

From the Incompatible to the Provisionally Synthesised in the Music of Robert Fokkens

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ABSTRACT

Tracing Lines, an album containing seven works written between 2001 and 2011 by the UK-based South African composer Robert Fokkens, was released in 2014. In this essay two works from this album, representing two important moments in the composer's development, are analysed. *Irreconcilable Truths* for violin and piano (2002) displays the impossibility of synthesis when different entities collide; *Africa* for soprano and piano (2007) contains moments in which such entities synthesise. The aim is to provide a temporal link between these trends in order to highlight the evolution of the composer's display of identity within the given time-frame. Subconscious sonic perceptions are outlined through general readings of 'plain' spectrograms, and Gestalt readings of melodic range spectrograms of the recordings of the works in question. In both *Irreconcilable Truths* and *Africa*, the 'plain' spectrograms contradict the 'seminal trends' assigned to each work. In contrast with my first perceptions upon hearing the recordings of the works, the Gestalt in *Irreconcilable Truths* is more pronounced than in *Africa*. Set theory analyses of the scores, which serve to outline the intuitive design of pitch relations in the score, are followed by a brief consideration of pitch-rhythm relations. From these relations I conclude that *Irreconcilable Truths* contains hidden foreshadowings of the forthcoming breakdown between different entities, and compensations for the boldness of the second entity. *Africa*, on the other hand, displays moments of almost unprepared synthesis of these entities, and at the same time parts with the idea of separate entities at a slower pace than expected. The results are read in the context of the composer's negotiation of a South African identity.

1. Robert Fokkens (b. 1975) describes himself as a South African composer based in the UK (Fokkens 2015). After finishing school in 1993 he postponed his planned journalism studies in order to take a 'gap year'. He only started composing in 1994, and only seriously in 1995 when he enrolled at the University of Cape Town with the intention of becoming a composer. Upon discovering that the course did not include composition in the first year, Fokkens arranged for extra-curricular lessons with Peter Louis van Dijk. He is not concerned about whether an audience 'understands' his music: 'then you're either going to end up just writing the kind of piece ... you know everybody will understand, or you're not going to write at all' (Fokkens in Muller 2007). He completed his master's degree at the Royal Academy of Music, London, in 2002, and his PhD at the University of Southampton in 2007, under the tutelage of Michael Finnissy (Fokkens 2015). He is now a lecturer in Composition at Cardiff University, Wales (Muller 2007).

The idea of a South African identity is important to Fokkens – he wonders whether there is such a thing, what it entails, and how it relates to a personal identity (Muller 2007). As a white South African living in Europe, his exploration of identity requires 'constant reconsideration' (Fokkens 2013, 3). Fokkens finds a place like England to be culturally stable in many ways.¹ He believes that South Africa has the potential for a far more vibrant cultural scene, but that the infrastructure seems to be lacking. He fears that if he were back in South Africa, his energy would be spent on building a culture, rather than on being creative (Muller 2007). The implication is that one must leave South Africa in order to be a South African composer.

2. *Tracing Lines*, an album containing recordings of seven works written by Fokkens between 2001 and 2011, was released in 2014. The musicians performing in these recordings are the Fidelio Trio, Carla Rees (bass flute) and Patricia Rozario (soprano).

3. The two compositions under scrutiny in this essay – *Irreconcilable Truths* for violin and piano (2002), and *Africa* for soprano and piano (2007) – represent two distinct moments in Fokkens's ongoing negotiation of

different musical worlds and identities. In *Irreconcilable Truths* his concern is the impossibility of synthesis when perceptibly different musical entities collide (Fokkens 2013, 8).² *Africa*, on the other hand, contains moments when, in Edward Venn's words (2014, 82), 'contrasting materials are combined dialectically, sometimes finding a precarious, provisional synthesis'. My aim is to trace the line, so to speak, from the incompatibility between different musical worlds in *Irreconcilable Truths* to the moments in which they momentarily assimilate in *Africa*. I will then address the issues concerning identity outlined in the first paragraph in the context of my conclusions. One may also describe this analysis as a comparative hermeneutic reading of the two works in question, with the aim of establishing a temporal continuity between them that illuminates how the composer's display of identity in his works evolved within the given time-frame (2002-2007). General readings of 'plain' spectrograms, and Gestalt readings of melodic range spectrograms, serve to establish subconscious sonic perceptions. Set theory analyses of the scores serve to outline the intuitive design of pitch relations in the score. The analysis ends with a brief consideration of pitch-rhythm relations.

4. A brief surface-level description of each piece illustrates its formal design. *Irreconcilable Truths* is a work consisting of 237 bars in which two clearly contrasting 'musical worlds' are juxtaposed temporally. The result is a simple A-B-A¹-B¹-A²-B²-A³-B³ structure. The first musical world is mobile, dissonant, and representative of a number of textures, and rhythmic and thematic ideas. The second is static, repetitive, thinly textured throughout, and employs modal, rhythmic and string playing ideas notably influenced by Xhosa music, especially the bow-playing of Madosini (Fokkens 2013, 3).³

The 194 bars-long *Africa* also contains material derived from bow music – most notably the two-note oscillating figure reminiscent of the drone of a mouth bow. Unlike in *Irreconcilable Truths*, this African-inspired material is only at first contrasted with alternative material and is then integrated into the musical texture so that it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish between the two musical worlds as the piece progresses. Therefore, despite the individual sections being clearly

Figure 1: Extract from *Irreconcilable Truths* – example of the ‘first musical world’ © Composers Edition

Figure 2: Extract from *Irreconcilable Truths* – example of the ‘second musical world’ © Composers Edition

Figure 3: Extract from *Africa*

distinguishable by means of pauses and/or thematic changes, the structure can at best be described as A-B-C-D-E, with E coming closest to being a return of A. In both pieces each musical world moves through an array of rapidly changing time signatures.

5. Rather than aiming to present the composer's intentional design (as in paragraph 4) or the listener's conscious sonic perceptions thereof, my analysis aspires instead to articulate subconscious sonic perceptions that emerge from the performances of the works on the *Tracing Lines* album. Included in my analysis is a consideration of how intuitively created pitch and pitch-rhythm relations manifest in the score. This should show how the aforementioned incompatibility and momentary assimilation play out – or do not play out – *underneath* the surface. By giving perspectives on the work that are not readily apparent, I hope to make the reader aware of the conflict that arises in the analysis of the works, between conscious and subconscious perceptions, and between the conscious and intuitive design of pitch and pitch-rhythm relations. Whereas the score is a 'set' entity, performances are not; every instance is different. An analysis that combines the analysis of a score with the analysis of a performance has an ontological presupposition: that a composition is the sum of a score and a specific live or recorded performance thereof.

6. 'Plain' spectrograms show time on the X-axis and frequency (pitch) on the Y-axis (see Figures 4 and 5). The green-yellow-red colour scheme indicates differences in amplitude (volume), with yellow indicating a greater amplitude than green, and red a greater amplitude than yellow. The stacked lines of overtones and the horizontal squiggles of vibrato are clearly distinguishable on these spectrograms. In line with my ontological presupposition, however, my interpretations regarding musical expression conflate the inherent timbral characteristics of the instruments chosen by the composer, and expressive devices employed by the performers. I therefore consider amplitude, vibrato, timbre, and overtones all to be expressive devices.⁴

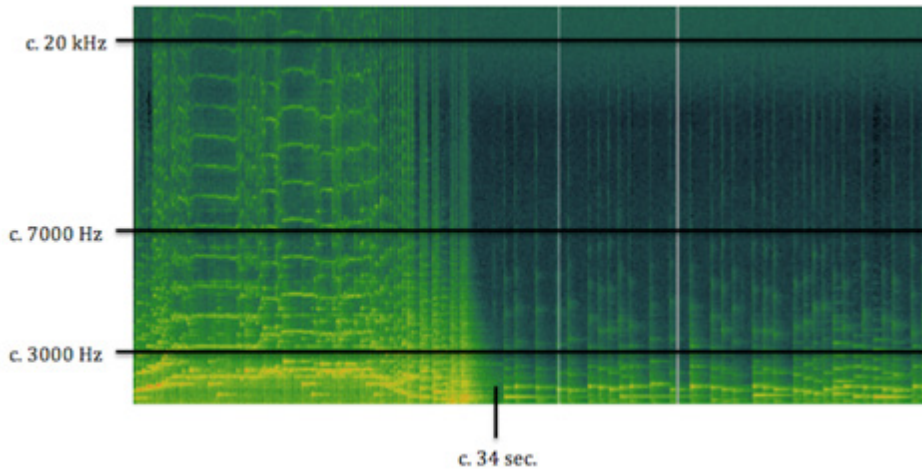


Figure 4: Spectrogram: *Irreconcilable Truths* (c. 0:21-0:50) © Composers Edition

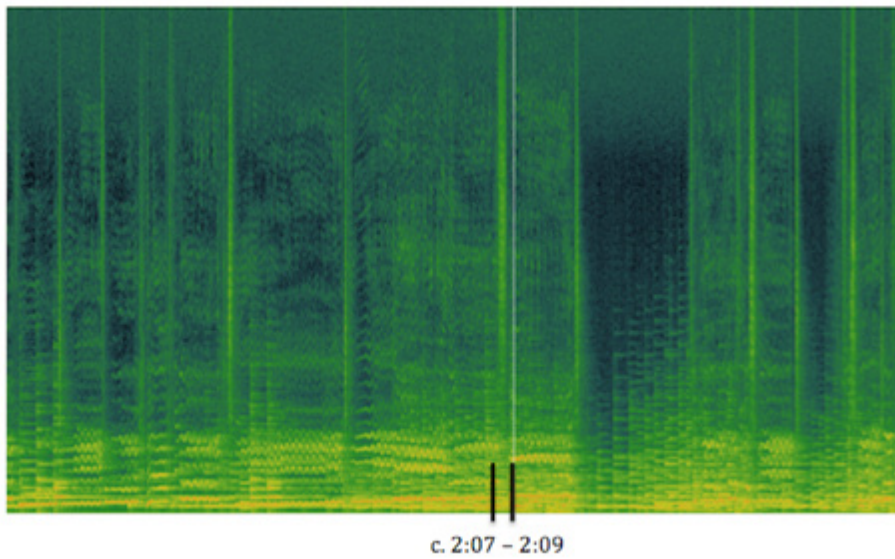


Figure 5: Spectrogram: *Africa* (c.1:52-2:20) © Composers Edition

7. The spectrogram of *Irreconcilable Truths* indicates that the first musical world ends and the second begins around the 34-second mark. Overall, there is relative order in the spacing of the frequency peaks, although slightly less so in the second musical world. Whereas the frequency peaks in the first musical world rise above 22 kHz, those in the second fall well within the range of human perception (20 kHz and lower). The same can be said about the overtones in *Irreconcilable Truths*: in the first musical world they look clear and neatly stacked (that's the case above the 3000 Hz range, at least) and reach beyond the range of aural perception; in the second they appear cloudy and hardly reach a maximum peak of 7000 Hz. The spectrogram shows greater variation in amplitude in the first musical world, whereas it remains relatively stable in the second.

The frequency peaks in the spectrogram of *Africa* are unevenly spaced; they are thick and heavy, the result of breathing and of the spitting sounds of consonants ('aFRiCa'). Overtones are mostly cloudy and blotchy, and fall within the range of human perception. There is great variation in vibrato and amplitude in the work as a whole. The redness of the peak in amplitude is notable from 2:07 to 2:09 where, in the text, the 'blood [spills] in the field'.

8. The first musical world in the spectrogram of *Irreconcilable Truths* appears to be the sprightly over-achiever of the two: it is sharp, silver, expressively diverse, and transcendently ambitious in its ventures beyond conscious human perception; the second appears natural, wooden, and uniform in expressiveness. The aurally perceived busyness and great variation of textures within the first musical world in *Irreconcilable Truths* contradicts the general consideration of the spectrogram. Where the musical worlds are juxtaposed and remain separate, there is relative order underneath their respective surfaces. Their contrasting characteristics are contained. Identities that are perceived as being 'set' provide comfort – albeit a vulnerable one. This comfort of separation is an uncomfortable truth.

In *Africa*, there is chaos. The momentary assimilation of musical worlds – the expressively diverse and the natural, respectively – presents

a chaotic spectrogram. The attempt at merging separate identities into one leads to disorder (temporarily, at least). This is another uncomfortable truth. In both *Irreconcilable Truths* and *Africa*, the spectrograms contradict both my conscious aural perception and a traditional analysis of the musical surface.

9. Unlike 'plain' spectrograms, melodic range spectrograms (see Figures 6 and 7) serve 'to make it easier to discern individual musically meaningful features' (Cannam et al. 2015). The frequency range is narrower compared to the 'plain' variety, limiting the display to octaves that usually contain melodic content (Cannam et al. 2015). Thus, 'fundamental pitch spectrogram' may be a more accurate label than 'melodic range spectrogram'. I will, however, use the accepted subject term. Ian Verstegen (2005, 25) suggests in the context of Gestalt readings that '... any problem of temporal organisation [e.g. music] can be described with spatial concepts [e.g. shapes]'. In the melodic range spectrograms of *Irreconcilable Truths* and *Africa* I deleted differences in colour that would indicate musically significant noise events in order to focus on the emergent two-dimensional shapes in the visual display of pitches that permit a Gestalt reading thereof.

Gestalt psychology gained popularity with its shape perception. It proposes that perception is a problem of perceptual organisation, and that, depending on the conditions in question, the stimulus is organised into the simplest percept (Verstegen 2005, 11, 16). The law of *prägnanz* urges one to do this. From this statement one may deduce that the easier it is for the viewer or listener to organise a given stimulus into the simplest patterns and shapes, the more pronounced the Gestalt. However, the point is not to suggest that a more pronounced Gestalt is more desirable than one that is less pronounced, but only that the Gestalt in a visual representation of sound (my focus here) may tell a more detailed, and consequently different story than the aurally perceived Gestalt of the same sound. According to Mark Reybrouck (1997, 60), one must keep in mind that in a Gestalt analysis of sound "the "perceived" structures are not necessarily isomorphic with the "sounding" structures as such, because of the role of schemes and knowledge mediating between

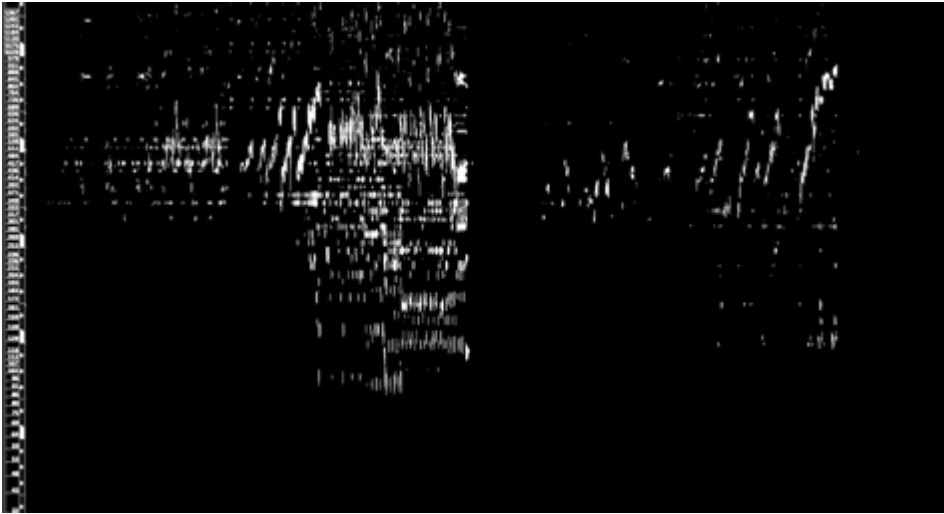


Figure 6: Melodic Range Spectrogram: *Irreconcilable Truths*

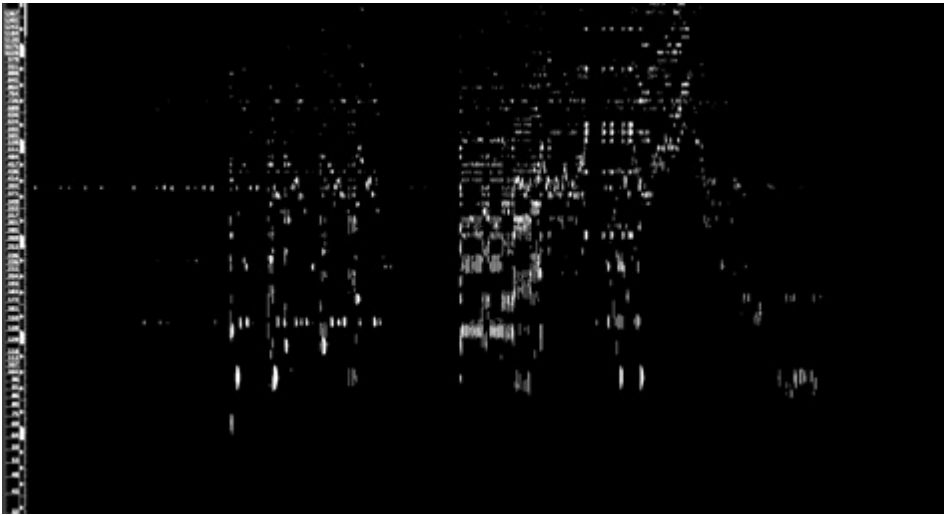


Figure 7: Melodic Range Spectrogram: *Africa* © Composers Edition

stimulus and response'. My interpretation of this statement suggests that an artificially produced visual representation of sound, although by no means perfect, is less mediated by 'the listener as dependant variable' (Reybrouck 1997, 60), and may therefore tell a different story than the consciously perceived sonic Gestalt.

10. The melodic range spectrogram of *Irreconcilable Truths* (Figure 6) indicates two clearly discernible sections.⁵ The two prominent, parallel, horizontal series of dots in the section on the left – the one series starting later than the other – are completed into lines by the law of continuity (this is the case most of the time hereafter when I refer to lines). After that it is easy to let the law of closure complete a parallelogram by imagining a diagonal line that joins the two beginning points of the horizontal lines, parallel to the existing diagonal line that joins the ends of these lines. Where the horizontal lines intersect with the four vertical lines, at least three joined rectangles are visible, the outer lines of which form what looks like a square. The outer edges of the three smaller rectangles stacked on top of those just mentioned can be joined into another, larger rectangle. The outer edges of the larger rectangle combined with the square below it form another rectangle. A diagonal line through the square divides it into two triangles. An awkward triangle dangles at the bottom of the square. Another diagonal line parallel to the one belonging to this triangle lets another parallelogram emerge. This is achieved by joining the three specks at the top. These examples should suffice – numerous other shapes are not described here. The section on the right hand side is denser. Parallelism abounds in this section, with tiny horizontal and vertical lines allowing for numerous rectangles, squares, triangles, and parallelograms to emerge. It is easy to imagine the first two thirds (in length) and the first three quarters (in width) of this section as forming a large rectangle. The inner part of the spectrogram as a whole can also be seen as a rectangle.

The melodic spectrogram of *Africa* (Figure 7) also presents us with two clearly discernible sections. This time the denser of the two is on the left hand side. The three clearest horizontal lines at the beginning of this section intersect with a number of diagonal lines to form smaller

and larger parallelograms. Following this, three prominent diagonal lines, this time leaning to the right, can be seen. Now, the longer vertical lines, unequal in length, become blotchy and blend into each other. The smaller, more orderly lines underneath suggest shapes only at micro-level. The edges of what could have been slightly larger shapes are uneven and ambiguous at best. The right hand section is dominated by four prominent, right-leaning diagonal lines at the far end. Below these lines, the outline of a square is visible. The promise of a triangle as the defining shape for the top half of this section is spoiled by the withering out into the higher frequency range of what should have been the diagonal side of this shape. The presence of a simple, large shape at macro-level evades this melodic spectrogram.

11. Contrary to expectation based on conscious perception, the overall visual representation of the sonic Gestalt in *Irreconcilable Truths*, as suggested by its melodic range spectrogram, is much more pronounced than that of *Africa*. Gestalt has become clouded in the move from the first trend to the second. The Gestalt in both cases also stands in contrast to the two 'seminal trends' assigned to each work. The conservation of separate, perceptibly 'stable' identities requires less cognitive effort, whereas their merger requires more cognitive effort. The uncomfortable truth here is that clinging on to false stability is easier.

12. What follows is my pitch-class set theory analysis of the works in question. If one takes as a premise that 'a musical creator's mind can operate subconsciously with a row of tones' (Wright 2007, 39) and that pitch class set theory can be used to 'illuminate deep structure' (à la Joseph Straus) (Pasler 2008), it follows that this analytical technique can describe pitch relations not forged by conscious design; it can express the composer's intuitive design of pitch coherence. My approach to this method is to use it as a means of abstraction in service of the specific. In other words, my identification of set classes allows for a statistical survey thereof, which in turn allows me to study specific manifestations of sets belonging to the same often-used set classes. Such an analysis requires a highly subjective segmentation of pitches into sets. My segmentations

were led by a summative consideration of micro-structural elements, including phrasing, changes in time signature, thematic and motivic changes, textural changes, and text, with consistency being the key to achieving valid results. In the interest of not manipulating the segmentation to fit the method, I allowed for segments containing fewer than three and more than eight pitch classes where it made sense to do so. In such cases I provide the prime form rather than the Forte number of the relevant set class.⁶ The presence of a text in the soprano part of *Africa* urged me to do a separate segmentation thereof that adheres to the poetic structure, in addition to the segmentation of the voice and piano parts combined. The limited scope of this essay does not allow me to present the entire segmentation; I therefore provide a representative example in Figure 10. The segment numbers that follow serve only as a rough means of spatial orientation in terms of where pitch class groups are found and how they are organised in the score.

13. The set classes that I present here are those that appear most often in each work. In both compositions the trend is for set classes that appear most often to be the only set classes that appear for the given number of times – this served as a useful demarcation for my selection.

Irreconcilable Truths

Set class (0, 1) is used twelve times:

Segment 8 (4, 5)	Segment 10 (4, 5)	Segment 13 (0, 1)	Segment 31 (5, 6)
Segment 65 (10, 11)	Segment 66 (0, 1)	Segment 72 (6, 7)	Segment 130 (10, 11)
Segment 135 (3, 4)	Segment 137 (3, 4)	Segment 147 (3, 4)	Segment 155 (4, 5)

This set class manifests as a number of pitch class sets, all of which are repeated except (5, 6) and (6, 7). Although there is no consistent pattern as a whole, the reader will notice that there are some patterns at a

smaller scale. (4, 5), which appears in the first two segments above, surfaces again in the last segment. (5, 6) and (6, 7) combined form a three-note chromatic set. (5, 6) and (6, 7) are both enclosed by (0, 1) and (10, 11).

Set class 8-19 is used ten times:

Segment 85 (0, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, t, e)	Segment 116 (0, 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9)	Segment 123 (1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, t, e)	Segment 152 (0, 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, t)
Segment 198 (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, t, e)	Segment 211 (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, t)	Segment 219 (0, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, t, e)	Segment 220 (0, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, t, e)
Segment 224 (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, t)	Segment 232 (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, t, e)		

Although subsets abound, no pitch class set is repeated in its entirety in the appearances of this set class.

Set class 5-19 is used ten times:

Segment 90 (0, 4, 7, 8, e)	Segment 93 (0, 3, 5, 6, e)	Segment 140 (3, 4, 7, 9, t)	Segment 141 (0, 1, 6, 7, 9)
Segment 157 (4, 5, 8, t, e)	Segment 188 (3, 4, 7, 9, t)	Segment 191 (3, 4, 7, 9, t)	Segment 192 (3, 4, 7, 9, t)
Segment 193 (3, 4, 7, 9, t)	Segment 196 (3, 4, 7, 9, t)		

Only pitch class set (3, 4, 7, 9, t) is repeated – five times close to each other from segments 188 to segments 196, and once, more than forty segments earlier in segment 140.

Set class 6-Z24 is used nine times:

Segment 33 (1, 3, 7, 8, t, e)	Segment 34 (1, 3, 7, 8, t, e)	Segment 36 (1, 3, 7, 8, t, e)	Segment 69 (1, 3, 7, 8, t, e)
Segment 70 (1, 3, 7, 8, t, e)	Segment 132 (1, 3, 7, 8, t, e)	Segment 133 (1, 3, 7, 8, t, e)	Segment 134 (1, 3, 7, 8, t, e)
Segment 245 (1, 3, 7, 8, t, e)			

This set class always manifests as the same pitch class set.

Set class 3-5 is used eight times:

Segment 5 (4, 9, t)	Segment 11 (4, 5, t)	Segment 15 (4, 5, e)	Segment 29 (5, 6, e)
Segment 68 (4, 5, e)	Segment 74 (3, 9, t)	Segment 138 (3, 9, t)	Segment 148 (3, 4, 9)

Only pitch class sets (4, 5, e) and (3, 9, t) are repeated. Both reappearances are far from the first appearances of these pitch class sets.

Africa: Voice Part

Set class (0, 2) is used five times:

Segment 1 (3, 5)	Segment 2 (3, 5)	Segment 3 (3, 5)	Segment 5 (3, 5)
Segment 36 (2, 4)			

The repetitions of pitch class set (3, 5) are not significant, as they follow close on each other's heels. However, the only reappearance of this set class later in the voice part takes the form of a different pitch class set.

Africa

Set class 7-34 is used ten times and set class 8-18 five times. I present them in the configuration that they appear – 7-34 eight times, then 8-18 five times, and then 7-34 again twice – for reasons that will become clear in due course. The separate presentation of the voice part, the right hand of the piano, and the left hand of the piano in the case of set class 7-34 is due to obvious pitch relations within these lines as set out below.

Set class 7-34:

Segment 42

Voice (o, 7, 9)

Piano 1 (o, 1, t)

Piano 2 (3, 5)

Segment 44

Voice (o, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, t)

Piano 1 (o, 1, 9, t)

Piano 2 (3, 5)

Segment 45

Voice (o, 3, 5)

Piano 1 (o, 1, 7, 9, t)

Piano 2 (3, 5, t)

Segment 46

Voice (o, 7, 9)

Piano 1 (o, 1, t)

Piano 2 (3, 5, t)

Segment 47

Voice (o, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, t)

Piano 1 (o, 1, 3, 7, 9, t)

Piano 2 (3, 5, t)

Segment 48

Voice (o, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, t)

Piano 1 (o, 1, 3, 7, 9, t)

Piano 2 (o, 3, 5, t)

Segment 49

Voice (o, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, t)

Piano 1 (o, 1, 7, 9, t)

Piano 2 (o, 3, 5, t)

Segment 50

Voice (o, 1, 3, 5, t)

Piano 1 (o, 1, 3, 7, 9, t)

Piano 2 (o, 3, 5, t)

Set class 8-18:

Segment 56

(1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7,
t, e)

Segment 58

(o, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7,
8, e)

Segment 60

(o, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9,
t, e)

Segment 62	Segment 63
(o, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, e)	(o, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, e)

Set class 7-34:

Segment 67	Segment 72
Voice (3, 5, 7, 9, t)	Voice (o, 8, 9, e)
Piano 1 (1, 3, 5, t)	Piano 1 (2, 4)
Piano 2 (o)	Piano 2 (o, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, e)

In the case of set class 7-34 in the voice part, (o, 7, 9), (o, 3, 5) and (3, 5, 7, 9, t) are all subsets of (o, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, t). (Segment 72 is momentarily left out of the equation). In the right hand of the piano part, (o, 1, 7, 9, t), (o, 1, 9, t) and (o, 1, t) are all subsets of (o, 1, 3, 7, 9, t). (1, 3, 5, t) in segment 67 is the only pitch class set that does not adhere to the relational pattern. In the left hand of the piano, (o), (3, 5) and (3, 5, t) are all subsets of (o, 3, 5, t). Where set class 8-18 is concerned, a different pitch class set is used in every appearance of this set class, and there are no subset-superset relationships worth mentioning. The relationship between set class 8-18 in segment 63, and 7-34 in segment 72 is significant. Segment 72 has thus far not been considered due to the fact that the pitch class sets in that segment differ significantly from all the other appearances of set class 7-34. Pitch class set (o, 8, 9, e) in the voice part in segment 72 is a subset of pitch class set (o, 2, 3, 8, 9, e) in the voice part of segment 63. The pitch class set in the piano part (both hands) in segment 72, (o, 2, 4, 6, 8, 9, e), differs only with one pitch class from that of the piano part in segment 63, (o, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, e).

14. In *Irreconcilable Truths*, three of the four most prevalent set classes – (o, 1), 8-19 and 5-19 – belong to the first musical world. The manifestations of (o, 1) display degrees of symmetry and pattern. The relationships between the manifestations of 8-19 are only at the most abstract of levels – that of the set class itself. One pitch class set belonging to set class 5-19 is repeated later in the work, creating a degree of symmetry. In

99
neath the weight of hu - mi - li - ty Can this be you the back that

103
bends this trem - bling red - striped back saying

Figure 8: *Africa*, segment 63 (c. bars 101-103) © Composers Edition

152
gain grow - ing a - gain

p
mp

Figure 9: *Africa*, segment 72 (bars 54-56) © Composers Edition

summary, the relationships between pitch class sets in the first musical world range from the abstract to the non-abstract, and in the case of non-abstract relationships, there is always a degree of pattern or symmetry present. 6-Z₂₄ belongs only to the second musical world, and appears only as a single pitch class set. Patterns and levels of abstraction are therefore irrelevant. The degree of separation of pitch relationships between musical worlds is almost complete in every way.

In *Africa*, the pitches from a pitch class set belonging to set class 8-18 and another belonging to set class 7-34 amalgamate to form another version of 7-34. This moment of synthesis is sudden and clumsy: two set classes of which the pitch class sets of one have strong relationships and the other of which the pitch class sets do not, merge across the span of two segments; there is no gradual build-up.

There are a few pitch relations across the two worlds worth mentioning. (0, 2), the whole-tone derived from bow music which abounds in the second musical world in *Irreconcilable Truths* (not presented in this analysis, but obvious nonetheless) and in *Africa*, is hidden inconspicuously in segments 9 and 30 in the first musical world in *Irreconcilable Truths*. The one foreshadows the other; it is a warning to the analyst. Similarly, 7-34's hidden appearance in the first musical world in *Irreconcilable Truths* foreshadows its abundant appearance in *Africa*. 6-Z₂₄'s appearance in *Africa* is a remnant of the untransformed second musical world in *Irreconcilable Truths*.

Despite there being an almost complete degree of separation between musical worlds in *Irreconcilable Truths*, there are a few moments that point towards a deeply submerged potential for future amalgamation of identities. The pitch class sets of set class 6-Z₂₄ in *Africa* are no longer the same as in *Irreconcilable Truths*, but as if the metaphorical voice of the concept of separate identities in *Africa* wishes to say 'I'm leaving, so I'm letting go gradually', the pitch class sets (as with any Z-related sets) are not transpositionally or inversionally related, but only in terms of their interval vector.

15. The results of my survey of pitch-rhythm relations are mostly precarious; what proves to be most useful is my comparison of manifestations

of pitch-rhythm relations of the same set classes present in both compositions. Where relevant, registral placement was also taken into account. I would like to set apart three set classes with regard to pitch-rhythm relations. The rhythms of (0, 2) in the first musical world of *Irreconcilable Truths* present themselves as two short semiquavers in the violin part, coupled with a short quaver in the piano accompaniment. These rhythms are presented in both whole-tone and minor seventh spacings. In the second musical world and in *Africa*, (0, 2) manifests as Fokkens's beloved oscillating crotchet-quaver combinations, exclusively in whole-tone spacing. The rhythms of 6-Z24 in both pieces include those associated with (0, 2) (the set class of the pitch class sets when the instrumental/voice parts are read on their own). I therefore only refer to the piano accompaniment where 6-Z24 is concerned. The rhythmic patterns associated with this set class are clearly related, but not the same. Their use in *Africa* is more filled-out and unstable: in the right hand, two quavers become two dotted quavers, and quaver rests followed by quavers are replaced with four quavers. In the left hand, longer note values are replaced with shorter ones (this is as specific as one can be), and whole-tone spacing is occasionally replaced with widely-spaced minor sevenths. The rhythmic manifestations of 7-34 are similar to those of 6-Z24, with the addition of three-note quaver figures. This is the case in both compositions, with one exception: segments 246 to 247 in *Irreconcilable Truths*.⁷

16. The impatience and harshness of (0, 2) in the first musical world of *Irreconcilable Truths* stands in contrast to its soft-edged, static version in the second musical world. The latter takes priority in *Africa*. The impatient and harsh version of (0, 2) exists to compensate for the shameful boldness of the soft-edged, static version; the shame dissolves and the boldness appears to become the norm in *Africa*. Venturing into the formation of a new identity requires this boldness. The rhythmic characteristics of the accompaniment in 6-Z24 in *Africa*, compared to its manifestations in *Irreconcilable Truths*, disrupts this boldness with its own kind of impatience and harshness, albeit to a lesser extent than the juxtaposition of the two types of (0, 2) mentioned above. This slightly more careful impatience and harshness now exists in the verticality of the moment,

and not temporally. The addition of three-note quaver figures in 7-34 lends to it an element of lyricism. Its momentary appearance towards the end of *Irreconcilable Truths* (but not right at the end, as that would be too blunt) foreshadows its abundant appearance in *Africa*. What one sees again as an excuse for shameful boldness, is at the same time an uncertain promise of assimilation.

17. The consciously perceived, and consciously designed turmoil of *Irreconcilable Truths* hides the uncomfortable calmness and the stable, pronounced Gestalt of separateness underneath its surface. The orderly, sharp, ambitious, harsh, systematic and abstract first musical world in this work is the vulnerable over-achiever: deeper down, its stability is shaken by intuitively designed, hidden foreshadowings of, and compensations for, uncomfortable exposures and breakdowns to come. Some of the exposures can already be heard and seen in the direct, simple and bold second musical world in this composition. However, the breakdowns remain suspended. Only in *Africa* do they break into turmoil. The consciously perceived aural stability of the work contradicts this conclusion, whereas its less pronounced Gestalt confirms it. The moments of synthesis come suddenly, and it lets go of separation very gradually. The truths (entities, worlds, identities) are no longer irreconcilable, but are not yet comfortable with each other.

The false stability of separateness and the clumsiness of attempts at synthesis mimic South African politics – politics that are not new, but that are still relevant, and which play into the negotiation of a South African identity. Fokkens's negotiation is a brutally honest one that is not afraid of experimentation and failure. Whether one needs a degree of distance and the necessary infrastructure in order not to fear experimentation and failure brings me back to the rhetorical question posed at the beginning of the essay: must one leave South Africa in order to be a South African composer?

90 91 92 7

Vn. $\text{♩} = 106$ sempre sul pont. *pp* *poco cresc.* *mp* *pizz.*

Pno. *P* *poco cresc.* *mp*

93 94 95 96 97

Vn. *mf* *dim.* *p* *cresc.*

Pno. *mf* *dim.* *p* *cresc.*

98 99 100 101

Vn. *mf* *accel.* *cresc.* *accel.*

Pno. *mf* *cresc.*

102 103 104 105

Vn. $\text{♩} = 180$ arco; sul pont.

Pno. $\text{♩} = 180$

106 107 108

Vn. $\text{♩} = 180$ *cresc.*

Pno. *cresc.*

Figure 10: *Irreconcilable Truths*, segments 90-108 (bars 80-98)

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ENDNOTES

- 1 England was his country of residence at the time of the interview with Stephanus Muller from which much of the information cited in this article is drawn.
- 2 'Entities', 'musical worlds', and 'identities' can be read as metaphors for each other.
- 3 Latozi 'Madosini' Mphahleni was born in 1922 in Umtata in South Africa's Eastern Cape province. She is a well-known player of the *umrhubhe*, *uhadi*, *isitololo* and *ifleyiti* bows, and also sings and dances. She has performed in numerous countries around the world (Latozi 2006, 11).
- 4 One may wonder how this could be possible if the singer is perhaps only able to produce a tone with a certain level of stability and volume in a certain range, and if the violin can produce a wider range of overtones than a singer? My premise here is that the instruments used are choices made by the composer, and in the case of the *Tracing Lines* album, the specific musicians were also chosen by the composer. Expression in performance can therefore not be considered the sole domain of the performers.
- 5 Although the author's methods and intentions differ greatly from my own (and are infinitely more complex), I took my inspiration for a Gestalt reading of the visualisation of sound from Jaana Utrianen's *A Gestalt Music Analysis: Philosophical Theory, Method, and Analysis of Igor Reznikoff's Compositions* (2005).
- 6 See Allen Forte's *The Structure of Atonal Music* (1973).
- 7 Segment 246 consists of bars 223-228, and segment 247 is bar 229.

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Bass Flute Part

Inyoka Etshanini

(Snake in the grass)

R. Fokkens
June 2007

$\text{♩} = \text{ca. } 42$

Bass Flute in C

senza vib, tenuto

Violin

pp
senza vib, tenuto

Violoncello

pp

14

B. Fl.

pp cresc. *mp* *pp* cresc.

Vln.

pp sempre

Vc.

pp sempre

Poco agitato

23

B. Fl.

mp *pp* *pp* *mp*

Vln.

sempre *pp*

Vc.

sempre *pp*

27

B. Fl.

p *mf* *dim.* *ppp*

Vln.

pp

Vc.

pp

rit. Tempo primo

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31

B. Fl. *p mp p*

Vln. *ppp p*

Vc. *ppp p*

36

B. Fl. *p cresc. mp cresc.*

Vln. *p cresc. mf cresc.*

Vc. *p cresc. mf cresc.*

40

B. Fl. *ff f mf mp*

Vln. *f ff*

Vc. *f ff*

Tempo primo ma poco meno mosso
(♩ = 36) 3

46 rit.

B. Fl. *P* *PP* *PPP*

Vln. con sord. *ppp tenuto*

Vc. con sord. *ppp tenuto*

49

B. Fl.

Vln.

Vc.

52

B. Fl.

Vln.

Vc.