

ANALYSIS OF IGOR STRAVINSKY'S **“BERCEUSES DU CHAT”**

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Study done for the course “Análisis 4” (“Analysis 4”), lectured by prof. Marcelo Rilla at the Escuela Universitaria de Música (University School of Music) of the Universidad de la República (University of the Republic), in Montevideo, Uruguay. It is recommended to read the written analysis of each song while also reading the score in C included at the end of each analysis (and, as these scores omit indications included in the original score, it might be convenient to read the original score as well).

I. Спи, кот

The instruments' behavior in this song produces two clearly distinguishable streams. On one side, the voice and the Eb and Bb clarinets have a melodic character with a modal center in *D* (in which we can identify moments of monophony, heterophony and polyphony), and on the other the A clarinet plays a textural role that we could describe as “bourdon-like”, where the polarized note is *C#*.

More precisely, in the vocal line the notes are, in ascending order starting with *D*: *D-Eb-E(♭)-F-G-A-C*, using a total range of *minor 7th* (which means that none of the notes is used in more than one octave). It is possible to see the group of pitch classes in the voice as a *D minor pentatonic scale*, but where the *3rd D-F* is sometimes “filled with chromaticisms”.

The clarinets in Eb and Bb use the same pitch classes (though they do play them at different octaves), but also add *Bb* and *B♯*; that is to say that they also fill with chromatic notes the other *3rd* of the *D minor pentatonic scale*.

Among these three instruments we have nine pitch classes, being the notes not present *C#*, *F#* and *G#*. Considering the clear modal center in *D* in what these instruments play, of those three notes the more dissonant ones would be *C#* (because of its semitone distance with *D*) and *G#* (because of its tritone distance with *D*). These happen to be the

only two notes played by the A clarinet, which also helps the A clarinet segregate from the other three instruments.

The song has 16 measures, and the voice and Eb and Bb clarinets give it an **A-B-A'-B'** form, where the sections end with cadences in *D* and are articulated by elision:

-**A** (mm1-4) and **A'** (mm8-15): the voice performs the melody, but the Eb clarinet duplicates or freely imitates its behavior at certain moments.

-**B** (mm4-8or9) and **B'** (mm11or12-16): the Eb and bass clarinets perform independent melodies, but most of the time it is only one of them that has activity (movement) at each moment.

I think the form of the song could be seen as a complexification of a simple **A-B-A-B** form, where each of these letters represent a 4-measure fragment. The following table compares the **A-B-A-B** considered as a model, with the **A-B-A'-B'** that actually happens in the song:

A	A	A	A					A	A	A	A				
				B	B	B	B					B	B	B	B
Above the model taken as reference / Below the actual form of the song															
A	A	A	A				A'	A'	A'	A'	A'	A'	A'	A'	
			B	B	B	B	B	(B)		(B')	B'	B'	B'	B'	B'

Obs.: The beginning of m9 can be considered part of **B** as well as part of **A'**, because the first note of the Eb clarinet is not only a doubling of the voice (which determines we are already in **A'**) but also the prolongation of a note that started in m7 (which makes it a prolongation of **B**). Something similar happens at m11: the dotted eighth note of the clarinet can be considered a doubling of the voice (which makes us think we are in **A'**), but also can be interpreted as a pickup for the next melodic phrase (that is, as the beginning of **B'**).

A' differs from **A** in that a pickup is added and some of the note values are stretched. Instead, **B'** differs from **B** mainly in that the voices that were played contrapuntally (in m4) are now played in succession (mm12-14), also repeating the notes of the second half of m14 in the first half of m15. This stretching is compensated by the fact that the phrase in mm6-7 of the Eb clarinet is suppressed from **B'**, with the exception of its first notes.

As a final thought it might be worth mentioning what happens in m12 with the Eb clarinet, which is that on the one hand it is reusing the material from m4 and on the other this material can also be interpreted as an elaboration of what the voice does on m12, contributing to a heterophonic way of listening.

Score in C

Berceuses du Chat

I. Спи, кот

Analysis: Gonzalo Varela

Igor Stravinsky

$\text{♩} = 52$

1 2 3 4

Voice

Clarinet in Eb

Clarinet in A

Bass Clarinet in Bb

5 6 7 8 9 10

V.

Eb Cl.

A Cl.

B. Bb Cl.

11 12 13 14 15 16

V.

Eb Cl.

A Cl.

B. Bb Cl.

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II. Кот на печи

Unlike the first song, this one uses the whole chromatic scale. However, even though there is no stream that always polarizes *D* and another one that always polarizes *C#* (like there was on the previous song), when the instruments do their final cadences once again the voice and the Eb clarinet favors *D*, while the A clarinet favors *C#* (meanwhile, the ending of the bass clarinet in this song could hardly be considered a cadence).

The song makes great use of the presentation of a material and its horizontal and vertical reutilization. Its form is close to the “*sentence*” archetype presented by William E. Caplin in the book “Classical Form”. In it, we begin with a “basic idea” that is repeated, then we have a fragmentation of this material where the harmonic tension rises, and this finally concludes with a cadence.

In this case, the basic idea happens in the first five measures. A monophony is presented by the voice, while the Eb clarinet contributes to a heterophonic perception, “becoming active” from time to time to duplicate passages of the voice, or, as it happens in m5, imitate one of its gestures. Meanwhile, the bass clarinet contributes to a polyphonic perception, but its melody is still considerably dependent of what the other instruments do (it is completely dependent in terms of rhythm, its melodic contour is almost the same, and in its intervallic relationship with the other instruments perfect intervals prevail).

It might be worth mentioning that the motif that the Eb clarinet plays in m5 relates with what just happened (as was said, it seems an imitation of the motif that the voice does just before) but can also be considered a pickup of m6, where an exact repetition of the basic idea (which lasts until m10) begins. This kind of repetition is what typically happens in the *sentence* model proposed by Caplin when analyzing music from the classical period.

These ten measures make up what Caplin calls the *presentation* of the *sentence*; and what follows is the *continuation*, where we expect to hear fragments smaller in size (smaller than the basic idea), and an increase in density until the moment of the cadence. In order to delimit fragments (something necessary to identify a process of fragmentation) the most common device is the repetition of a material, because when we hear the start of a repetition of a certain passage we can clearly delimit the first

execution of that passage from its repetition. Precisely, starting from m11 a reutilization and development of materials of short duration (some of it introduced in the *presentation* and other in the *continuation* itself) begins, in a sometimes complex manner, because even though sometimes a fragment of a material that had already been presented is played (which is what happens in traditional fragmentation), other times different materials that had already been presented are combined in order to generate new material. For example, in the clarinets, a combination of elements from mm14-15 is what results in the material of the last two beats of m16, and then all that is played in m16, including the voice, is exactly repeated in m17. Another kind fragmentation in these measures can be seen in the voice, because between mm14-15 it plays a phrase that lasts four quarter-notes, then it plays a similar phrase that lasts three quarter-notes (m16), and then with the exact repetition of the ending of that material it plays a phrase that lasts two quarter-notes (m17).

Another example of material reutilization can be seen in the agile motif that ascends and descends in a few notes, that is performed for example by the Eb clarinet in m5, which suffers a great number of transformations throughout the song without losing its identity.

In addition to a reutilization of material, in this *continuation* the auditory scene complexifies with the simultaneous participation of the four instruments, who also now produce vertical note groupings that prioritize the more dissonant intervals, instead of the *perfect* ones from before. This increase in density and tension is comparable to the one that commonly happens before the cadence in classical music (though in classical music the means are different, such as the acceleration of the harmonic rhythm), and as in that case, here too this leads to a cadence. In this case the cadence first is undoubtedly in *D*, but that then proves to be a false ending, because the A clarinet does a new transformation of the motif that quickly ascends and descends (which had been introduced in m5) to end with a cadence in *C#*.

Score in C

Berceuses du Chat

II. Кот на печи

Analysis: Gonzalo Varela

Igor Stravinsky

$\text{♩} = 88$ (♩ siempre = ♩)

The musical score is presented in two systems. The first system includes the Voice part and three woodwind parts: Clarinet in Eb, Clarinet in A, and Bass Clarinet in Bb. The second system includes the Violin (V.), Eb Clarinet (Eb Cl.), A Clarinet (A Cl.), and Bass Bb Clarinet (B. Bb Cl.). The score is written in 3/8 time, with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The Voice part is marked with a tempo of 88 and includes a note that is always equal to a quarter note. The woodwind parts are marked with various articulations and dynamics, including accents and slurs. The score is divided into measures, with some measures containing multiple measures of music. The first system contains measures 1 through 3, and the second system contains measures 4 through 8. The score is written in a standard musical notation style, with a treble clef for the Voice and Violin parts, and a bass clef for the Bass Clarinet and Bass Bb Clarinet parts. The woodwind parts are written in their respective clefs: Clarinet in Eb (treble), Clarinet in A (treble), and Bass Clarinet in Bb (bass).

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Musical score for measures 9-13. The score is for four instruments: V. (Violin), Eb Cl. (E-flat Clarinet), A Cl. (Alto Clarinet), and B. Bb Cl. (B-flat Clarinet). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 2/4 to 3/8, then to 4/8, and finally to 2/4. Measure 9 is marked with a box containing the number 9. Measure 10 is marked with a box containing the number 10. Measure 11 is marked with a box containing the number 11. Measure 12 is marked with a box containing the number 12 and a '3' above the staff. Measure 13 is marked with a box containing the number 13 and a '3' above the staff. The V. part has a triplet in measure 12 and another triplet in measure 13. The Eb Cl. part has a quintuplet in measure 10. The A Cl. and B. Bb Cl. parts have rests in measures 11 and 12.

Musical score for measures 14-16. The score is for four instruments: V. (Violin), Eb Cl. (E-flat Clarinet), A Cl. (Alto Clarinet), and B. Bb Cl. (B-flat Clarinet). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 4/8 to 3/4, then to 2/4, and finally to 2/4. Measure 14 is marked with a box containing the number 14. Measure 15 is marked with a box containing the number 15. Measure 16 is marked with a box containing the number 16. The V. part has a quintuplet in measure 15. The Eb Cl. part has a quintuplet in measure 15. The A Cl. part has a quintuplet in measure 15. The B. Bb Cl. part has a quintuplet in measure 15.

Musical score for measures 17-19. The score is for four instruments: V. (Violin), Eb Cl. (E-flat Clarinet), A Cl. (Alto Clarinet), and B. Bb Cl. (B-flat Clarinet). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature changes from 2/4 to 3/4, then to 2/4, and finally to 2/4. Measure 17 is marked with a box containing the number 17. Measure 18 is marked with a box containing the number 18. Measure 19 is marked with a box containing the number 19. The V. part has a quintuplet in measure 17. The Eb Cl. part has a quintuplet in measure 17. The A Cl. part has a quintuplet in measure 17. The B. Bb Cl. part has a quintuplet in measure 17.

III. Бай-бай

This song is composed of 16 measures, of which the last 8 are a repetition of the 8 previous ones (with very few exceptions in the vocal line, that may even have to do with differences in the lyrics). Each of these 8-measure groups can be divided in three subgroups of 2, 3 and 3 measures (the cadences in the voice work as clear points of articulation), and we will call the first group of two measures **A**, the first group of three measures **B**, and the last group **C**.

The voice and the Eb clarinet integrate heterophonically in a high stream, with the Eb clarinet again doubling certain passages of the voice, sometimes taking considerable liberties (mainly in m7 and m15). Meanwhile, unlike the two previous songs, here there is no bass clarinet in Bb but a second clarinet in A, and both clarinets in A integrate in a lower stream, whose strict vertical *perfect 4th* in sections **A** and **B** make us perceive it as a “thickened melody”. However, section **C** sees the start of a more polyphonic interaction between the A clarinets, being there more rhythmic independence and variety in the vertical intervals between them.

Like in the first song, both streams (in this case the one of the voice and the Eb clarinet, and the one of the two A clarinets) also segregate because of the pitch classes they use. In the case of the high stream the notes used are *D-E-F-G-A-C* (which we could consider a *D pentatonic minor scale* with an added 2nd degree, or *D aeolian* or *dorian* without the 6th degree). Meanwhile, both A clarinets use the notes *C#-D#-F-F#-G#-Bb-B*, which through enharmonization can be considered a *C# mixolydian* scale. Maybe the most important thing to point out is that the group of notes of this stream contains every note that the first stream was lacking to complete the chromatic scale, with the addition of *F(♯)*, which is present in both streams.

Unlike the first song, where one of the streams had a mainly textural role, here I see the relationship between the streams as a polyphony (a counterpoint), and because each of them uses a very different set of pitch-classes, a polyharmonic way of listening is favored. In addition, in this song too the high stream cadences in *D* and the low one in *C#*, only that this is complexified by the fact that when that *C#* is played an *F#* from the lowest clarinet is also played.

Score in C

Berceuses du Chat

III. Бай-бай

Analysis: Gonzalo Varela

Igor Stravinsky

$\text{♩} = 96$ (♩ siempre = ♩)

The first system of the score includes four staves: Voice, Clarinet in Eb, Clarinet in A, and another Clarinet in A. The music is in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The Voice part features a melodic line with two first endings marked with '1' and '2'. The woodwind parts provide harmonic support, with the two Clarinet in A parts playing a similar rhythmic pattern.

The second system of the score includes four staves: Violin (V.), Eb Clarinet (Eb Cl.), Clarinet in A (A Cl.), and another Clarinet in A (A Cl.). The Violin part has six measures, each marked with a box number from 3 to 6. The Eb Clarinet part is mostly silent, with some notes in the final measures. The two Clarinet in A parts play a rhythmic accompaniment.

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7 8 9

V.

E♭ Cl.

A Cl.

A Cl.

10 11 12

V.

E♭ Cl.

A Cl.

A Cl.

13 14 15 16

V.

E♭ Cl.

A Cl.

A Cl.

IV. У кота, кота

This last song consists of a seven-measure loop, which can be divided in four different phrases. The first phrase is in mm0-1, the second one in mm2-3, the third one in mm4-5, and the fourth one in mm6-7. Like in the previous songs, the voice is here restricted to a considerably small range, in this case a *major 6th*.

In regards to rhythm, we can say that the composition is homorhythmic, presenting essentially only one rhythm but with small differences between the instruments. In regards to harmony, the set of pitch-classes is diatonic, and it corresponds to the *A aeolian* or *G mixolydian* scale. Even though the different instruments use the notes in this set differently (and the note *D* seems to have much importance) the behavior of the voice and Eb clarinet generate in most of the piece a clear modal center in *A*, though in the end the *finalis* of the song reveals to be *G*.

Once again we can identify two streams, one formed by the Eb clarinet and the voice, and the other one by both clarinets in Bb. The clarinet en Eb does an *8^{ve}* doubling of the voice, except for small moments when this behavior is interrupted (the clarinet “skips” a 16th note in m1 and changes some notes in mm4-5). Meanwhile, the Bb clarinet and the bass clarinet in Bb simultaneously play two melodies that interact heterophonically, presenting an almost identical rhythm and melodic arcs that at times seem to be going to the same place (at a distance of an *8^{ve}*) (for example, to the *G* in the end of m1, or to the *D* in the end of m3) but through different paths, which makes them occasionally produce considerably dissonant vertical intervals between them. In mm4-5, however, their relationship changes and is of parallel *7^{ths}*, being the bass clarinet in a higher register than the Bb clarinet (and, as it was mentioned, it is also in these two measures that the Eb clarinet and the voice differ more).

Score in C

Berceuses du Chat

IV. У котa, котa

Analysis: Gonzalo Varela

Igor Stravinsky

$\text{♩} = 69$

Voice

Clarinet in E \flat

Clarinet in B \flat

Bass Clarinet in B \flat

The first system of the score consists of four staves. The top staff is for the Voice, with a tempo marking of quarter note = 69. It features a melodic line with four measures, each containing a circled number: 0, 1, 2, and 3. The three instrument staves below (Clarinet in E-flat, Clarinet in B-flat, and Bass Clarinet in B-flat) provide accompaniment with rhythmic patterns corresponding to the voice line. The time signature is 2/4.

V.

E \flat Cl.

B \flat Cl.

B. B \flat Cl.

The second system of the score consists of four staves. The top staff is for the Violin (V.), with a tempo marking of quarter note = 69. It features a melodic line with four measures, each containing a circled number: 4, 5, 6, and 7. The three instrument staves below (E-flat Clarinet, B-flat Clarinet, and Bass B-flat Clarinet) provide accompaniment. The time signature is 2/4.

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