as it contains notes of various durations and is also used as part of the main melodic idiom. As a result of this then, it can be said that motif X has a dynamic tonal expression. The inclusion of a sub-motif X-1 is necessary as it is used in that configuration independently of motif X.

The following example shows both motif X and sub-motif X-1 within the tonal context of the opening four bars:

Example 5.8.1: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 7 bars /1–4

The musical score is in 6/8 time and features a treble and bass staff. The tempo is marked 'Molto Moderato' and the mood is 'Dolce'. A bracket labeled 'Motif X' spans the first four bars. A box highlights the notes in the second bar of the treble staff. The word 'ten.' appears in the second and fourth bars. A bracket labeled 'Motif X-1' is located below the bass staff in the fourth bar.

Rhythmic ambiguities are present from the start in this composition. The boxed notes in bar 2 highlight a *rhythmic deficit* in the alto part of the treble stave that is present from the opening bar of the composition. The presence of a quaver on the first beat of the bar presents a problem as there are no rests for the remaining two quaver beats that would be associated with the ‘stems-down’ alto voice. This type of rhythmic ‘untidiness’ would seem to go against the grain of Alkan’s noted structural rigidity, however, there is no doubt that it adds to the allure of Alkan’s compositional style. It is present throughout this composition.

The level of chromaticism in this *Pièce* is not at the same dissonant level as it was in the previous *Pièce*. The chromaticism here appears to be more measured but this does not affect the composition’s originality or significance within the set.

The following bars illustrate one of Alkan’s uses of chromaticism within this piece:

Example 5.8.2: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 7 bars 13–17



The bars containing boxed notes show the sliding linear chromaticism that Alkan uses, shifting the harmony from major to minor very quickly — C major to c minor via the E-natural/E-flat in the upper voice of the fourth bar of the example above — and from one tonal sphere to another — C minor seven to D major seven — that can be seen in the progression across the barline. This could be viewed as Alkan’s deliberate attempt to destabilise the harmonic palette.

The X motif and the sub-motif X-1 dominate the rhythmic plane for over thirty bars. At bar 33 there is an abrupt change to the governing rhythmic pattern combined with some harsh dissonances.

This interruption, of three bars duration, is outlined below:

Example 5.8.3: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 7 bars 33–35



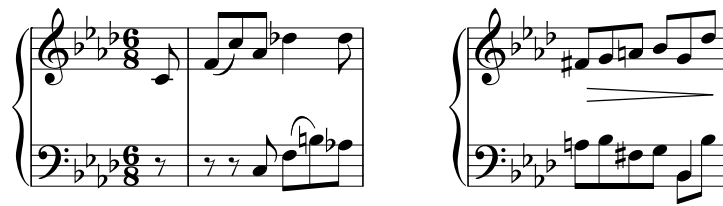
The rhythmic pattern in the treble part is not new: it forms the last section of motif X, however the rhythmic gesture that is introduced in the bass part is new. It becomes a rhythmic and tonal constant against which all other activity is compared. The tonal contrasts are evident from the start; starting with explicit diatonic harmonies that descend in to a harsh chromatic clash in the last bar of the above example — the F-naturals clashing with the F-sharps in the upper parts. The purpose of this section is transitory — it is leading the music away from the tonic major and into the tonic minor. The rhythmic organisation in the bass part of the first bar can be labelled as R.

Alkan actually uses a change in key signature to denote the modulation to the tonic minor section (F minor), which is uncommon in the works presented in this thesis. Rhythmically this F minor section is similar to the original F major section however, the subtle differences that Alkan works in to the rhythm (and the tonality) help to keep the section independent in its own right.

The sectional opening presents a few anomalies regarding style and consistency. Even though the key signature has changed Alkan still writes accidentals in front

of some of the notes. Also, there is one bar in the entire composition that has the notes beamed ‘incorrectly’. The following example illustrates both of these points:

Example 5.8.4: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 7 bars /37 and 45

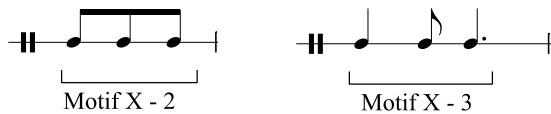


The flat signs in front of the D in the treble part and the A in the bass part are redundant and unnecessary. However, the beaming of the bass part in the second bar above is strange. In other parts of the music Alkan introduces a second voice in any given part but does not interfere with the rhythmic metre or structure. Here, however, the ‘re-grouping’ of the quavers is contrary to that which is expected in compound time, with an emphasis now being placed on the middle quaver that is associated with the second group of three quavers. Alkan gives the lower B-flat crotchet a rhythmic independence, perceived *visually*, and also a greater tonal emphasis, perceived *aurally*, by allowing the note to be held as it is re-struck an octave higher.

Regarding the rhythmic structure of this section, elements of motif X and sub-motif X-1 are detectable. Here these elements are labelled as autonomous sub-

motifs of the governing X motif (as was seen in the opening section regarding sub-motif X-1).

For example, the following rhythmic groupings that appear in the second section can be labelled thus:



These two motifs are considered sub-motifs of X as both sets of rhythmic organisation are to be found in the original X motif. While the rhythmic grouping of sub-motif X-2 remains unchanged in the music, there are variants of sub-motif X-3 which is at times preceded by a dotted crotchet. Alkan demonstrates the versatility with which he can compose by allowing one motif to be subdivided into smaller motifs and developing motifs that have their fundamental origin in the central motif.

Motif X-2 is a static rhythm that is latently dynamic, as it is incorporated into the prevailing melodic idiom at times within the *Mineur* section. For the most part, motif X-2 plays a transitory role forming link passages between various inner sections or a supporting role by accompanying the dominant melodic line. Despite the rhythm itself being static, its tonal expression is dynamic as it clearly avoids static pitch repetitions throughout the entire composition.

Motif X-3 is dynamic and is a popular rhythmic grouping favoured by Alkan. It is heard as part of a wider rhythmic scheme (preceded by a dotted crotchet as mentioned earlier) but gains independence thanks to phrasing and a modulation to A major. This modulation is also announced by a change of key signature.

The following example shows motif X-3 and the second occurrence of a notated key change in this *Pièce*:

Example 5.8.5: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 7 bars 64–67 (first half)

The boxed notes illustrate Alkan's focus on the rhythmic grouping of motif X-3. The insertion of slurs helps in shifting the attention to the second beat of the bar. Another notable feature present in the above example is the apparent inconsistency regarding voicing and note placement. Perception is imperative here as the listener would be unaware that the parts in the bass line are effectively crossing. So why write the notes in this manner? The phrasing clearly indicates the position of the melody in the treble part so, in theory, there is no reason why the parts should cross in the bass line. It is the present author's belief that Alkan

does this to preserve the integrity of the motif. Alkan does not replicate this behaviour in the treble part of this piece.

Alkan changes key again, from A major back to the *Pièce's* original tonic of F major. However, the suggested tonality directly after the notated key change is F minor but the sparse two-part texture keeps the tonality indistinct.

The next section, labelled *Majeur*, is a Partial Macro Repeat of the opening section and there is nothing new introduced motivically. There is a Total Macro Repeat of the three-bar interruption after which there is a small episodic section that leads into the final coda and cadence.

It is in the six bars that precede the final cadence that Alkan combines elements of all the rhythmic motifs. The following example illustrates this:

Example 5.8.6: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 7 bars 123–125

The musical score for Example 5.8.6 shows three measures of music. The treble clef part has a melodic line with notes G4, A4, B4, C5, and D5. The bass clef part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with rests. The first measure is marked 'Dolce subito.' and 'f.'. The second measure has a key signature change to F minor, indicated by a double sharp on the F line, and is marked 'f.'. The third measure is marked 'f.' and 'ten.'.

Alkan favours this compositional method: bringing all the motivic elements of the composition together in juxtaposition to create a sense of unity as the piece ends.

Perhaps the most prominent rhythmic feature of this composition is its construction on a single dominating motif, motif X, and derivatives thereof. This alone highlights Alkan's keen sense of development, and ability to rework given material into something new, presented in a different way or changing its tonal function within a sectional context.

5.9 *Pièce* No. 8

This *Pièce* features two contrasting, dichotomous sections, A and B, and perhaps best portrays Alkan's play on minor and major tonalities and the rhythmic motifs associated with each tonal section.

The following table gives an outline of the form of the *Pièce*, and should help in contextualising the matters discussed.

Table 6: Sectional Divisions illustrating Dominant Motifs and Sectional Tonics in *Pièce No. 8, Op. 72*

<i>Sectional Title</i>	<i>Bar Numbers</i>	<i>Dominant Motif(s) Used</i>	<i>Sectional Tonic (Notated Key Sig.)</i>
A	1-16	X & Y	A Min
B	17-43	Z, Y, Y-1 & Y-2	A Maj
A1	44-94	X, X-1, Y, Y-1 & Y-3	A Min
B1	95-127	Z, Y, Y-1, Y-2 & Y-3	A Maj
Coda	128-end	X, X-1, Y, Y-1 & Y-3	A Min

The first most striking rhythmic motif to be identified, motif X, is heard in the opening bar of the *Pièce* and dominates the rhythmic plain. It is developed further in the composition and this developed version can be labelled as a sub-motif.

They are both outlined below:



Motif X acts as a quasi-tremolo and at times acts like a fading echo tonally. It is a static rhythm and it is expressed statically also with repetitions of the same note/chords.

The following example shows the opening four bars of the *Pièce*:

Example 5.9.1: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 8 bars 1–4

Assez vile.
Sostenuto.

mf

Sosten:

mf

Present in the above example is a second motif that appears throughout the composition and transcends the sectional contrasts by acting as the ‘unifying’ motif. It is the rhythmic grouping seen in the upper voice of the upper treble part in the first two bars of the piece (seen in the example above). This is outlined rhythmically as follows:

Motif Y

It is essentially a dynamic rhythm as it is usually the opening gesture of the melodic line. It also dominates in its own right, for example from bars 9 to 16, here motif Y along with motif X, are used almost exclusively.

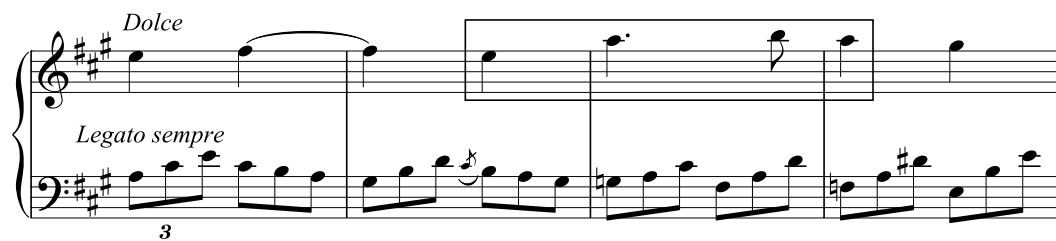
The third dominant rhythmic motif, motif Z, seen in *Pièce* No. 8 is triplet movement. It is seen in the contrasting B sections of this composition and plays an accompanying role to the prevailing melodic line. It can be defined as follows:



It is rhythmically static but its tonal expression is dynamic when viewed in the context of the piece. It also plays on the established metric flow, which up to its introduction is positive, by distorting the rhythmic metre.

The following example illustrates the use of motif Z and its dynamic tonal expression:

Example 5.9.2: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 8 bars 17–20



The four bars represented in the example above are the first of section B. Immediately it can be seen that Alkan reorganises texture, timbre, rhythm and tonality to create a section that is in stark contrast to that which dominated section A.

The boxed notes represent a favoured rhythmic grouping of Alkan's. It appears here, but does not develop in to a dominating motif but deserves mention as it will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6.

Motif Y can be seen in the example above and it is in this contrasting B section that it undergoes durational diminution, with the last crotchet of the motif being shortened to a quaver. This also helps to keep it distinct and separate from its use in section A. The following example shows the durational diminution of the Y motif associated with section B:

Example 5.9.3: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 8 bars 22–26

The musical score shows two staves. The treble staff has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The bass staff has a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The first bar of the treble staff contains a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4). The second bar contains a motif of four eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5). The third bar contains a motif of four eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5). The fourth bar contains a motif of four eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5). The fifth bar contains a motif of four eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5). The sixth bar contains a motif of four eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5). The seventh bar contains a motif of four eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5). The eighth bar contains a motif of four eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5). A box highlights the last two bars (bars 5 and 6), where the motif is modified. The label 'Motif Y-1' is placed above the treble staff in the final bar of the boxed section.

Because motif Y has been changed as shown in the boxed notes in the last two bars of the example above, it can be labelled as motif Y-1. Alkan toys with motif Y as the composition progresses and this keeps it from becoming predictable and stale. These Y sub-motifs will be discussed and illustrated further on.

The first set of boxed notes in the example above illustrates Alkan's predilection for sliding chromaticism. The notes with their stems up are ascending chromatically and this creates an air of dissonance with the treble part.

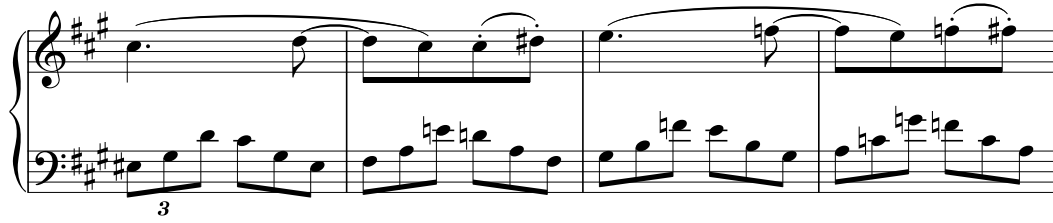
The two-part texture, within which this is taking place, is quite exposed and is one of the main contrasts between this B section and the opening A section. There also exists a dichotomous relationship between the two sections regarding the grouping of notes; the four-semiquaver grouping in section A versus the triplet grouping in section B. The level of dissonance is *perceived* to be more apparent in section B with the three-against-four rhythmic formation creating its own tonal distortions.

Motif Y repeatedly endures some sort of rhythmic mutation in section B and as a result of this motif Y-2 can be outlined as follows:



The following example contextualises this tonally:

Example 5.9.4: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 8 bars 33–36



The introduction of the dotted note actually helps to distort the rhythm, with the triplets in the bass line conflicting (rhythmically) with the last quaver in the first bar of the example above, tied across the bar line.

Total Macro Repetition occurs with the reintroduction of section A at bar 44. The first four bars are repeated exactly *aurally* but Alkan uses enharmonic equivalents to create a different visual affect. There are some small differences introduced and the initial ideas that were put forward in the first statement of section A are developed. The inclusion of the sub-motif X-1 at this point adds another dimension to the rhythmic language (and its tonal expression).

Motif Y undergoes another change in this section, in the form of durational diminution. The rhythmic values of the motif are halved and, instead of occurring over two bars, it is now present in every bar. Motif Y-3 can be outlined as follows:



The tonal direction and the tonal expression of this motif changes from the initial tonal organisation that was associated with the original usage of motif Y. It suggests a quicker pace in the music, achieved through the occasional quickening of the harmonic rhythm. The following example illustrates motif Y-3:

Example 5.9.5: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 8 bars 54–57

The image shows a musical score for a piano piece. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score is divided into four measures. The first two measures are labeled 'Motif Y' and feature a melody in the treble clef with a note tied across the barline, and a bass line of semiquaver chords in the bass clef. The last two measures are labeled 'Motif Y-3' and feature a more active melody in the treble clef with frequent chord changes, and a bass line of semiquaver chords in the bass clef. The overall effect is a shift from a slower, more static harmonic rhythm to a quicker, more active one.

Motif Y (without the note tied across the barline) and motif Y-3 can be seen back-to-back in the example above and the rate of pace of the semiquaver movement tonally is different between the two. It must be said that the positioning of the semiquavers also helps in suggesting a quicker harmonic pace. When they form the basis of the bass line (in the lower treble part in the first two bars of the above example) they are tonally static for a longer period: the repeated middle C being the lowest note. When the orientation changes and they are shifted to the upper treble part as part of motif Y-3, the rate of harmonic change is *perceived* to be quicker even though the same harmony may be employed for more than the motif's duration.

As this section is an augmented version of the original section A there is an expectation regarding the appearance of new material, either tonally or rhythmically. In this respect Alkan introduces the motif X-1, and he does so at bar 66. The following example illustrates this:

Example 5.9.6: Alkan 11 Pièces Op. 72 No. 8 bars 66–69

Motif X-1 is visible from the first bar of the above example above. The boxed notes underneath illustrate motif Y, while the next set of boxed notes illustrate rhythmic motif Y-1. In this instance it becomes clear that Alkan wants to create an air of familiarity concerning motif X-1 by using it in conjunction with two differing, but already familiar, statements of the Y motif. It is these three motifs that dominate the rest of section A1.

Motif X-1 is a static rhythm and remains so for the duration of its usage. Its tonal expression is also static, with repetition forming the primary basis of its tonal treatment regardless of its voicing (treble or bass).

The modulation back to the tonic key of A minor for section A1 is signified with an actual change in the key signature. Alkan uses Total Macro Repetition to establish that the sectional tonic has changed back to the original before modulating chromatically into a host of other keys. The deftness and agility with which Alkan uses tonality is to be commended. The use of enharmonics, as mentioned earlier, enables him to establish that which is already familiar and then veer away in an opposite tangent visually. The following two-part Example, 5.9.7A and 5.9.7B, illustrates how Alkan achieves this:

Example 5.9.7A: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 8 bars 1–5

Example 5.9.7B: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 8 bars 44–48

There is a sense, when viewing the two components of Example 5.9.7 together, that Alkan's use of enharmonics is redundant considering that the point of arrival in the fifth bar of each of the examples is the same chord [E-major(7)] spelled in the same manner. However, the enharmonics do facilitate a brief tonal shift in the second example above (5.9.7B) by allowing the earlier B-diminished-seventh chord in bar 5 to be replaced with a B-flat major (9) chord. The insertion of the demisemiquaver gesture keeps in line with the developmental nature of section A1.

From the beginning of section B1 (which starts at bar 95) it is clear that it is significantly different from its first statement. The difference lies in the positioning of the parts, which are reversed here.

The first fifteen bars of the section utilise three of the various Y motifs but the developmental material begins with the broadening of the two-part texture to a three-part texture. The organisation of the voices is interesting too. The following example illustrates the three-part texture as it becomes established:

Example 5.9.8: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 8 bars 111–114



Alkan, by introducing the third voice, shifts the focus away from the triplet movement. The two-octave interval between the separate statements of the melodic line (the idiom in the bass part and the upper treble part) partially-negates the accompanying role that the triplet motif previously played in section B. However, by virtue of its rhythmic configuration it still stands apart and makes an impact both tonally and rhythmically.

The level of chromaticism deepens as the section unfolds and there is a deliberate effort to move as far away from the sectional tonic of A major as possible. Alkan, at times, takes the level of chromaticism in this section so far that there are bars where diatonic notes are now sparse. The following example shows this high level of chromaticism:

Example 5.9.9: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 8 bars 120–121



The first bar in the example above is significant as it is the first time within section B1 that triplet motion is broken. The quaver motion is anticipatory for in the final bars of the section, leading back into a reprise of the A section, the triplet movement is totally abandoned and the tonality becomes less chromatic.

The far-reaching chromaticism can be clearly seen in the second bar above, with the presence of the double-sharp and the numerous chromatic notes emphasising Alkan's tonal awareness — and the obvious discrepancies that can arise through musical perception: what is heard versus what is seen. The final chromatic notes of bar 121, Example 5.9.9, have enharmonic equivalents that bring the music closer to the sectional tonic/tonic minor *aurally* but Alkan's tonal choices *visually* lead him away from the nearly-related keys.

The coda of this *Pièce* brings together elements of almost all the activity that has been heard. It is essentially another 'version' of section A but undergoes further changes with the inclusion of un-resolving scalic passages (the resolution of this particular idiom Alkan saves for the final bars before the closing cadential pattern).

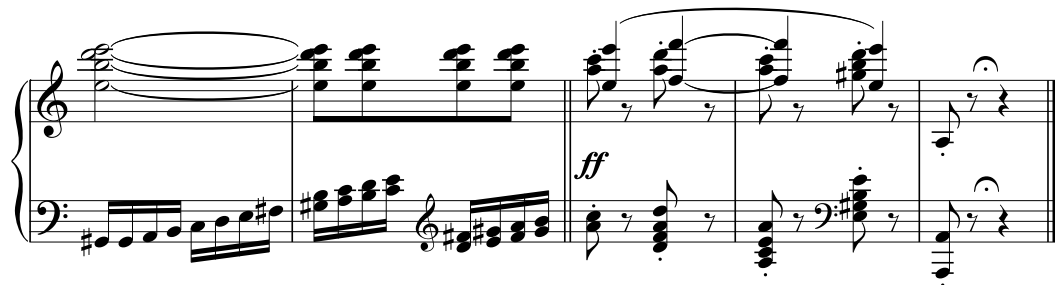
The rhythmic motifs that dominate the coda are motif X and motif Y-3; the staticism of the X motif clashing with the dynamism of the Y-3 motif exaggerated by the tonal expression of each also facilitating this clash. The textural pattern changes in this section also with the treble part being replicated in the bass part an octave (and sometimes two octaves) lower, similar to that seen in Example 5.9.8. This unison writing adds a tonal depth to the music as the struggling melodic idiom (contained in motif Y-3) is spread out further over the instrument. This also affects the tone and timbre — and all of this achieved by minimal changes.

These developmental actions solidify Alkan's ability to develop the simplest of motifs and manipulate them into structures that are well constructed, well contained and closely monitored.

The suppression of the original motif Y until the very final phrase is very significant. It, itself, becomes a rhythmic cadence⁴, being the rhythmic expression of the final tonal cadence. The use of a resolving scalic passage to precede the final cadential pattern is also significant as it affectively resolves the issue of the previous unresolved scales earlier in the section.

The following example illustrates the last five bars of the composition:

Example 5.9.10: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 8 bars 146–150



The contrast between the staccato diatonic chords and the legato octave statement of motif Y ensure that it is the fundamental melody and rhythm associated with not just the ending of the section, but the entire *Pièce*. In the final section it is

⁴ By rhythmic cadence I mean the use of a rhythmic motif, containing long note values, to bring an end to - or signify the end of - a section of a piece whereby another rhythmic motif, containing shorter note values, has been used at length.

motif Y-3 that dominates; a durational diminution of motif Y. The use of motif Y as a *rhythmic* cadence is significant as it creates a temporal sense of ‘slowing down’ against the backdrop of the quicker-paced motif Y-3.

5.10 *Pièce* No. 9

Broadly speaking the overall harmonic palette of this composition is befitting of the title: *dans le Style Religieux*. There is, at times, a ceremonial air to the tonalities and a majestic quality to the rhythms used, both of which are diverse and varied, to suggest a *religious style*.

The particular rhythmic gestures that create a grandiose-type idea are outlined in Example 4.10.1 below. These are not considered as motifs as they only feature as part of a larger rhythmic and tonal section within the composition.

Example 4.10.1: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 9 bars 1–4

Assez Lentement.

pp e Sosten.

rf

ten.

The notes that are boxed in the example above represent the regally, grandiose rhythmic gestures that add to the *religiosity* of this *Pièce*.

The first main motif can be expressed two ways and are outlined as follows:



Both of the motifs above are essentially the same. Motif X1 is used as a self-contained entity, while motif X2 (aided by the quaver in parentheses at the end of the bar) facilitates the formation of larger rhythmic (and tonal) organisations. The following example illustrates this:

Example 5.10.2: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 9 bars 18–20

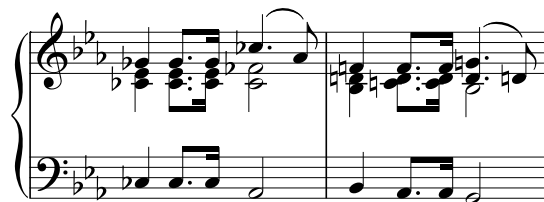


The differing usages of the basic X motif can be seen in the first two bars of the example above. The second and third bars also help to illustrate the deftness with which Alkan can change key with the sudden and, quite often, unexpected introduction of chromatic notes. Despite the ‘flat’ tonality that has been established the somewhat over-bearing *visual* presence of the sharps in the second and third bar above sees Alkan toying with enharmonic tonality; suggesting one

key or tonal shift to the listener but suggesting a different key or tonal shift to the player or ‘viewer of the score’.

Alkan affirms the unity or singularity of the X motif by allowing the two differing versions to be heard together. It can be seen in example 5.10.3 that Alkan uses motif X1 to ‘accompany’ motif X2. The following two bars from the opening section show the two versions occurring together:

Example 5.10.3: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 9 bars 9–10



The motif, in both guises, is dynamic but Alkan almost exclusively confines its usage to the first twenty-four bars where it is almost always accompanied by the same rhythmic grouping at each statement (see Example 5.10.2 above). Could this accompanying rhythmic feature be labelled a counter-motif, or an *accompanying* motif? The two appear together exclusively throughout the composition but in order to label it as a motif it becomes necessary to look at the rhythmic movement further on in the composition, as repetition is one of the governing rules in motivic selection in this analysis.

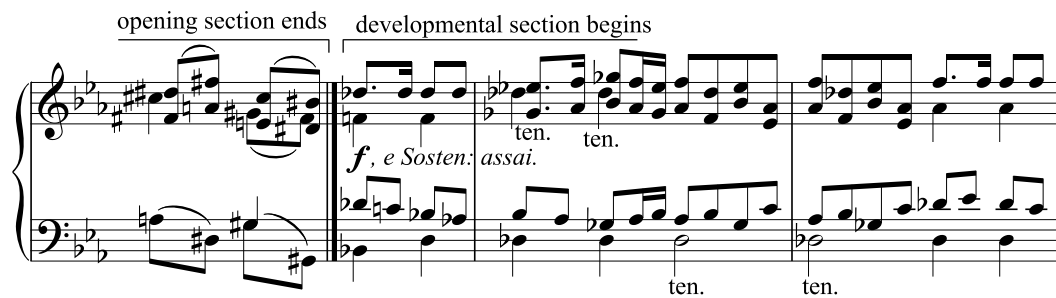
In the context of the piece as a whole, the accompanying rhythmic organisation that is used to accompany motif X *can* be labelled as a rhythmic motif. Thus motif Y can be rhythmically outlined as follows:



As the piece develops the elements contained within motif Y separate to form smaller sub-motifs and it is for this reason that the above configuration can be considered the *sum total* of Y's rhythmic activity. This can also be said for motif X, as elements of it go on to form dominant sub-motifs also.

Alkan ends the opening section halfway through bar 24 and begins a developmental section starting from the second half of the same bar. It is from this point on that elements of the rhythmic motifs outlined above emerge as independent entities. The following example illustrates the beginning of the developmental section:

Example 5.10.4: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 9 bars 24–26

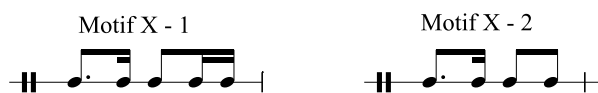


The presence of the double barline in the first bar of the above example (bar 24) emphasises Alkan's strictness when considering sectional endings and beginnings and his overall firmness when considering structural changes. The abrupt change from the prevailing sharp key to the flat key, in which the developmental section starts, is accomplished through an enharmonic modulation.

As a result of the sectional barline being inserted mid-bar, there is the perception of a *false bar* and this has a knock-on affect on the metric flow of the music. Alkan's clever use of rhythm and tonality ensures that, while there are a steady four beats maintained, the positioning of them within the context of two barlines is clouded.

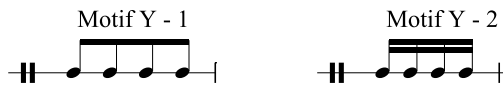
If the example above is re-examined, it can be seen that the tonality of the last two beats of the second bar (bar 25) is repeated across the barline as the first two beats of the third bar (bar 26). Together, these four beats sound like a rhythmic unit, or a full bar, to the listener.

From the perspective of motivic development, the presence of the dotted-quaver-semiquaver rhythm clearly belongs to motif X while the four-quaver movement belongs to motif Y. As the section continues the individual constructs of the two main rhythmic motifs are used in an independent fashion. The following can therefore be considered as sub-motifs of the main X motif:



They are both dynamic rhythms, whose tonal expression almost exclusively involves the melodic line. However there are instances, particularly with sub-motif X-2, where it is used in a tonally static way (bars 45–46, see Example 5.10.5). Their consideration as sub-motifs in this *Pièce* is centred on their repetitious nature and multiple appearances they have within this section and the composition generally.

Also, the following can be considered as sub-motifs of the main Y motif:



The first of these sub-motifs, Y-1, is in essence a static rhythm. However its association with both X sub-motifs affords it a level of dynamism that cannot be ignored. Therefore it is a static rhythm that is latently dynamic. The second sub-motif is static and its tonal expression is always static, forming the basis of repetitious stepwise motion.

The following example shows how these motifs interact within the *Pièce*:

Example 5.10.5: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 9 bars 33–34 and 45–46

Bars 33–34

Bars 45–46

The boxed notes in the first two bars of the example demonstrate the dynamism that is sometimes attached to motif Y-1. It also illustrates one of the instances where Alkan reuses the same harmony across the barline which has a destabilising affect on the governing Metric Flow.

The second two bars of the example (bars 45 and 46) incorporate the usage of sub-motif Y-2 and also highlight the staticism that can be associated with sub-motif X-2.

The rhythmic and tonal activity that dominates the developmental section is that which is presented in bars 45 and 46 of the example above. The use of the sub-

motif Y-2 *tonally* to maintain a mostly-diatonic harmony is clever. Alkan treats the repetitive nature of this idiom as a pseudo-pedal note — allowing small chromatic shifts to occur in the upper voice that fundamentally do not interfere with the established harmony which, in this occurrence, is the tonic harmony.

The section ends with a return to the opening material. This, a Partial Macro Repeat of the opening sixteen bars, sees the use of sub-motif Y-2 in the bass line. This serves to link the developmental section to a recapitulation of the opening bars. Tonally, the harmonic palette remains essentially the same as the original except for the inclusion of some enharmonic equivalents here.

The final section of the composition sees the rhythmic emphasis being placed on motif X-1 and Y-1 combined together in the treble part forming a melodic line. The harmony suggests tonic minor adding another tonal palette to the piece. The way in which the *Pièce* ends is interesting and merits mention. The following example illustrates this:

Example 5.10.6: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 9 bars 80–82 (last bar)

The musical notation shows the final bar of the piece. The treble clef part contains a melodic line with a 'ten.' marking above it. The bass clef part contains a bass line with a 'ten.' marking below it. A 'pp' dynamic marking is present in the bass part. The piece ends with a double bar line.

In the final bars of *Pièce* No. 9, outlined above, the effect Alkan is trying to achieve or allude to is that of spatial distance. The sentiment is one of motion, with the one-beat delay of the resolution-tonic chord stalling the end of the composition while adding suspense and temporal depth. The two quaver statements of the tonic chord are diminutive in so far as the *expectation* of a long, lingering tonic resolution is not realised. There is a certain level of expectancy too regarding the hairpin crescendo in the second last bar. The listener is awaiting the final point of the crescendo to be of a loud dynamic; instead it is a crescendo to a *pianissimo*.

Alkan, in this *Pièce*, employs all the same compositional tools that have been seen in previous compositions. The sliding chromatic lines, the clashing minor seconds created by statements of the same note altered chromatically, rhythmic ambiguity, and tonal ambiguity (through the use of enharmonics and abrupt modulatory shifts) are all present.

5.11 *Pièce* No. 10

This *Pièce* is constructed on one dominant rhythmic motif, from which almost all the remaining rhythmic activity can be derived. There is a hypnotic dotted idiom used in this composition that, after a few repetitions, clouds the time signature and distorts the Metric Flow.

The main motif can be outlined as follows:

Motif X

Motif X + 1

Motif X is undoubtedly the most used rhythmic configuration within the context of this composition. Sub-motif X+1 forms the basis of the melodic line in the opening and is a dynamic rhythm as it contains various note values and a dotted rhythm. Motif X, however, is a static rhythm that is latently dynamic. As the composition progresses motif X struggles to form part of the main melodic line. Up to that point its tonal expression is also static.

The following example shows the opening eight bars of the composition:

Example 5.11.1: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 10 bars 1–8

Moderement

f. ma Sostenuto

It is necessary to include all the bars in the above example in order to illustrate the level of staticism associated with motif X in the opening section of *Pièce* No. 10. From the above example it can be seen that motif X+1 is of two bars duration and the ratio between the two X motifs is 1:4.

Despite the rhythmic organisation of motif X, its tonal expression, after the first series of repetitions, aids in the perception of it being regrouped back-to-front; that is to say quaver followed by a dotted crotchet. This is an instance where-by the symbiotic relationship that exists between rhythm and tonality combine in simple form to influence both the *experience* and the general *perception* of the music.

The harmony and tonality remain diatonic up to bar 22 with the introduction of the leading note, C-sharp (the tonic key being D minor). Alkan plays on the listener's expectations, as the chord that is anticipated is the dominant, but in fact the chord that is heard is that of C-sharp major. The following example helps to put this in to context:

Example 5.11.2: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 10 bars 22–28

The musical score for Example 5.11.2 consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, in D minor. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score is divided into seven measures. Measure 22 starts with a forte (*f*) dynamic. Measures 23, 24, and 25 are grouped by a bracket and feature a *sf* (sforzando) dynamic. Measure 26 has a *ten.* (tension) marking. The score concludes with a final chord in measure 28.

Alkan's smart use of tonality cannot be denied when considering the example above. The expected dominant chord is eventually heard (the last two bars of the example above), but now within the context of an underlying C-sharp major tonality. Its affect here in *this* context is modal. This type of harmonic progression helps in suggesting a *Style Religieux*.

As the tenth *Pièce* continues it becomes very clear that motif X has a firm hold on the rhythmic movement, as does motif X+1 and it is not until bar 51 that the rhythmic movement seen in bars 23 and 24 (Example 5.11.2) is re-introduced. On this occasion of its use there is nothing flamboyant about the tonality and, as if to negate the extreme tonal shift that previously occurred with its usage, it remains texturally sparse and tonally diatonic. The following example helps to contextualise the tonal and rhythmic contrast between the two statements of this gesture:

Example 5.11.3: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 10 bars 49–52

The musical score shows two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a dotted minim note in each of the four bars, with a 'p' dynamic marking. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a series of chords in each of the four bars, with a 'Sostenuto' marking. A 'ten.' marking is present above the right hand in the final bar.

From the example above the contrast between the statements of the dotted minim gesture is obvious. The second main difference is the inclusion of motif X as the accompanying figure. The inclusion of motif X here weakens the rhythmic affect previously seen (and heard) with this gesture as it is now occurring within the context of an X-dominant rhythmic backdrop. The rhythmic staticity of motif X is reflected in the tonal staticity of the dotted minim gesture.

As the section develops it becomes clear that the rhythmic grouping seen in the last two bars of the example above is not just an occasional rhythmic gesture. Due to the repetitious activity that is witnessed in this contrasting section this rhythmic organisation can be elevated to the role of a primary rhythmic motif. This motif shall be labelled motif Y and is outlined below:

Motif Y

The notation for Motif Y consists of a dotted minim note, followed by a quarter note, a half note, and a whole note, all on a single staff.

There is no real melody associated with motif Y, however there is a certain level of motivic expectation and perception associated with it. It is expected to partake

in some ‘melodic’ activity, given that the accompaniment is rhythmically static. By virtue of its rhythmic dynamism there is also a certain tonal perception of dynamism attached to it, however, this does not actualise as the sub-section develops.

The rigorous repetition of motif X aids the perception of a continuous staticism but there is a melodic line that is being suggested within the accompaniment. The perceived staticism of motif X here is perhaps better described as a *visual staticism*. Unlike its previous usage, where the motif is static both rhythmically and tonally, here it is rhythmically static but latently dynamic.

Motif Y, in fact, punctuates the simple melody and this can be seen in the following example:

Example 5.11.4: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 10 bars 87–91

The musical score shows four bars of music. The right hand (treble clef) has a simple melody with a fermata on the second bar. The left hand (bass clef) has a complex accompaniment of chords. Dynamics include 'Cresc: poco a poco.', 'Cresc: poco a poco.', and 'cresc molto.'

The important role that musical perception plays in Alkan’s music can be seen in the example above. From a purely visual perspective the presence of motif Y in the third bar appears to make an important musical/tonal point but, in fact, it is the

upper notes of the rhythmically-static accompanying motif X that manipulate the melodic/tonal sphere. The ‘visual versus aural’ dichotomy is again present here.

The opening material is reintroduced at bar 117 and Alkan keeps the idiom fresh by swapping the motifs; motif X now in the treble part with motif X+1 in the bass part. The difference in tone and timbre (moving from a fuller chordal texture back to the two-part texture) comes unexpectedly. The motion corrects itself to the arrangement that was presented in the opening bars and is developed further by rearranging the ‘crotchet-quaver-quaver-crotchet-quaver-quaver’ configuration seen in motif X+1 in to two groups of four quavers. The overall tonal sense is the same; with the extra quavers serving as under-auxiliary notes, but the rhythmic action does add a sense of development to the composition. The following example illustrates this:

Example 5.11.5: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 10 bars 125–126



The final section of this *Pièce* sees another attempt to further destabilise the rhythmic meter and the notated shift in tonal dominance from the tonic (d minor) to the tonic major (D major) changes the mood of the composition. In order to confirm and re-affirm the new tonic, the last seventeen bars exclusively contain

diatonic harmony — with statements of the tonic chord (D major) or just octave Ds or a perfect cadence.

The following example illustrates the destabilising rhythmic configuration:

Example 5.11.6: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 10 bars 173–176

The musical score for Example 5.11.6 is in G major (one sharp) and 2/2 time. It consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The treble staff contains a series of chords, with the first two notes of each chord beamed together and enclosed in a box. The bass staff contains a series of eighth notes, with the first two notes of each pair beamed together and enclosed in a box. The tempo and dynamics are marked 'mf e Cres: sempre'. An '8va' marking with a dashed line and a bracket is placed above the final two chords of the treble staff.

The beaming of the quavers in the treble part (boxed notes in the example above) is somewhat unusual, although it can be explained in terms of the governing time signature (2/2) – that is, they are the internal pair of quavers from a group of four and, as such, could be beamed together. However, the boxed notes in the bass part present a visually-destabilising idiom that is promoting the perception of a Negative Metric Flow.

Essentially, it is the way in which Alkan accents the beats that creates the perception of a Negative Metric Flow and if the composite rhythm of the above example is considered it can be seen that each bar has exactly the correct number of quavers, eight.

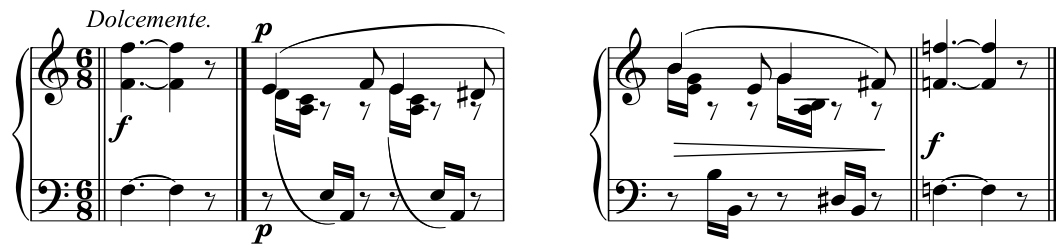
The composition ends with a series of ascending tonic chords, in various inversions, leading to a perfect cadence. In this *Pièce*, Alkan keeps tonal ambiguity to a minimum while feeding the ‘visual versus aural’ debate with the perception of rhythmic destabilisation.

5.12 *Pièce* No. 11

The final *Pièce* of this set sees Alkan indulge his predilection for rhythmic and tonal ambiguities which are both evident from the opening bars. It is, perhaps, in this *Pièce* that the level of rhythmic distortion is most obvious with the inclusion of tuplet-rhythms and the accenting of weaker beats. Tonally, this *Pièce* links in to this set’s title (*Pièces dans la Style Religieux*) by way of a homophonic — and homorhythmic — episode. As the composition develops it becomes clear that its structure is similar to that seen in the majority of the pieces that have been analysed in the previous chapters.

The first feature that immediately stands out is presented in the opening bar. As the composition continues, this material appears to take on the role of a ‘heralding’ bar. The following example helps to contextualise this.

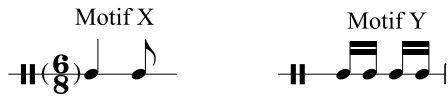
Example 5.12.1: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 11 bars 1–2 and 10–11



The unison, coupled with the loud dynamic, give this bar, and indeed all the other bars that are similar to it in this composition, a heraldic quality. They punctuate the *Pièce* throughout and suggest a counter-tonic of F major. This notion is, perhaps, further strengthened by the presence of two separate bars of unison B-flats, the first at bar 62 and the second appearing at bar 67, with the next instance of this heraldic bar at bar 81 featuring a return to the unison Fs. There is a sense of tonal modernity surrounding this piece and the idea of this polytonal activity gives this notion some credence.

There is tonal ambiguity also when considering the mainstream movement of the harmony. Alkan's decision to begin the *Pièce* in a key other than that suggested by the tonic is nothing new. However, the quick chromatic turn in bar 2 in the presence of the D-sharp adds a destabilising air to the tonal mix.

From example 5.12.1 above, the main rhythmic motifs can be identified and are presented as follows:



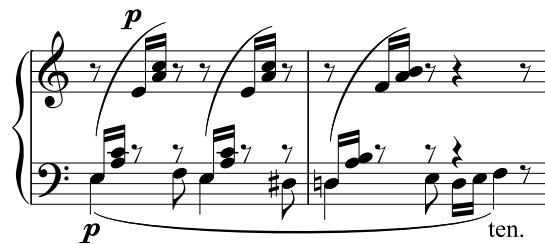
These primary motifs dominate the opening section of the composition and form the basis for motivic development and expansion later on in the piece.

Motif X is dynamic and it is probably the only motif in this piece that has an expressly 6/8 feel to it. Its tonal expression is also dynamic as it gives structure to the governing melodic curve. Motif Y is a static rhythm, and plays a supporting accompanying role to the dynamic Motif X.

Repetition is an important feature in this piece. There is both macro and micro repetition present with a partial macro repeat of the opening section beginning at bar 12. Micro repetition can be associated with both motifs X and Y. Each motif is repeated intact throughout the sections in which they appear.

In order to keep these two motifs from becoming stale, Alkan uses the register of the instrument to add a sense of development to the music. The following example illustrates this.

Example 5.12.2: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 11 bars 12–13



In essence this section is almost a complete tonal repeat of the opening ten bars, the register of the melody and the shift in tonal direction associated with motif Y help maintain a sense of motivic development.

The upbeat into bar 24 begins a new section of this *Pièce* that sees Alkan rework the motifs that were presented in the opening bars. These sub-motifs can be outlined and labelled as follows:



This section is structured in a similar manner to the first with the melody being repeated in the bass after its initial statement. This type of structural treatment affords the composition a sense of unity. Motif X+1 is dynamic and its tonal expression is also dynamic. Motif Y+1 is a static rhythm but due to it being used as a linking rhythm in the melody line, it has a perceived level of dynamism that allows it to be considered as a static rhythm that is latently-dynamic. Motif Y+2

is dynamic and its tonal expression is dynamic also. The following example helps to contextualise this:

Example 5.12.3: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 11 bars /24–25 and 30

(Bars /24–25)

Motif Y+1 used dynamically as a melodic link

(Bar 30)

Alkan develops the material from the sub-motifs further and attempts to suggest rhythmic distortion. Alkan takes a familiar, stable motif (in this instance it is motif X) against which he places an off-beat or unstable motif. This act alone does not constitute rhythmic distortion: instead it is the repetition of this act that creates the perception that the rhythm has been distorted. It must be noted at this point that instrumentation plays a role in the perception of rhythmic distortion in this particular instance. Consider the following: this *Pièce* is played on an organ with each hand on a different manual, and differing registration whereby the right-hand part is being projected with more colourful, louder registration than the left-

hand part. The semiquaver rest becomes more exaggerated, alerting the listener to a delay in the right-hand part. The repetition of this is the mechanism that gives the perception of rhythmic distortion. This is not necessarily the case if the composition was played on piano, or harmonium. The following example illustrates how Alkan does this:

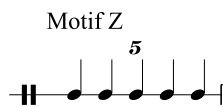
Example 5.12.4: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 11 bars 44–46

The image shows a musical score for two staves, treble and bass clef. The treble staff contains six measures of music, each starting with a semiquaver rest followed by a group of notes. The bass staff contains six measures of music, each starting with a semiquaver rest followed by a group of notes. Both staves have slurs over the notes and the word 'ten.' written below the notes in each measure. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4.

The rhythmic movement in the treble line of the above example is derived from the original Y motif. Also present in the above example is an instance of false relation. Alkan makes use of false relation to upset the tonal plane and the explicit use of this can be seen in the last bar of example 5.12.4 — the E-natural in the bass line clashing with the E-flat in the treble line.

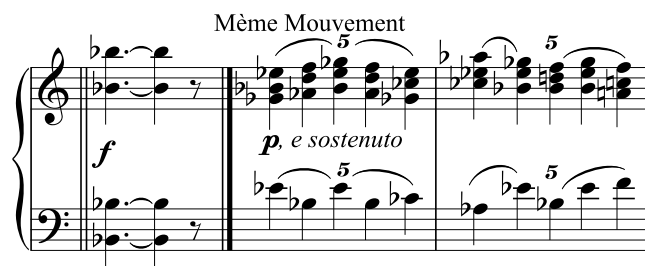
Alkan establishes a sense of musical ‘normality’ by reintroducing material from the opening section. However, the succeeding episode manages to throw the structure of the composition into flux again. The punctuating bar of unison B-flats at bar 62 has its heraldic nature actualised by acting as a pivot note helping the music to modulate to a flat key — initially E-flat minor.

The homorhythmic structure of the episode contrasts directly with the busy rhythmic activity witnessed up to this point. The final motif can easily be extracted and can be outlined as follows:



This is the only motif that appears during the episodic section. The motif itself is static, with crotchet movement throughout, but as there is no other rhythmic movement present, there is a perceived level of dynamism attached to it. The following example shows the punctuating bar leading into the episode.

Example 5.12.5: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 11 bars 62–64



Alkan tries to negate the effect of the compound time signature by creating a crotchet-based tuplet in the episode section. However, by not changing the time signature he creates a certain degree of rhythmic ambiguity. The root-rhythm-to-tuplet ratio (that is, the note value on which the tuplet is constructed; in this case a

crotchet) suggests that the governing time signature is 3/4. The tuplet ratio is somewhat dubious as it is difficult to relate the current five-crotchet bar to the preceding compound time signature.

In the final stages of the composition Alkan unifies the constituent motifs and sub-motifs by juxtaposing them (with the exception of motif Z). However, it is the shift in tonality that provides the greater interest with a notated key change occurring in bar 92, from a minor to A major, lasting for twenty-one bars' duration, before returning to the tonic key of a minor. The new major tonality is allowed to establish itself by being used in conjunction with familiar rhythmic motifs. The familiar rhythmic patterns have perceived tonal associations (in this case, as the tonic key is minor, the perceived tonal associations of the motifs presented in the opening stages of the piece are minor) and the new tonal adjustment adds a sense of development to the composition as a whole.

The last nine bars of this eleventh *Pièce* contrast directly with all the harmonic/tonal activity that has been presented up to this point. Alkan ends the composition with a monophonic solo statement of the opening theme, punctuating it with the heraldic bars of unison Fs. The following example illustrates this.

Example 5.12.6: Alkan 11 *Pièces* Op. 72 No. 11 bars 121–129

The appearance of the opening theme in such an exposed manner, which is without the familiar harmonic background that has been attached to it, adds another dimension to the music. The monophony and textural sparseness here is a departure from that seen in the earlier parts of the *Pièce*.

The general affect that is created by the use of monophony in this instance is cadential. As the piece ends, its harmonic foundation is stripped away exposing the thematic material. This, coupled with the quietening dynamic, creates a sense of ‘ending’. The cycle then closes in retreat rather than triumphantly. Alkan cleverly uses the final note as the basis of a perfect cadence in a minor — with the tonic implications occurring quickly and quietly on the second beat.

5.13 Conclusion

In this set of works Alkan demonstrates a keen awareness of structure. This, too, was witnessed in the other sets of works examined as part of this thesis. There are a few common traits that run through the set, adding a sense of unity. Perhaps the most obvious trait is Alkan's penchant for beginning (or ending) a *Pièce* with a monophonic statement – regardless how short. This he does in *Pièce* numbers 1, 3, 6 and 7 and its influence can be seen in the opening bars of the fourth *Pièce* (the monophony here is quite small — and a two-part texture is discernable very quickly). *Pièce* number 11 also ends with a monophonic statement.

Motivic juxtaposition also plays a major role in the construction of these compositions. Almost all of its usage is centred on bringing together rhythmic motifs in an act of compositional unity. In the last *Pièce* it serves to bring together all the X motifs, both primary and sub-motifs.

Alkan, in this set of works, shows himself to be an efficient composer making use of contrasting musical elements such as monophony and polyphony, diatonic harmony and chromatic harmony. Also present in these *Pièces* is the composer's ability to manipulate motifs and his individual sense of style and tonality.

In the following chapter the findings from all three analysis chapters will be summarised, compared and expanded.

Chapter 6

Conclusion:

Outlining and Discussing the Analytical Findings

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the analytical findings from chapters 3, 4 and 5. These will be discussed under various headings allowing all three analyses to be compared and contrasted with the same consideration. The primary area of interest will be the similarities between the three sets of works regarding rhythmic structure and compositional structure. Alkan's effective use of motivic juxtaposition is perhaps the single most striking structural factor that is present throughout the three sets of works examined here.

The findings from each of the analysis chapters will be presented individually and in a similar manner with each giving consideration to the following: repetition and motivic juxtaposition, rhythmic interests and tonal interests. The 'Visual versus Aural' dilemma and the area of musical perception will be dealt with separately. This chapter will also help clarify contextually the analytical method used and expand on the ideas expressed and conclusions drawn from the previous analytical chapters.

6.2 The Op 64 *Prières*: General Observations

From the analysis presented in Chapter 3 it can be clearly seen that there are a number of dominating features that help to unify the thirteen pieces as one set. These features, both rhythmic and tonal, will now be discussed in the context of the analysis.

Repetition plays a vital role in these pieces, both at a micro level (particularly the repetition of one note or group of notes as seen in *Prière* No. 6) and a macro level (as can be seen in *Prière* No. 7 with the dichotomous two-theme dialogue). The repetition that is displayed in the *Prières* emphasises Alkan's ability to develop and reuse thematic material without compromising his compositional originality. Despite the use of repetition, Alkan's music as presented in the *Prières* remains fresh and does not seem over-played or stale. The repetition is measured and balanced and is mostly combined with motivic juxtaposition.

The use of motivic juxtaposition can be traced throughout the set of *Prières* and it becomes a main compositional feature in six of them (*Prières* 1, 4, 8, 11, 12 and 13). In these pieces Alkan uses motivic juxtaposition as a quasi-cadential mechanism, which mainly features in the latter stages of the piece or the final section or coda, whereby he takes two (or three) previously labelled dynamic rhythmic motifs and places them together. This type of juxtaposition adds a sense of structural unity to the piece in which it is occurring. The juxtaposition of a dynamic and static rhythm, however, does not yield the same affect, as the weaker

static rhythm normally plays the role of a supporting mechanism and is present from the opening stages of the piece; as seen in *Prière* No. 2.

From the analysis, the *Prières* present some very interesting results with regard to rhythm. The rhythmic grouping of ‘dotted-crotchet-quaver-crotchet’ forms part of the main (dynamic) rhythmic motif of *Prières* 1, 2 and 7. This particular rhythmic organisation makes several other appearances throughout the set and indeed it features in the *Préludes* and *Pièces* also. Its presence in all three sets of works merits more detailed discussion, and this will be revisited later on in the chapter.

Another main feature of Alkan’s rhythmic language, which emerges from the analysis in chapter 3, is his fondness to disperse the rhythm of a composition from large note values to small note values as can be seen in Examples 3.5.3, 3.8.1 and 3.8.2. This type of behaviour creates a sense of rhythmical depth and its large-scale presence can be seen in *Prières* 4, 7, 9 and 11. It is essentially a vertical idiom whereby the differing rhythmic values are ‘stacked’ (as opposed to the rhythmic organisation of a hemiola which is linear or horizontal) and it is this trait that aids the perception of depth. Other rhythmic phenomena present in the *Prières* will be examined within the context of perception further on.

The dominating tonal gesture that is witnessed in the *Prières* is the interval of a third. In almost all of the thirteen pieces of this set there are sections or parts that are tonally centred on this interval, be it in major or minor form (not forgetting the occurrence of a diminished third in *Prière* No. 6, at bar 44). The

use of a third as a ‘reciting harmony’ — that is to say an interval around which the music hovers — could be viewed as a link to the Gregorian Church Modes which themselves have a reciting tone and were the subject matter of a set of small preludes entitled *Petits Préludes sur les huit gammes du plainchant* (1859).

These short preludes also give some insight into Alkan’s appreciation of early music. Making the Gregorian modes the subject matter of his compositions ties in with his inclusion of transcriptions from Handel’s *Messiah* that are seen in both the *Prières* and the *Préludes* (Op. 66) – all showing a willingness to appreciate and present ‘early music’ in a new way. The appearance of these *Petits Préludes*, and of course the Handel transcriptions, at a time when promoting early music was seen to be counter-Romantic, sees Alkan perhaps going against the grain, in terms of a defined Romanticism. These would have been viewed as regressive works, and despite the unquestionable originality that is seen in all of these sets, the inclusion of the baroque transcriptions might have inhibited their popularity.

From early on in the analysis it becomes obvious that tonal ambiguities play a major role in the structure of these *Prières*. The first instance of this can be seen in the opening bars of the first *Prière*, whereby Alkan begins the composition in a key that is not the tonic. The level of ambiguity intensifies as the internal modulations in *Prière* No. 7 serve to destabilise not only the *Prière*’s governing tonic but the various sectional tonics also. This tonal instability becomes a regular occurrence throughout the set and indeed throughout the analysis as a whole.

This cycle of compositions are structured in such a fashion as to suggest that the first *Prière* serves as an introduction to the set. It outlines almost all the compositional elements that are employed throughout the set: monophonic solo statements, homophonic sections, motivic juxtaposition, repeated chordal repetitions, tonal/key ambiguities and rhythmic ambiguities. In the same way, the final *Prière* acts as a summary to the set.

6.3 The Op. 66 *Préludes*: General Observations

The opening piece of this set is not compositionally representative of the set as a whole. However, it does perhaps give a clear indication as to where the inspiration for their inception stems from. If one were to view or interpret the first prelude and the Handel transcription as being structural ‘book-ends’ to the pieces contained between them, it could be deduced that the influence cast upon them is definitely baroque — albeit with a Romantic twist.

While many of the *Prières* were composed in a homophonic style (with some using a melody-reliant homophony) the Op. 66 *Préludes* tend to veer away from that style (it is not totally abandoned, rather its usage is not as prevalent in this set). The second *Prélude* is, perhaps, more indicative of Alkan’s compositional style as portrayed in this set of works. The level of modernity in this composition is noticeable and the suggestions of both polytonal and polyrhythmic activity seem to contrast directly with the *Prélude* that preceded it. The novel use of grace notes, both rhythmically and tonally, underlines Alkan’s ability to see beyond the

predictable and push the boundaries of both the rhythmic and tonal realms to the limit.

In the *Préludes* there is a high level of rhythmic distortion, which is primarily the intentional result of continuous repetition of the same rhythmic (and at times tonal) idiom. In *Prélude* No. 6 there is a section that sounds as if there are two separate time signatures employed. Alkan achieves this affect by repeating the same note but varying rhythmic (note) values and starting *off* the beat. This type of rhythmic gesture, the emphasising of the weak beat, becomes a feature of not just these *Préludes* but of the three sets of works examined.

Repetition and motivic juxtaposition play an important role in the structure of these *Préludes*. Certain rhythmic techniques that were used in the *Prières* can be seen here in the *Préludes*. The ninth *Prélude* is structured on a notated tremolo — and this is not the first time (nor the last) that Alkan employs this technique. *Prière* No. 3 is also structured on a notated tremolo, albeit much faster than the one presented here. The overall affect is hypnotic due to the staticism of the perpetual repetition. In the ninth *Prélude*, however, Alkan clearly blurs the boundaries that govern staticism and dynamism by allowing a static rhythm to have a dynamic tonal expression. This can also be seen in the *Pièces* (*Pièce* No. 10 exhibits this quality too, see Example 5.11.4).

Motivic juxtaposition can be clearly seen in *Préludes* 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8. In these *Préludes* juxtaposition is used in the same manner that was seen in the *Prières* – that of unifying the constituent elements of the composition.

These *Préludes* portray Alkan's tonal language as being diverse and complex. As was seen with the *Prières*, baroque influences pepper the tonal structure of some of the compositions in the set. The sequential patterns seen in the first *Prélude* and in the eighth are testament to this. However, Alkan cannot be defined by his (obvious) admiration of the baroque masters.

The presence of false relation, seen in *Prélude* No. 10, and the use of linear-augmented intervals (*Prélude* No. 6) show Alkan to be a composer that pushed the boundaries regarding the presentation of tonality. There is, at times, the suggestion that Alkan is trying to introduce a sense of harmonic or tonal duplicity. This can be seen in the fifth *Prélude* and also in the eleventh *Pièce*. The allusion of polytonality in Alkan's music is important, as it appears to conflict with his penchant for structural (in both a rhythmic and tonal sense) strictness. This is addressed further on when considering Alkan's use of chromaticism.

6.4 The Op 72 *Pièces*: General Observations

The opening *Pièce* of this set is somewhat reminiscent of the first *Prélude* insofar as it has a similar Baroque feel to the structure — with each beginning with a pedal/bass solo. Here, Alkan uses the first composition as a quasi-introduction, or

starting point, from which the other pieces ‘develop’. The *Pièces* are scored for piano or harmonium (or organ).

As the analysis progresses it becomes apparent that a lot of the *Pièces* are based on either one dominant rhythmic motif (that is split into smaller sub-motifs) or two rhythmic motifs (that are split into sub-motifs). This does not suggest a lack of imagination on Alkan’s part; in fact the opposite is quite the case. This type of motivic development is again testament to Alkan’s compositional creativity. The ability to shape a composition from one rhythmic motif, develop the motif tonally and keep it from becoming stale, illustrates Alkan’s acute sense of development.

The use of motivic juxtaposition is present in this set of works also. The type of juxtaposition that is seen in the first *Pièce* can be classed as complementary juxtaposition. In these instances the juxtaposition is not dichotomous nor does it weaken the composition’s structure rhythmically or tonally. The explicit occurrence of the more standard type of juxtaposition, that is the juxtaposition of motifs towards the end of the piece, can be seen in *Pièces* 5, 7, 8, 10 and 11.

The use of repetition is again widespread in the *Pièces*. Perhaps the two greatest instances of repetition can be seen in *Pièces* 4 and 10. In *Pièce* No. 4 micro repetition dominates and it is the constant repetition of the quaver that actually destabilises the governing beat structure of the time signature. The same is true for *Pièce* No.10, except in this instance it is the repetition of the same motif (motif X) both rhythmically and tonally that clouds the beat stresses of the time

signature. In both of these cases the repetition patterns are disruptive to the fundamental structure of the compositions in which they occur.

The tonal interests found in the *Pièces* are something similar to those witnessed in the *Préludes*. The presence of linear augmented intervals and false relation can both be seen in *Pièce* No. 5 which strengthens the notion that Alkan's use of tonality and harmony were indeed progressive. In *Pièce* No. 6 there is an instance of voice exchange which creates the sense of tonal and rhythmic staticism; a rhythmic and tonal *temporal* pause. In this *Pièce* Alkan adds a second dimension to the tonal sphere creating a sense of tonal agitation by using continuous repetitions or oscillations of 'leading note –tonic'.

Little doubt can remain that dissonance can be considered a feature of Alkan's compositions. In the third *Pièce* it is the quick chromatic shifts from major to minor that send the overall tonality into a state of flux. This is further compounded by the use of diminished chords and augmented intervals.

The unambiguous use of baroque compositional idioms here and in the other two sets of works point to the influence of Bach and Handel. The presence of sequential patterns, hemiolas and *Tierce de Picardie* are undeniable proof of this. In general terms, the rhythmic and tonal interests that arise as a result of the analysis of the *Pièces* in chapter 5 are similar to those seen in both chapters 3 and 4. It is, therefore, now possible to draw some conclusions as to Alkan's style of composition, by summarising his use of rhythmic and tonal techniques.

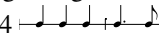
6.5 An ‘Alkan Idiom’?

The idea that Alkan favoured a particular rhythmic grouping in his compositional process seems likely from the findings of this analysis¹. Throughout the analysis one particular rhythmic grouping occurred more than any other, and indeed it appeared in some way in almost all of the thirty-five individual pieces examined. Whether forming part of a dominating motif, or occurring singularly, the appearances of the following rhythmic gesture (or durational augmentations or diminutions of the same) are too numerous not to be considered significant:



The point of rhythmic arrival in this motif (that is, the crotchet) is sometimes substituted with a note of longer durational value or the first quaver of a group of two or four. The integrity of the motif is not lost however, as the dominating or catching gesture is the dotted rhythm. The main occurrences of this rhythmic motif appear in the format outlined above.

Re-examining the various motifs that have been identified throughout the three different sets of works it can be clearly seen that the above rhythmic configuration appears as part of a dominant rhythmic motif in a considerable number of the individual compositions. Its appearance can be tracked as follows: as part an X

¹ It is interesting to note that Ronald Smith made a similar observation regarding Alkan’s rhythm. He makes mention of “Alkan’s favourite ‘happy and glorious’ rhythm 3/4 ” in *Alkan The Man The Music*, (1976; London: Kahn & Averill, 2000), vol II, p. 26.

motif in *Prières* Nos 1, 2, 4 and 7, and as part of motif X in *Préludes* Nos 2, 7 and 8, motif Y in *Préludes* Nos 4 and 9 and motif Z in *Prélude* No. 1, part of motif X in *Pièces* Nos 2, 6 (the crotchet being replaced with a group of quavers in each instance here), motif X-3 in *Pièce* No. 7 (the crotchet and dotted crotchet swapped) and as part of motif Z in *Pièce* No. 1.

Alkan places a greater emphasis on this idiom, by having it appear as a dominant rhythmic motif (either complete in itself or as part of a motif) in almost a third of the compositions examined as part of this thesis. Aside from its motivic inclusions, this rhythmic configuration makes numerous appearances throughout the three sets of works.

Where time signatures differ from those stated at the beginning of the piece, or where a change of time signature is suggested (causing a Negative Metric Flow to prevail), the idiom is altered; either durationally expanded or contracted. The general effect is, however, the same.

The supremacy of this rhythmic gesture is not suggested from a solely aural perspective, but is also dependent on the visual. What might be missed from a single listening of these works cannot be overlooked or ignored from examining the score. Therefore the symbiotic relationship that undoubtedly exists between rhythm and tonality is mirrored analytically by the symbiotic relationship that necessarily exists between the aural element of analysis and the visual element of analysis.

This interdependency that ties both aural and visual elements is perhaps more necessary when making the music of Alkan the primary focus of an analytical study. Due to the hidden (and sometimes very deliberate and explicit) ambiguities that are to be found in his music, the need to relate that which is tangible (the written score) and that which is subjective (one given interpretation or reading or actualisation of the same written score) becomes an integral part of a balanced analysis. It is here also that the role of musical perception is considered. This ‘visual versus aural’ element and musical perception will be discussed further on in this chapter.

The significance of this rhythmic idiom can be validated by charting its function within the context of each of the pieces in which it occurs. At times, it would seem that Alkan wishes to mask it rhythmically, superimposing it with a dotted minim or cloaking it in some other way. Instances of this are to be seen in the *Prières* and indeed the other works analysed in this thesis.

6.6 Dynamic and Static Rhythm: Tonal Considerations

The categorisation of the rhythmic movement within Alkan’s works examined in this thesis, as being static or dynamic (or derivatives thereof) is an invaluable tool. By engaging with Alkan’s rhythmic language in this way, the affect of tonality can be further highlighted within a smaller context; that of the motif.

The symbiotic relationship existing between rhythmic and tonal entities is evident in Alkan's music. Rhythm, when considered singularly, is a group of organised beat stresses: tonality, when considered in the same way, is sound (or a collection of sounds) of indefinite duration. Therefore two hypotheses emerge; (a) rhythm is that which gives organisation to tonality and (b) tonality is that which gives expression to rhythm. These statements demonstrate the complexities that are ever present when discussing the relationship between rhythm and tonality.

In order to relate the two further, within the context of the present analysis, the tonal associations that exist when describing the rhythmic movement in the works analysed as being either static or dynamic needs to be addressed.

The primary function of the analysis was to identify the dominating rhythmic motifs present in Alkan's music for organ, pedal-piano and harmonium. Each motif also had to be considered within the context of the tonal and harmonic language employed. Therefore, the association of rhythm and harmony in this analysis can be described thus: that each rhythmic motif identified has a tonal expression. Basically, the tonal expression of each motif is as important as the rhythmic motif itself — they are equally co-dependent on each other in order for the motif to be understood completely, as a unit.

The tonal expression of a particular motif can vary. In the instance of partial-macro repetition, where the rhythm is unchanged but the surrounding harmony/tonality has changed, it is seen that each motif can have more than one

tonal expression. In fact, there are an infinite number of tonal expressions attached to each organised rhythmic motif when considered outside the structure of a particular piece of music. Any given or identified rhythmic motif, considered firstly outside the context of tonality, remains a singular event: that is, the rhythm of that motif will not change; it is a strict set of durational values. Viewing the same motif, now within the context of tonality, results in many tonal representations of that motif.

The categorising of rhythmic motifs as being fundamentally static or dynamic relates directly to the primary function of that particular rhythm. It is in considering this that the hierarchical nature of Alkan's rhythmical language becomes evident. In his music, it can be clearly seen that such rhythmic categorisations are openly reflected in the given tonal expression. A simple rhythm of repeated quavers has, in this analysis, been described as being a static rhythm: Alkan actualises the static nature of this rhythm by making its tonal expression reflect the rhythmic staticism, as was seen in Example 3.4.1. This is also true for dynamic rhythms.

Examining the sub-sections of the two main rhythmic categories, it can also be seen that the same is true for those rhythmic motifs that are labelled latently-static or latently-dynamic. Rhythms that have been labelled as being 'dynamic but latently-static' are rhythmically dynamic but their tonal expression has a perceived level of staticism. This staticism is usually weakened with the introduction of another dominant rhythmic gesture that is static and whose tonal

expression is explicitly static also. This is also true for rhythms that have been labelled as being ‘static but latently-dynamic’, the rhythm is static but there is a perceived level of dynamism associated with it. This dynamism is usually weakened with the introduction of another dominant rhythmic gesture that is dynamic and whose tonal expression is explicitly dynamic also.

6.7 Chromaticism: A by-product of compositional inflexibility?

Throughout the three sets of works that have been examined Alkan’s use of chromaticism is constantly documented. But why present a tonic key – in the form of a key signature – only to depart from it within two bars (or less) and not return to it until the end of the composition or at all?

It has been shown that rhythmically, Alkan will rather beam across the barline or accentuate the ‘off’ beat rather than yield to changing the time signature to suit the metric flow. This structural inflexibility with regard to rhythm champions the argument for musical perception; the disparity between the *visual* and the *aural* and also between the temporal realm and the tonal.

Asserting the same logic then to the sometimes-high level of chromaticism witnessed in the works analysed, it can be suggested that Alkan’s use of chromaticism is a by-product of his compositional technique regarding his inflexible approach to rhythmic metre. The rigorous adherence to the time signature is mirrored tonally by the preservation of the original key signature.

Rather than notate a sectional key change, Alkan inserts continuous accidentals to maintain a change of key.

The dissention from a stable key to an unstable, ambiguous tonality can sometimes seem quite arbitrary within the context of the wider harmonic/tonal palette of a particular piece. The apparently inflexible approach to the use of notated key signatures to signify sectional key changes appearing in any piece from the *Prières*, *Préludes* and the *Pièces* confirms Alkan's adherence to structure. In *Pièce* No. 8 Alkan uses double-sharps and other 'suggestive' accidentals (that is raising the third or seventh degree of the major scale a semitone, for example B to B-sharp) to stay close to the governing tonal structure while also facilitating the possibility of an enharmonic modulation. This can clearly be seen in Example 5.9.9.

6.8 Musical Perception: Visual versus Aural

The area of music perception plays an important role in Alkan's music. From the very first *Prière*, there appear anomalies that run throughout the analysis chapters that seem to contradict the norms of musical notation. The dot that begins bar 16 of *Prière* No. 1 seen in Example 3.2.2 is the first instance of this contradictory visual-versus-aural perception. In this instance there is a very deliberate effort on Alkan's behalf to destabilise the metric flow but also remain true to the governing time signature and tonal/melodic idiom.

This behaviour seems contradictory; motivic rhythmic rigidity on the one hand, whereby Alkan wishes to preserve the integrity of the rhythmic motif, conflicting directly with the visual structure of the score which is, perhaps, destabilised as a result. The inclusion of multiple sets of seemingly arbitrary slim double barlines – within which he encases a particular motif or idiom (see Example 3.2.2) – sees Alkan develop a personal structural style.

As the analysis continues it becomes more obvious that the relationship that exists between ‘that which is seen’ and ‘that which is heard’ in Alkan’s music is, at times, dichotomous. With regard to false relation, we see that Alkan boldly presents it in *Prélude* No. 10 (seen in Example 4.11.3) and in *Pièce* No. 6 (Example 5.7.2). Clearly in this instance what is being heard is not exactly tallying with what is written on the score. Due to the notes occurring chromatically and at the same register, it sounds as though the chromatic notes are occurring in the same voice. This attempt by Alkan to aurally negate the false relation is a clever ploy. The use of enharmonics also facilitates the perception of false relation.

Alkan’s use of enharmonics, particularly for modulatory purposes, can be traced throughout the *Prières*, *Préludes* and, to a lesser extent, the *Pièces*. Enharmonic use is perhaps one of the finest examples of where what is seen is completely different from what is heard.

Another interesting facet that can be considered part of the visual-versus-aural hypothesis is that of voicing. The classification of a four-part texture in to *voices* does not always make rhythmic sense in Alkan's works and is perhaps more obvious in the *Pièces*. Looking back at Examples 5.8.1 and 5.8.2 it can clearly be seen that, despite the eventual presence a four-part texture (actualising itself with the last quaver chord of bar 2), Alkan does not suggest it at the beginning of the composition. The lack of rests in the inactive inner voices means little, if anything, to the aural interpreter but what is the implication to the score-reader or the instrumentalist?

Alkan also creates a level of ambiguity with regard to rhythmic grouping and will often break from the standard norms. An example of this can be seen in *Pièce* No. 9, Example 5.8.4. In this instance Alkan shifts the stress in the bass part of bar 45 away from the strong first quaver in the grouping; instead he re-beams the quavers in order to stress the weaker middle quaver of the compound beat in 6/8. Another example of this can be seen in Example 4.5.4 where Alkan regroups the sextuplet semiquavers into groups of four but still implies the six-in-the-time-of-four ratio.

Alkan manages to add another dimension to his music by using musical perception as a structural tool in his compositions. The presence of a secondary meaning in his music, through the presence of the 'visual versus aural' dimension, can definitely be considered as important and note-worthy. Indeed, it is the present author's opinion that it elevates his music to a higher level, whereby

neither playing it nor listening to it are alone sufficient in attempting to truly understand it.

The presence of elided cadences in these works (see Example 3.11.4 and Example 5.7.5) again sees Alkan playing with structure and tonality. The ear hears the cadence (which in these cases is almost always perfect) but there is a change of force: the structure has changed. The ambiguity concerning Alkan's tonal intentions is alluring; is the perceived cadence a by-product of his penchant for structure?

6.9 Conclusion

There is little doubt that, in order to appreciate the developments and advancements of music in the Romantic Era, the compositions of Charles Valentin Alkan must be considered. The three sets of works that form the basis of this analysis represent a small percentage of the composer's overall compositional output for keyboard. Their significance in highlighting a compositional style that pushes the boundaries of both rhythm and tonality cannot be denied.

Alkan's compositional output can almost be considered as an 'untapped musicological resource'. The scale and magnitude of some of his *Etudes* for solo piano almost cry out to the musicologist (and analyst) to be investigated. The area of musical reception, regarding the inclusion of his works in concert programmes

in nineteenth-century Paris, is one that the present author is considering for further research.

It is, in my opinion, Alkan's use of rhythm that gives his compositional style its individuality. There is a somewhat emotional sense of agitation present in those compositions that make use of high levels of static repetition (as was illustrated by motif X in *Prière* No. 3), while the use of motivic juxtaposition as a rhythmic tool adds a sense of unity and stability to the compositions, or sections within composition, where it occurs.

Contextualising Alkan's rhythmic language within the spectrum of his harmonic and tonal plane highlights further the personal stamp he placed on music in the nineteenth century. This stylised blend of rhythm and harmony, I believe, is what gives his music its 'Alkan-ness', making it impossible to be mistaken for another composer's music. Modern musicological analysis would, and in the future will, benefit from the inclusion of the compositions of Charles Valentin Alkan in its analytical-paradigmatic literature.

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Select Discography

Recordings are listed in chronological order according to the year in which they were released.

Charles-Valentin[§] Alkan, *Alkan Organ Music*, Kevin Bowyer (Nimbus NI 5089, 1988)

Charles-Valentin Alkan, *Charles-Valentin Alkan*, Nicholas King (Symposium 1059, 1988)

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Charles-Valentin Alkan, *Organ Works Volume 1*, Kevin Bowyer (Toccata Classics Tocc 0030, 2005)

Charles-Valentin Alkan, *Organ Works Volume 2*, Kevin Bowyer (Toccata Classics Tocc 0031, 2007)

[§] The title page of the sleeve notes hyphenates Alkan's forename and middle name. For continuity I replicate it throughout the discography.

Abstract

The music of Charles Valentin Alkan is currently experiencing an emergence from musical obscurity. This thesis puts forward an interpretation of Alkan's rhythm as found in the dominant motifs present in the music for organ, pedal-piano and harmonium. This is presented against a historic background that places Alkan's music within the context of nineteenth-century Romanticism and its development in Paris.

Following on from the contextualisation of his music this thesis presents a cross-sectional examination of existing modern and established analytical literature, with the difficulties regarding the analysis of rhythm being noted and discussed. This culminates in the formulation of an analytical method that is applied to the three sets of works considered for examination; the Op. 64 *Prières*, Op. 66 *Préludes* and the Op. 72 *Pièces*.

One of the main areas of note, resulting from the analysis, is the presence of two main-stream rhythmic motif types which are classified as *Dynamic* and *Static* which in turn reveal two sub-motif types labelled *Latently Dynamic* and *Latently Static*. The way in which these motifs are *Tonally Expressed* also leads to the same classifications; tonally dynamic/latently dynamic or tonally static/latently static. Dynamic rhythms that are latently static are dynamic rhythms whose *Tonal Expression* can be considered static — the reverse is true for static rhythms that are latently dynamic.

The frequency with which certain rhythmic patterns appear is addressed in the final chapter, with the idea of an ‘Alkan idiom’ mentioned. There also emerges a compositional pattern that confirms Alkan’s penchant for compositional ambiguity; the ‘visual versus aural’ theme. It is this element of his compositional process that necessitates the acknowledgement of *musical perception* as a consideration within the analysis. The use of motivic juxtaposition, to unify the dominant motifs of a given composition, is recognised as one of his most-used compositional tools in the works examined.

The music for organ, pedal-piano and harmonium, while highlighting Alkan’s liking for structural clarity with regard to both rhythm and tonality, presents some of the most engaging music from the composer’s opus.