

# Irish Musical Studies

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## 7: IRISH MUSIC IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

*Edited by*

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## An Irishman in Darmstadt: Seóirse Bodley's *String Quartet no. 1* (1968)

GARETH COX

Having once been the most avant-garde Irish composer of his day, Seóirse Bodley now finds himself in the role of elder statesman following the recent demise in the 1990s of a whole generation of senior Irish composers that included Aloys Fleischmann (1910–92), Gerard Victory (1921–95) and Brian Boydell (1917–2000). He was the first Irish composer to become intimately acquainted with (and accept) the post-war avant-garde aesthetic and his three summers spent at the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt in the 1960s introduced him to the exciting (if often cerebral) developments in international contemporary composition. This article deals with one of the final works of what could be described as his 'Darmstadt Period' of the 1960s, namely his *String Quartet no. 1* of 1968, a piece which represents not only the peak of his personal modernism but also marks a watershed in his compositional career between two styles.

Before 1968 there are few examples of compositions written in the string quartet genre in post-war Ireland.<sup>1</sup> Notable quartets include Brian Boydell's two octatonic quartets of 1949 and 1957 (and his third written just after Bodley's in 1969),<sup>2</sup> Gerard Victory's *String Quartet* of 1963, and John Kinsella's (b. 1932) two *String Quartets* of 1960 and 1968. Mention should

<sup>1</sup> Other string quartets include A.J. Potter (1918–80), *Fantasie nos. 1 & 2 for String Quartet* (1957 & 1958), Bernard Geary (b. 1934), *String Quartet no. 1* (1960), and Proinnsias Ó Duinn (b. 1941), *Essay for String Quartet* in 1961 and a *String Quartet* in 1962. It may also be noted that the English composer of Irish descent, Elizabeth Maconchy (1907–94) wrote twelve string quartets between 1933 and 1979 and a *Sonatina for String Quartet* in 1963. <sup>2</sup> See Gareth Cox, 'Octatonicism in the String Quartets of Brian Boydell', in: Patrick F. Devine & Harry White (eds), *The Maynooth International Musicological Conference 1995, Selected Proceedings, Part One (Irish Musical Studies 4)*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1996), 263–70; Hazel Farrell, 'The String Quartets of Brian Boydell', MA thesis (Waterford, 1996); Philip Graydon, *Modernism in Ireland and its Cultural Context in the Music and Writings of Frederick May, Brian Boydell and Aloys Fleischmann*, MA thesis (NUI Maynooth, 1999); and Axel Klein, *Die Musik Irlands im 20. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1996).

also be made, however, of one important pre-war quartet, namely Frederick May's (1911–1985) String Quartet in C minor of 1936<sup>3</sup>.

Bodley was born in Dublin in 1933 and his distinguished career as composer, pianist, conductor and academic has followed an uncomplicated path, from studies in Dublin and Stuttgart to an academic post in the Music Department at University College Dublin where he retired as Professor Emeritus in 1998 after nearly forty years. Stylistically, his compositional career has been more eventful as he progressed from a fairly predictable tonal/chromatic/modal language in the 1950s, to serial and aleatoric excursions in the 1960s, before developing an idiomatic style in the 1970s with the juxtaposition of avant-garde elements and aspects of traditional Irish music.<sup>4</sup>

He won a scholarship in 1962 and used it to attend the Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt the following year, returning again in 1964 and 1965. Darmstadt was for many years the European (and many would argue, also the international) post-war home of avant-garde music<sup>5</sup> and Bodley was exposed there to the most complex forms of post-Webern integral serialism, aleatoricism, and electronic music. Although the compositional fervour in Darmstadt appears to have subsided somewhat by the early 1960s after Wolfgang Steinecke's death in 1961 as the format of the Summer Courses became more academic under Ernst Thomas, the influence on Bodley's compositional thinking was nevertheless significant. He had there the unforgettable opportunity to hear many of the leading composers of the day such as Boulez, Pousseur, Berio, Stockhausen, Babbitt, Ligeti, Kagel, and Maderna analysing their works and techniques in lecture/workshop series: The wide-ranging lectures in 1963–1965 included: 'Notwendigkeit einer ästhetischen Orientierung' (Boulez), 'Questionmètier – Frage Handwerk' (Pousseur), 'Instrument und Funktion' (Berio), 'Analyse: Gruppen für 3 Orchester' and 'Komposition, Komplexe Formen' (Stockhausen), 'The Structure of Musical Systems' (Babbitt), 'Klangtechnik und Form (Analyse von *Apparitions*, *Atmosphères*,

3 See Axel Klein (as n. 2) and Joseph Ryan, 'Nationalism and Music in Ireland', PhD diss. (National University of Ireland, 1991). May's quartet is also the subject of an article by Robert W. Wason in this volume. 4 For biographical details and comments on his studies in Stuttgart with Johann Nepomuk David, see Malcolm Barry, 'Examining the Great Divide', *Soundpost* (October–November 1983), 15–20; Bodley in interview with Charles Acton, *Éire-Ireland* 5 (1970), 117–33; Gareth Cox, 'German Influences on Twentieth-Century Irish Art-Music', in: Joachim Fischer, Gisela Hoffer, Eoin Burke (eds.), *Irish-German Connections*, (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1998), 107–14; Klein (as n. 2); and Klein, 'Aber was ist heute schon noch abenteuerlich?: Ein Porträt des irischen Komponisten Seóirse Bodley', *Musiktexte* H. 52 (Januar 1994), 21–5. 5 See Gianmario Borio and Hermann Danuser (eds.), *Im Zenit der Moderne: Die Internationalen Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt 1946–1966* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Wissenschaften, Reihe Musicae, 1997) and Metzger & Riehn (eds.), *Darmstadt-Dokumente I in: Reihe Musik-Konzepte Sonderband 1946–1966* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1999). See also Rudolf Stephan & Lothar Knessl et al. (eds.), *Von Kranichstein zur Gegenwart: 50 Jahre Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik 1946–1996* (Stuttgart: Daco Verlag, 1996).

und *Aventures*)' (Ligeti), 'Analyse des Analysierens' and 'Komposition und Denkkomposition' (Kagel), 'Komposition in Sprache' (Hans G Helms), 'Klangvorstellung und Realisation: Satzlehre und Instrumentaltechnik' (Boulez), and 'Komposition und Klanggestalt' (Maderna).<sup>6</sup> Presumably Siegfried Palm's lecture on 'Notationsprobleme für Streichinstrumente' could have shaped his thinking somewhat as regards his future quartet. He also attended the concurrent conferences on topics such as 'The Notation of Contemporary Music' (1964) with papers by Earle Brown, Pousseur, Ligeti, Kagel, Caskel, Dahlhaus, Roman Haubenstock-Ramati, Aloys Kontarsky, and Siegfried Palm, and 'Form in Contemporary Music' (1965) with Adorno, Boulez, Earle Brown, Haubenstock-Ramati, Kagel, Ligeti, Rudolf Stephan, and Dahlhaus and avidly noted his frank opinions in the programme booklets at the concerts of contemporary works performed during the two-week courses. Small wonder, then, that his influences were so eclectic.

All this stimulation could not but have a radical impact on his musical language. He has described his period at Darmstadt as 'a most exciting and stimulating time' and made him feel that 'serial and post-serial music was almost the only way that music could develop'.<sup>7</sup> However, he has also said that he was not so much influenced by other composer's music but rather by aspects of their techniques and the lectures by composers explaining and analysing their works.<sup>8</sup> It was therefore more the *spirit* of Darmstadt that inspired him rather than any specific composer or language and he was to spend six months free from composition rationalising what he had learnt. He embarked on a series of the most avant-garde works that he was to write and which Anthony Hughes would describe as the 'most adventurous Irish music of the decade'.<sup>9</sup> The works from this period include *Prelude, Toccata and Epilogue* for piano (1963), *Chamber Symphony no. 1* for flute, bassoon, harp, vibraphone and strings, (1964), the song cycle for soprano and orchestra *Never to have lived is best* (1965), *Configurations for Orchestra* (1967), *String Quartet no. 1* (1968), and the *Ariel Songs* (1969).

Bodley recalls that the string quartet was informally commissioned by the leader of the RTÉ String Quartet, David Lillis, during the interval of a concert.<sup>10</sup> It was completed in September 1968 and premiered a few months later by the RTÉ String Quartet on 6 January 1969 at the Dublin Festival of

<sup>6</sup> All taken from the *Darmstadt Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik, Programme Booklets, 1963–1965*. <sup>7</sup> Axel Klein, 'Irish Composers and Foreign Education: A Study of Influences', in: Devine and White (as n. 2), 282. <sup>8</sup> Bodley in conversation with the author, 2000. <sup>9</sup> Hughes, Anthony, 'Bodley', in: Stanley Sadie (ed.), *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London: Macmillan, 1980), vol. 2, 838. <sup>10</sup> He also said that David Lillis particularly remembered the ending of his quartet at the recording as it marked the final farewell of the original RTÉ String Quartet and the last time they played together (Bodley in correspondence with the author, 1999). According to Bodley the Quartet were later pressing him to write another one for them (Acton, as n. 4, 130).

Twentieth-Century Music<sup>11</sup>. It was performed twice subsequently, in Belfast and in Newcastle, and recorded by the New Irish Recording Company in 1973 (as number NIRC LP NIR 006) but never released. There are two interpretations on cassette in circulation (both by the RTÉ String Quartet) and both of which are available from the Contemporary Music Centre, Ireland:<sup>12</sup> One is a live recording of the premiere and the other is of the unreleased recording just mentioned, the latter being truer to the composer's intentions. The score is only available in a manuscript photocopy from the CMC and the RTÉ Library has a set of parts. All in all, it is a work much better known by title than by performance, perhaps because, as Malcolm Barry suggests, it 'represents a peak of abstraction unique in Bodley's output'.<sup>13</sup> A programme note for the premiere was supplied by the composer himself: in it he stated that he thought of 'the first movement as September Music no. 1' and that he intended it to be 'the first of a series of projected works which somehow reflect the significance of that month [for him], not only that month externally [but] also an attitude'.<sup>14</sup> The String Quartet<sup>15</sup> is in two movements of contrasting duration: the first should last about 2½ minutes and the second about 11 minutes.

The short **First Movement** has only 64 bars and can be formally divided into five sections. Metrically there are 34 changes of time signature within the 64 bars, mostly 2/4, 3/4, or 4/4 and, although there are no tempo indications, each section, as can be seen from the following table, has a different metronome marking which gets faster throughout (slowing, however, in the final section). Sketches indicate exact timings in minutes and seconds for each subsection of beats, for instance the final section is subdivided into the following beats: 6, 21, 9, 36:

First Movement:

Section I	bars 1–2 (2)	♩ = 48 (8 beats)
Section II	bars 3–10 (8)	♩ = 60 (24 beats)
Section III	bars 11–21 (11)	♩ = 72 (56 beats)
Section IV	bars 22–43 (22)	♩ = 144 (77 beats)
Section V	bars 44–64 (21)	♩ = 96 (72 beats)

The pitch material is derived from the following row and his sketches show that he clearly intended the row to be subdivided into three discrete tetrachords;<sup>16</sup> however, although the pitches 1–4 and 9–12 are fixed, the pitches 5

<sup>11</sup> This is why it is sometimes listed as 1969. The senior music critic of the *Irish Times*, Charles Acton, whilst freely admitting that he was out of his depth in attempting to come to terms with the language, conceded however that there were 'a few moments and passages of quite lovely illumination of an otherwise misty prospect'. *Irish Times*, 7 January 1969. <sup>12</sup> 19 Fishamble Street, Temple Bar, Dublin 8. <sup>13</sup> Barry (as n. 4), 18. <sup>14</sup> Dublin Festival of Twentieth-century Music, Programme Booklet, 1969. <sup>15</sup> I wish to thank Seóirse Bodley for generous access to his sketches. <sup>16</sup> John Kinsella's less rigorous Second Quartet



& 8 can be moved or omitted and the pitches 6 & 7 omitted or reversed if desired. Thus the row retains most of the serial rigour whilst also permitting a certain amount of flexibility:



Music Example 6.1: Seóirse Bodley, String Quartet no. 1, Prime Row

The extremely disjunct row exhibits all interval classes except ic6, the tritone, and includes three each of the ics 2 & 4 between the eleven contiguous pitches. The three tetrachords mentioned belong to the prime forms 4-4, 4-7 and 4-4 and their interval vectors show their lack of tritone intervals, [21110] and [201210] respectively. The pc set 4-4 will act as a referential point in the second movement (e.g., Section II in the second movement begins with the pc set 4-4 sonority in all four strings and displays 4-4 and 4-7 at prominent moments during the section). The row matrix is presented here to facilitate row identification:

	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	
	0	2	1	9	11	6	10	7	5	8	4	3
P0	C	D	D <sup>b</sup>	A	B	F <sup>#</sup>	B <sup>b</sup>	G	F	A <sup>b</sup>	E	E <sup>b</sup> R0
P10	B <sup>b</sup>	C	B	G	A	E	G <sup>#</sup>	F	E <sup>b</sup>	F <sup>#</sup>	D	D <sup>b</sup> R10
P11	B	C <sup>#</sup>	C	A <sup>b</sup>	B <sup>b</sup>	F	A	F <sup>#</sup>	E	G	E <sup>b</sup>	D R11
P3	E <sup>b</sup>	F	E	C	D	A	C <sup>#</sup>	B <sup>b</sup>	A <sup>b</sup>	B	G	F <sup>#</sup> R3
P1	D <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>#</sup>	D	B <sup>b</sup>	C	G	B	A <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup>	A	F	E R1
P6	G <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>#</sup>	G	E <sup>b</sup>	F	C	E	C <sup>#</sup>	B	D	B <sup>b</sup>	A R6
P2	D	E	E <sup>b</sup>	B	C <sup>#</sup>	A <sup>b</sup>	C	A	G	B <sup>b</sup>	F <sup>#</sup>	F R2
P5	F	G	F <sup>#</sup>	D	E	B	D <sup>#</sup>	C	B <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>b</sup>	A	A <sup>b</sup> R5
P7	G	A	A <sup>b</sup>	E	F <sup>#</sup>	C <sup>#</sup>	F	D	C	E <sup>b</sup>	B	B <sup>b</sup> R7
P4	E	F <sup>#</sup>	F	C <sup>#</sup>	E <sup>b</sup>	B <sup>b</sup>	D	B	A	C	A <sup>b</sup>	G R4
P8	G <sup>#</sup>	B <sup>b</sup>	A	F	G	D	F <sup>#</sup>	E <sup>b</sup>	C <sup>#</sup>	E	C	B R8
P9	A	B	B <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup>	A <sup>b</sup>	E <sup>b</sup>	G	E	D	F	C <sup>#</sup>	C R9
	0	2	1	9	11	6	10	7	5	8	4	3
	RI	RI	RI	RI	RI	RI	RI	RI	RI	RI	RI	RI

The pitch material of Section 1 begins with the aggregates of the untransposed prime row P-0 and a transposed version of the retrograde inversion RI-10 within its two bars (although in the RI-10 aggregate pcs 3, 5 & 6 are

repeated): P–O: C (vc) D (vln1) D $\flat$  (vln2) A (vc) B (vln1) F $\sharp$  (vc) B $\flat$  (omitted) G (vln1) F (vc) A $\flat$  (vln2) E (vln1) E $\flat$  (vln1); RI–10: G & F $\sharp$  & D & F & E $\flat$  & C & E (vln1) B (vln2) C $\sharp$  & A (vln1) A $\flat$  (vc) B $\flat$  (vln1). The section ends with the interval class 4 (as the major third dyad) in all three lower string parts; this ic4 will prove to be a feature of the entire movement which, despite the serial nature of the pitch selection, gives some parts a quasi tonal feel: For instance, of the nearly 300 intervals, 33% are permutations of ic4.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a string quartet. It consists of four staves: Violin I (Vln I), Violin II (Vln II), Viola (Vln), and Cello (Vcllo). The score is for Section I, bars 1-2. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 48 M.M. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The score includes various performance instructions such as 'pizz' (pizzicato), 'arco' (arco), 'N. arco' (no arco), 'pp' (pianissimo), 'p' (piano), 'sf' (sforzando), and 'ppp' (pianississimo). There are also dynamic markings like 'al. b. m. ff p' and 'N.'. The notation includes notes, rests, and slurs. The score is written in a clear, legible hand.

Music Example 6.2: Seóirse Bodley, String Quartet no. 1, Movement I, Section I, bars 1–2

Section II shifts up a semitone in the bass and begins with an upward striving in the first violin over more than three octaves. Besides the preponderance of ic1 (particularly noticeable in the violins in canon in bars 3 & 4), the emphasis in this section is also on the tonal interval class, ic3 (e.g. vlnI: bars 4 & 5). The beginning of this section uses I–1: C $\sharp$  (vc & vln) B & C (vc) E (vln) D

②  $\text{♩} = 60 \text{ m.m.}$

Violin I:  $pp$ ,  $p$ ,  $sf$ ,  $pp$

Violin II:  $pp$ ,  $p$ ,  $sf$ ,  $pp$

Viola:  $pp$ ,  $p$ ,  $sf$ ,  $pp$

Cello/Double Bass:  $pp$ ,  $p$ ,  $sf$ ,  $pp$

Violin I:  $pizz.$ ,  $arco$ ,  $mp$ ,  $pp$  *cresc.*

Violin II:  $dim.$ ,  $ppp$ ,  $ppp$

Viola:  $ppp$ ,  $ppp$

Cello/Double Bass:  $N$ ,  $f$ ,  $pizz. p$

Violin I:  $pizz.$ ,  $sf$

Violin II:  $mp$ ,  $sf$

Viola:  $mp$ ,  $sf$

Cello/Double Bass:  $c.l.b.$ ,  $sf$ ,  $acc.$ ,  $mp$ ,  $p$

Violin I:  $pp$  3-7

Violin II:  $f$ ,  $p$  *pizz.*

Music Example 6.3: Seóirse Bodley, String Quartet no. 1, Movement I, Section II, bars 3-10

(omitted) G (vln1 & 2) E $\flat$  (vln 2) F# (vln1 & 2) A $\flat$  (vln 2) F & A & B $\flat$  (vln1) and then R-6, R-3 and R-8 can be traced throughout the rest of this short section.

However, I am less concerned with highlighting the various permutations of the row throughout the movement. As Christopher Fox has noted, 'generally, the aesthetic purpose of Darmstadt serialism is not that the series should occupy the musical foreground; rather the serial principle is the method whereby musical transformations can be achieved'<sup>17</sup>. Instead I wish to suggest that Bodley was allowing his ear to rule his pen, i.e. writing in many ways intuitively and governed by what Malcolm Barry has succinctly described as his tension between ear and historical consciousness.<sup>18</sup> The quartet is essentially linear and melodic and it is interesting to note that Bodley has stated that, although his radically different second string quartet written almost 24 years later in 1992 differs in style and texture from his first, both share 'beneath the surface disparities, a common emphasis on melody, and rejoice in the ability of strings to carry a singing melodic line'.<sup>19</sup> The movement also begins and ends on C (with a cadential-like rise through B $\flat$ -B-C in the first and second violins).

The structure of this movement could be interpreted as a Webernesque variation form with the five sections corresponding to five variations on the row material with the theme being the row itself (no section can therefore be designated as a theme as such). Each variation becomes more substantial as the movement progresses and is clearly separated (except between IV & V) by either a *fermata* or rests. They all display an individual character: the first presents the pitch material in two aggregates of the Prime (0) and Retrograde Inversion (-10) in two short bars and reveals straight away Bodley's preoccupation over the entire piece with multiple modes of string timbre: the first violin begins with a minim (tied to a semiquaver) started *non-vibrato* leading to *molto vibrato*, followed by two semiquavers played *col legno battuto*, a semiquaver (with acciaccatura) *sul ponticello tratto*, and a final semiquaver (of the quintuplet) plucked *pizzicato*, with the remainder of the section bowed *al talone* with *normal vibrato*. These playing techniques are also employed across the other parts in approximately the same order (although the slide up a quarter-tone in the second violin is the only instance of microtonal elements in the entire quartet, apart from some *glissandi* in the second movement). The second<sup>20</sup> section begins with an imitative (quasi canonic) idea in the violins

of the same year is divided into four trichordal sets (tracing major and minor dyads: B, C, D - A#, C#, A - E, G#, G - D#, F, F#). 17 Christopher Fox, *Darmstadt and the Modernist Myth*, New Music, 1999, [www.hud.ac.uk/schools/music+humanities/music/newmusic/Darmstadt\\_myth.html](http://www.hud.ac.uk/schools/music+humanities/music/newmusic/Darmstadt_myth.html) 18 Barry (as n. 4), 17. 19 RTÉ Programme Booklet (May 1993). 20 Despite the fact that the sketch pages for Section II of the first movement has 'clarinet and piano?' written at the top, Bodley has stated that he never intended

and uses *Klangfarbenmelodie*, the third explores numerous possible permutations of the quintuplet rhythmic cell before ending with a short cello solo and a *sff* heptad, the fourth includes many large leaps and again imitative features and leads without a break into the fifth which uses serial dynamics (his sketches also show evidence of these attempts to construct series of dynamics such as '*ff, f, mf, mp, p, pp*' or '*sf, ff, f, mf, pp, p*'). If any composer's influence comes through strongly it is surely that of Pierre Boulez, in particular his serial and pointillistic techniques as employed in *Polyphonie X* (1951) and *Structures* Books I & II (1952 and 1956–61), seminal works which would have been discussed, at least informally, at Darmstadt. Bodley has stated that when writing the Quartet he started with a technical approach which was 'very much concerned with this whole idea of irregularity of rhythm and the question of musical impulse behind it ... the whole thing did grow ... very much from a musical impulse.'<sup>21</sup>

Of course, Bodley was open to other non-musical influences (as he says, it was the Sixties after all!<sup>22</sup>) and in his sketches he has twice noted the word 'Ikebana' – the Japanese traditional art form of flower arranging – as he was impressed and influenced at the time by its concept, proportions and ideals. Ikebana, which purports to bring nature and humanity together, is based on a triangular pattern of three points which represent Heaven, Man, and Earth, thus allowing for creative expression although governed by certain structural parameters. In 1970 he mentioned that he had 'the greatest respect for much of the Japanese traditional art ... a Japanese flower arranger has to learn a very strict discipline and spontaneity tends to come after the discipline has been learnt'<sup>23</sup>

The **Second Movement** is considerably more substantial and complex than the first and is divided into eleven metrical and ametrical sections of varying length (the duration of each section is taken from the composer's sketches):

Section I	45 seconds	Section VII	67 seconds
Section II	90 seconds	Section VIII	110 seconds
Section III	67 seconds	Section IX	22 seconds
Section IV	22 seconds	Section X	67 seconds
Section V	90 seconds	Section XI	45 seconds
Section VI	45 seconds		

the material to be for anything else but a string quartet. Similarly, on one of the pages for Section III of the same movement, the words 'blocks = orchestral = style with either instruments producing more than one note at a time (piano) or many instr. (orchestra)' refer rather to a texture sought. Bodley in conversation with the author, 2001. <sup>21</sup> Acton, 1970 (as n. 4), 128. <sup>22</sup> Bodley in conversation with the author, 2001. <sup>23</sup> Acton, 1970 (as n. 4), 124–125.

It begins with a tetrachord derived from the pitches 8 through 11 of the RI-1 in the first violin (presumably again because he wishes to emphasize ic4 and the C with which the first movement began and ended), followed by R-10 in the cello (the C# being the final pitch of RI-1 and the first of R-10), and spread through the second violin, cello again and viola. The music in the connecting boxes are to be played consecutively, an idea which was apparently influenced by an account of the basics of Critical Path Analysis which Bodley had read about in the *Radio Times*.<sup>24</sup> It is an organisational method of prioritising the planning of a project where certain parts are dependant on others and therefore must be completed in a sequence (i.e., a Critical Path Action and a Non-Critical Path Action). For instance, I-6 begins in the first violin and continues down through the second violin part to the cello before completing the row back on the Eb in the first violin (where RI-2 commences). Bodley has noted in his sketches that the Critical Path can be divided between instruments and can contain more than one part (e.g. just before Section IX the Critical Path is spread over all four parts consecutively).

D could be considered to be a referential pitch for this movement: it begins and ends on this tone and the opening D is emphasised in the first violin under a prolonged *fermata* while the second violin also holds a D leading to the first violin's long trill on D at the end of the section (with an octave C 'clashing with the second violin at one point). Even the repeated Eb-D dyads in the second violin which follow this octave D 'resolves' to a D acciacatura. There are also five very prominent and accented dyads E-D in the first violin in the bars before and after Rehearsal No. 2b, a dyad which also ends Section V and occurs in the penultimate bar of the movement. Dare one indulge in a little *Augenmusik* here and stretch the pitch centricity argument a bit further to point out that the second violin's emphasis of Ab five times just before, and at the beginning of, Section V, and again in bars 5 & 6 of Section VI in the first violin, both towards and at the middle of the piece, constitutes a tritonal point equidistant from the two Ds? Perhaps not.

Section XIII contains a prominent passage in the first violin which Bodley alludes to in his programme note remarking that it reminds him of a seagull he saw flying over the sands as he was cycling along the Howth Road in North Dublin in his teens.<sup>25</sup> Bodley has marked in his sketches for this section 'Bird!!! (flies away)' and notes the word 'Bird' again for the final section. The three exclamation marks indicate perhaps his self-consciousness at his audacity in using such non-Darmstadtian (if there is such a word) programmatic elements. His notes for this section also clearly differentiate between the higher region of the solo line which should contain many tremolos and trills and a

<sup>24</sup> Bodley in correspondence with the author, 1999. <sup>25</sup> See n. 19.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for a string quartet, consisting of three systems of staves. The notation is dense and includes various performance instructions and dynamic markings. The first system begins with a circled number '1' and a star symbol. The notation includes notes, rests, and slurs across four staves. Key markings include *pp*, *sf*, *arco*, *pizz.*, *f*, *ppp*, *sfz*, *sub pmt.*, and *N*. The second system continues the musical development with similar markings and includes a section labeled *sub pmt.* with a circled 'X' below it. The third system features a section labeled *N ppp* and includes markings for *pp*, *sf*, *f*, and *pp*. The score is characterized by its complex rhythmic patterns and frequent use of dynamic contrast.

Music Example 6.4: Seóirse Bodley, String Quartet no. 1, Movement II, Section I

lower region which should have darker sounds and generate 'a certain tension'. The solo violin (or seagull?) begins playing in bar 2 of the section on a high D $\flat$  over a cluster accompaniment of D,E,E $\flat$ . A similar passage returns muted in Section XI.

Music Example 6.5: Seóirse Bodley, String Quartet no. 1, Movement II, Section XIII, bars 1-4

Darmstadt had also undergone a reaction to a rather contrived integral serialism and embraced the indeterminacy of John Cage and others. This clearly had an impact on Bodley as well and the second movement displays some







(3)

The musical score consists of four systems, each with four staves. The first system (bars 1-2) shows the Violin I staff with a melodic line starting on a whole note, followed by a triplet of eighth notes. The Violin II staff has a similar melodic line. The Viola and Cello/Double Bass staves provide harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The second system (bars 3-4) continues the melodic development in the Violin I and II staves, with the Cello/Double Bass staff featuring a triplet of eighth notes. The third system (bars 5-6) shows a continuation of the melodic lines, with the Viola staff playing a rhythmic pattern. The fourth system (bars 7-9) concludes the section with a final melodic flourish in the Violin I staff and a sustained chord in the Cello/Double Bass staff.

Music Example 6.6: Seóirse Bodley, String Quartet no. 1, Movement II, Section III, bars 1-9

such aleatoric elements: hexachords (or 'reservoirs of tones'<sup>26</sup>) are presented in boxes, mainly for the lower strings as a textural device in Section III: bars 1 & 7; Section IIIb: bar 3; Section IVa: bar 3; Section VII: bars 4 & 7; Section IX: bar 2. They are to be played in random sequence whilst observing any of the given dynamics. The following example from Section III also shows a semi-free, second violin line in bar 7.

Another influence of Darmstadt is his inclusion in the score of a very detailed table of signs. Apart from standard instructions such as *sul tasto*, *sul ponticello*, *al talone*, or a Bartókian snap, the following exact string techniques are demanded:

	= Non-vibrato
	= Molto vibrato
	= Move from non-vibrato to molto vibrato
N	= Normal vibrato
	= Sudden crescendo with vibrato

Courtesy markings for the performers in this very complex second movement are also inserted, for instance he marks the end of notes (or in some cases, the beginning of notes), relative to other parts with arrows and beats in ametrical bars are indicated with vertical strokes. Ascending and descending arrows through beams indicate a quite exact progressive *accelerando* or *ritardando* and are used over longer passages in, for instance, the entire Section V of the second movement to good effect. The square fermata sign  $\square\bar{\square}$  is used for a pause of approximately 2½ seconds (and variations thereof) and the  $\updownarrow$  sign indicates a pause or rest *ad libitum* (Bodley sometimes instructs the player to play everything under bracket in the time of the pause). However the plethora of agogic, timbral and dynamic instructions can make the work seem a little overcrowded occasionally and it sometimes appears as if Bodley had learnt *too* much in Darmstadt and is trying to fit too many techniques into a single work; this can detract from the rhythmic energy which he is clearly striving for and clouds some lyrical moments.

This work has not been heard in concert for over 30 years and, although aspects of the work can appear a little unconvincing, another public perfor-

<sup>26</sup> Bodley sketches.

mance is surely long overdue. Not only is it the last major work which Bodley was to write purely in the experimental 'Darmstadt' idiom before exploring his own more individual language, it also represents a milestone in twentieth-century Irish string quartet writing and avant-garde composition in Ireland. However, nothing could be a clearer statement of his future intentions than the C major beginning and end of *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* for Two Pianos of 1972 and, although many of the techniques and dissonances from the String Quartet still abound, his attempts to ensure, as he himself said, 'something which is *audible to the listener*'<sup>27</sup> [my italics] speak volumes about his desire for communication. It is therefore hardly surprising that he was to relinquish some of the dissonant and extremely complex language of the Sixties for a more accessible (and ultimately neo-tonal) style and for what might be described as Irish music as heard through Darmstadt ears.

<sup>27</sup> Acton, 1970 (as n. 4), 128.