

When I began looking at the nearly 200 hundred works to date composed by Larry Sitsky (born 1934),¹ I was somewhat surprised to notice a strong emphasis on writing for the violin, in both the number and type of works. After all, he has spent most of his career coupling composition with his life as a concert pianist and piano pedagogue, has written a significant body of piano works in most genres, published three books on piano music, and cites as his most important musical influences composer-pianists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries such as Bartók, Busoni and Anton Rubinstein. Yet works for violin, an instrument he has never played, seem to mark out several significant points in his compositional career.

Sitsky's first mature work was a solo violin sonata, written in 1959 while a student in the United States. The Violin Concerto no. 1 (1969-72) was his first in a genre which seems to hold special appeal for him; he considers his concertos to be amongst his most important and personal works. Two more violin concertos followed in 1983 and 1987, and a fourth is planned,² while no other instrument has rated more than one work in this genre. The violin's importance in Sitsky's output led me to explore firstly the process by which the brilliant young pianist transformed himself into a composer, partly through the solo violin sonata. The second point of interest was the influence of collaborative relationships with other performers, principally his close friend, the violinist Jan Sedivka, for whom the majority of his violin works have been written.

Sitsky took an early but largely untrained interest in composing, arranging and then performing music for piano and chamber ensembles³ during his student days at the New South Wales Conservatorium in Sydney between 1952 and 1958.⁴ He began composing in earnest only after leaving Australia on 22 May 1959 for eighteen months' postgraduate study in San Francisco with German-born pianist Egon Petri (1881-1962), a former pupil of Busoni. Sitsky's teacher at the NSW Conservatorium, Winifred Burston (1889-1976), had recommended this teacher, having herself learnt from and befriended both Petri and Busoni.

Having gone to the USA to study piano, Sitsky was quickly absorbed by the dynamic and exciting environment in which, for the first time, his interest in

composition and potential as a composer were recognised and encouraged by those in a position to render him assistance. Many of these were musicians whom one might have thought would not even notice the 25-year-old Australian. The work that Sitsky still claims as his "Opus One", that is the point of departure for his mature compositional style, is the Sonata for Solo Violin (1959).⁵ Begun on 2 August and finished in only 19 days, the work was written frantically and with ideas piling on ideas, so that the composer sometimes could not sleep at night.⁶ The result, however, was a neatly if somewhat rigidly structured work of five movements, in which an Improvisation Quasi Cadenza, March, and Theme and Five Variations are framed by an almost identical Prelude and Postlude.⁷ The sonata was heavily influenced by Bartók in many aspects but especially in Sitsky's borrowing of melody no. 128 from *The Hungarian Folksong*⁸ as the theme of the fourth movement, and a very obvious homage in the third variation to the slow movement of Bartók's own Sonata for Solo Violin (1944); the first few bars are virtually identical.

The composition of the Sonata for Solo Violin was inspired by direct contact with a performer, in this case an English violinist befriended only weeks before during the 20-day voyage across the Pacific aboard the S.S. Olsova. Sidney Manikin, who played his way around the world in ships' bands, was a trained classical violinist who was to have returned to San Francisco in September 1959; partly hence, Sitsky's rush to finish the work in August.⁹ However, he never met Manikin again after all, and instead went for violinistic advice to a friend of Petri's, renowned Hungarian virtuoso, Joseph Szigeti (1892-1973).¹⁰ Sitsky had two sessions with Szigeti, who seemed impressed with the work and offered suggestions, including rewriting some of the chords.¹¹ The Sonata was eventually premiered by the concertmaster of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Ernest Michaelian, in a concert of Australian music on 14 June 1960 organised and performed by Sitsky and other students.¹² To the large and very interested audience, the Sonata seemed to overshadow the other works on the programme, including those by Roy Agnew, Raymond Hanson, Richard Meale and Nigel Butterley.¹³

Shortly after completing the solo violin sonata, Sitsky also wrote a solo flute sonata for Peter Richardson, a friend from his student days in Sydney. This work, however, caused the composer much more trouble,¹⁴ and did not attract the same tremendous level of initial interest as the violin sonata had attracted, although it is now amongst Sitsky's most widely and frequently played pieces. The Sonata for Solo Violin therefore had a very auspicious beginning which bode well for Sitsky's future interest in violinists and their instrument.

Why, after his earlier experiments in writing and arranging music for piano and chamber ensembles containing piano, did Sitsky choose to begin his compositional career in earnest with works for solo melody instruments, neither of which he played, despite his abiding interest in and affinity with the nineteenth-century composer-pianists who had written large amounts of music as vehicles for their own performance? Two reasons for this state of affairs have emerged, and both take us to the heart of Sitsky's compositional process and its development.

Importantly, at this formative stage, he was looking for a mode of expression which would avoid the pianistic clichés with which was so familiar and which he felt it impossible to purge from any composition for piano at that time. He also believed, probably quite rightly, that his interest in the Romantic piano repertoire would not be seen as an acceptable or appropriate basis for a contemporary compositional style in the immediate post-World War II era of modernism.¹⁵ Accordingly, he investigated systematic and especially quasi-serial procedures in an attempt to purge those Romantic tendencies.¹⁶

More particularly, though, Sitsky sought a way to develop a horizontal, linear, melodic emphasis, rather than the vertical, chordal, harmonic one associated with the piano and its traditional Classical and Romantic repertoire.¹⁷ In addition, he was jealous of the genuine legato possible on other instruments, especially the violin, and has even described himself as a 'frustrated string player' for that very reason.¹⁸ Hence both solo sonatas depart from the predominantly chordal writing of the juvenilia.

Secondly and more importantly, in that it relates more generally to the subsequent course of his career as a composer, Sitsky was inspired and even goaded by the process of writing for a performer other than himself. Realising that the age of the heroic and idolised composer-performer is now largely past, at least in the world of "art music", Sitsky also saw, I think, the

possibilities of writing for other performers as a way of promoting his music more widely.

On his return to Australia early in 1961, Sitsky soon moved to Brisbane with his new wife, Magda, to take up an appointment at the recently opened Queensland Conservatorium as a chief study piano teacher. It was there that they met violinist Jan Sedivka and his pianist wife Beryl who had recently arrived from London, and the two couples quickly became close friends. Larry Sitsky and Jan Sedivka had a great deal in common: interests in cats, literature and philosophy; a dry and witty sense of humour blended with intense seriousness; an Eastern European cultural background (in Sitsky's case Russian, in Sedivka's Czech); and, of course, music. In particular, they shared a Romantic musical aesthetic and a passionate approach to playing and performing, which encompassed a healthy disrespect for the dots on the page and a formidable virtuosity, in the face of which technical difficulties seem to vanish.

Although Sedivka became director of the Tasmanian Conservatorium in Hobart in 1965 and Sitsky moved to the newly founded Canberra School of Music the following year, the two men and their families have maintained that early close friendship, which has included supporting each other's careers over the years. Sedivka reminisced in 1984, the year of his friend's 50th birthday:

Larry is one of my closest friends... We share the same view and attitude to life. When you get to know Larry, he is a very serious-minded man. He jokes and he laughs, he screams and he plays. He can also be very quiet and very deep. There is some kind of similarity [to myself]. I first met Larry socially, in Brisbane. I rather liked him. He was an excited young man with an enormous intellectual vivacity and my first real surprise came when I heard him play the piano. I said to my wife at the time, "Are we back at the Festival Hall?" I didn't expect anything like that in Brisbane 23 years ago. I thought he was a fantastic player—what was he doing there? And he probably felt the same: what was I doing there?¹⁹

Both performers obviously felt somewhat out of place in the Brisbane of the early 1960s; it must have been a joy and relief to both to find another like-minded performer close to hand.

Sedivka had, of course, heard some of Sitsky's compositions performed in Queensland, beginning

with the *Sonatina* for oboe and piano (1962),²⁰ and including the solo violin sonata, which received its Australian premiere at a Queensland Conservatorium concert in 1962. Sitsky also possessed a recording of the US performance, which Sedivka seems to have heard.²¹ Other works which Sedivka probably heard include the *Sonatina* for violin and piano (1962)—written at the instigation of another Conservatorium colleague, violinist Basil Jones, with whom Sitsky performed frequently—the *Fantasia [no. 1]: In Memory of Egon Petri* (1962) for piano, and the *Five Improvisations* (1961) for mixed choir and piano.²² Sedivka presumably also heard a recording of Sitsky's notorious *Woodwind Quartet* (1963) which had so shocked audiences, critics and other composers at the first Australian Composers' Conference in Hobart in 1963 and earned Sitsky the title of the 'enfant terrible' of Brisbane.²³ I'm sure Sedivka enjoyed the joke as much as the composer himself.

From this early personal and musical relationship, Sedivka developed a long-lasting admiration for and belief in Sitsky as both a performer and a composer. As Director of the Tasmanian Conservatorium, Sedivka even tried to persuade him to join the staff in 1969.²⁴ Over the years, Sedivka has played and indeed commissioned Sitsky's works, and supported and encouraged him through invitations to perform and teach in Tasmania, and by arranging contacts for recording, publishing and commissioning opportunities. Sitsky, for his part, had helped Sedivka obtain the job in Tasmania to begin with,²⁵ and has consistently expressed his admiration for Sedivka's skills, describing him as 'the best string teacher in the country',²⁶ writing for and dedicating to him the three substantial violin concertos and several chamber works, and being prepared to allow him considerable freedom in the interpretation of those works.

The first of these works was the *Concerto [no. 1] for Violin, Orchestra and Female Voices 'Mysterium Cosmographicum'* (1969-72), first proposed around the kitchen table in Brisbane in the mid-1960s.²⁷ It was Sitsky's first concerto for any instrument, and the beginning of a large output in this genre. The composer has come to count his concertos, especially those for violin, amongst his most important and personal works; recently he fulfilled the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's commission for a work to celebrate his 60th birthday with a cello concerto for David Pereira, one of his teaching colleagues at the Canberra School of Music.

The composition of the first violin concerto was a long and daunting process. Sitsky is usually an efficient and rapid composer,²⁸ yet a work which was such a labour of love for him took six or seven years to realise. There were the time-consuming practicalities of writing as large a work as this—it lasts some 40 minutes and includes a very large orchestra and a choir—and delays caused by detours into other large works such as his two operas, *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1965) and *Lenz* (1970-74). However, Sitsky also took so long over Sedivka's concerto because of a certain sense of intimidation at the thought of writing a work worthy of the violinist's capabilities.²⁹ This was perhaps especially so because Sitsky's string works up until that time had all been relatively short and straightforward apart from the *String Quartet no. 1* (1969).³⁰

Sedivka certainly encouraged Sitsky to create the most difficult music he wanted for the solo violin, writing in early 1967: 'I am having extra strings fitted to the violin as well as an automatic gear change—whereby unlimited speeds can be obtained. There will also be a red light anti-robots warning'.³¹ Sedivka corresponded regularly with Sitsky and often inquired after the concerto's progress. Eventually, he wrote somewhat desperately in November 1970, 'Are you actually writing the thing?'³² Finally finished a year later, one wonders whether Sitsky would have finished the work at all had he been writing for someone less persistent and with less faith in him. The two subsequent violin concertos and the chamber works came much more easily and quickly.

The programmatic content of the three violin concertos was suggested and heavily influenced by Sedivka and Sitsky's common interests in science, philosophy, the existential, mysticism, spirituality and the visionary, on which they often had long conversations. The first concerto draws for both structure and text on two major writings, *Mysterium Cosmographicum* and *Harmonices Mundi*, by the seventeenth-century astronomer, Johannes Kepler.

For the second concerto, written in 1983, the influence came from George Gurdjieff (1877-1949), a Greek-Armenian philosopher and mystic in whom Sedivka and later Sitsky were intensely interested. Based on the philosopher's teachings regarding the Law of Three and the Law of Seven, the work is in seven movements, divided into three sections in an arch form, the first and last three movements being separated by a central cadenza for the solo violin accompanied lightly by

percussion. The musical material is drawn from Gurdjieff's little known four-volume collection of folk songs from Armenia, not that far distant geographically and culturally from Sitsky's own Russian background.

The eight-movement structure of the Violin Concerto no. 3 (1987) is a quasi-programmatic realisation of the eight trigrams of the *I Ching*, the Chinese book of changes, while the succession of related melodies is based on a personalised pentatonicism that lends the work a pseudo-Asiatic air. The third concerto therefore represents both a manifestation of the interest in things Chinese prompted by Sitsky's formative years in China,³³ and also the interest in religious philosophy shared with Sedivka.

Also in 1987, Sitsky wrote *Tetragrammaton: Four Mystical Pieces* for violin and piano as a celebration of Sedivka's 70th birthday, drawing on the religious symbolism of their common Jewish heritage. Other works connected with Sedivka include the piano trio *Atman: A Song of Serenity* (1975), composed for the London Trio comprising Sela Trau and Jan and Beryl Sedivka, the chamber work *The Secret Gates of the House of Osiris* (1987), another piece for Sedivka's 70th birthday, and the String Quartet no. 2 (1981) commissioned by Sedivka's protégés, the Petra String Quartet, named after Sitsky's daughter. Of these works, *Tetragrammaton* is the most significant in terms of the relationship between Sitsky and Sedivka: musically, these short pieces encompass an extraordinarily wide range of instrumental techniques, thereby providing a miniature show-case for the violinist's talents.

In writing for Sedivka, Sitsky responded to the challenge of his friend's virtuosic technique; this is most obvious in the first concerto. There, Sitsky emulated one of his most important compositional and pianistic influences, Ferruccio Busoni. In his monumental Piano Concerto Op. 39 of 1904, Busoni had apparently 'wanted to write the concerto to end all concerti',³⁴ and it seems as if Sitsky wanted to do the same for the violin in 'Mysterium Cosmographicum'.³⁵ Both Busoni's piano and Sitsky's violin concertos are of epic proportions, in five connected movements forming a multi-layered arch structure; the heroic and virtuosic soloist of each plays almost continuously sometimes in a starring role and sometimes as an integrated part of, or commentary on, the orchestral texture; each finale contains a summary of previous material and introduces a single-sex chorus singing a

mystical text; and the orchestra is an ensemble of Mahlerian proportions.

These close similarities are not at all coincidental, of course. Sitsky took, and still does take, a great interest in Busoni and his compositions, playing a great many of these, writing a book on Busoni's pianism,³⁶ and studying the concerto itself with Petri.³⁷ In the light of these correspondences, it is noteworthy that Sitsky and Sedivka managed to arrange a dual performance of the Busoni and Sitsky's Violin Concerto in September 1978.

The final and perhaps most important aspect of the works as a manifestation of Sitsky's relationship with Sedivka is his compositional response to Sedivka's characteristic style of playing, his concessions to it and exploitations of it. The features which especially appealed to Sitsky include the Romantic robustness of his tone and his sensitivity to the sound, his delicate portamento, his tendency to manipulate rhythm subtly for expressive purposes, and a complete technical command of the instrument. These features are particularly exploited in the many cadenza and quasi-cadenza passages of the concertos, either solo or lightly accompanied. Both types of writing allow the soloist great scope for individual interpretation. The first concerto even opens with a long unaccompanied cadenza (see Example 1) in which a wide variety of techniques is rapidly introduced: double-stopping in chords and contrapuntal writing, bowed and fingered tremolo, octaves, trills, repeated down bows, left hand pizzicato with arco, natural and artificial harmonics and so on. Such passages form integral structural and musical focal points in the concertos, transcending the cadenza's traditional function of mere virtuosic display. This focus is particularly evident in the second concerto, where it is the pivot of symmetry in the seven movements.

(♩=60)

Vln. Solo
(con sord.)

Vln. Solo

intense \rightarrow less intense

tub

suddenly turbulent

The image shows three systems of handwritten musical notation for a violin solo. The first system is a single staff in treble clef with a tempo marking '(♩=60)' and a dynamic marking 'p'. The second system is a grand staff with dynamic markings 'intense', 'less intense', and 'tub'. The third system is a grand staff with the marking 'suddenly turbulent'. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and performance instructions.

Example 1: Sitsky, "Mysterium Cosmographicum", first three lines of opening cadenza.

Sedivka's tendency to portamento is evident in his recordings, but is sometimes raised to greater importance by its incorporation as a fundamental device. In the final movement of *Gurdjieff*, for example, the solo violin and other solo instruments from the orchestral

strings play with gradually increasing amounts of portamento, until the texture comprises only gliding tones, pinned down by pedal notes in the tutti strings and a delicate cymbal roll (see Example 2).

Piu Lento [Larghetto]

Solo violin

quasi f

* Viola solo con Sord.

* Cello solo
* always softer than solo violin con Sord.

gre

diu

gre

p

Example 2: Sitsky, *Gurdjieff*, 7th movement, solo string parts only, bar 39-end.

Sedivka's manipulation of rhythm is of course heard in the cadenza and quasi-cadanza sections described above, whether notated with bar lines or without. Sitsky also anticipates this flexibility in passages that are strictly notated, as in this example from the first movement of *Gurdjieff*, which Sedivka performed quite freely in the recording supervised by the composer. Although written straightforwardly and against a

steady quaver accompaniment in the pizzicato orchestral strings, he constantly anticipates both principal melodic notes and acciaccatiure, and plays considerably faster than the metronome marking (see Example 3). While this section is a pronounced example, having been marked *appassionata*, similar disregard for a strict beat is heard frequently in Sedivka's recordings of Sitsky's music.

The image shows a musical score for a solo violin piece. It is divided into two parts, A and B. Part A is the original notation, starting with a tempo marking 'Appass. [♩ = ca 44]' and a dynamic marking 'f'. Part B shows the performance by Sedivka, which is significantly faster and more expressive, marked with 'piu f' and 'ff, sempre cantando'. The notation includes various ornaments, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Example 3: Sitsky, *Gurdjieff*, 1st movement, bars 75-90, solo violin only; notated rhythm (A) as compared to rhythm played by Sedivka (B) on Move Records, MD 3084.

Sitsky is also not above allowing his favoured violinist to make compromises with the score when necessary. When Sedivka came to record the Sonata for Solo Violin, for example, Sitsky wrote to him: 'Need I tell you not to pay too much attention to metronome marks, note values or notes? Do what you like with the piece; its [sic] a bit gawkish, so that the Master's touch is needed to overcome this.'³⁸ The liberties Sitsky allows Sedivka to take with his scores are reflected especially in the more ferociously difficult sections of 'Mysterium Cosmographicum'. In correspondence preceding the first performance, Sitsky encouraged his

soloist, if problems arose, to 'either consult and I will alter, or alter the damn thing yourself';³⁹ in fact, he preferred Sedivka to fake and/or change notes in order to preserve the spirit and gestures of the piece, 'since the value of exact notation diminishes in relation to the speed of execution'.⁴⁰

Such compromises were made frequently in the mercurial fourth movement, where there are long stretches of solo writing which the composer admitted were virtually unplayable. Sedivka dropped notes in passages of fast double stops containing frequent and awkward changes of position, and in the non-legato

chromatic semiquavers, (see Example 4) where the soloist is barely audible anyway, resorted to what he called 'snakes' of indiscriminate bow scrubbing on the G and D strings. In such cases, Sitsky considered the visual effect of playing to be more important than the actual sound since often the soloist is masked or even totally swamped by orchestral gestures, as the composer himself pointed out.⁴¹

There has been, then, a transition from Sitsky's writing his first mature work for violin because of a coincidental meeting aboard ship, to the deliberate composition of a number of significant violin works due directly to a strong personal and musical relationship with one violinist in particular; in addition, a number of other string works are due indirectly to this same relationship. Apart from his own instrument, the piano, Sitsky has not written so frequently and so copiously for any instrument other than the violin, and it is the strong friendship with Sedivka that has inspired this continued interest. As prolific as he is, even Sitsky himself feels he has written a lot of violin music: when sending Sedivka the rough copy of the Violin Concerto no. 3 in early 1987, Sitsky facetiously complained: 'It's all your fault. I feel like Spohr...'⁴²

Notes

¹ This paper arises out of primary-source research associated with the preparation of *Larry Sitsky: A Bio-Bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995) and carried out by myself and Peter Campbell, to whom I am deeply indebted. Most of the primary sources are located in the Larry Sitsky Papers, National Library of Australia, MS 5630. Apart from scores, most of the primary-source material used for this paper may only be viewed with Sitsky's permission.

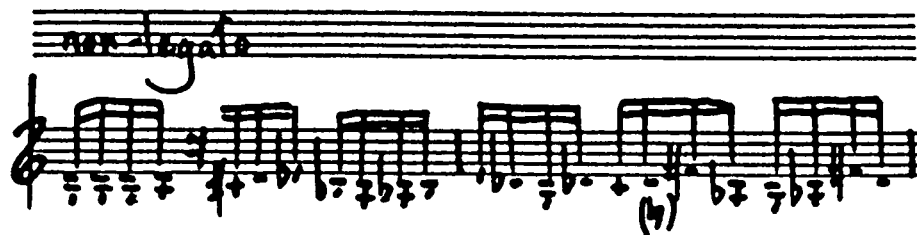
² Larry Sitsky, personal communication, Canberra, 21 April 1994. See also Helen Musa, 'Sitsky says it's a crazy life', *Canberra Times*, 28 August 1994, p. 23.

³ These juvenilia include three vocal works, *Footprints in the Snow* (1955), *Four Settings from Tagore* (1956) and *Encore* (1958), all accompanied by piano, and *Encore* also by flute, a *Little Suite* (1958) for piano, and two piano trio arrangements (both 1958) of folk songs from Bartók's Slovakian and Hungarian collections. These pieces were probably all performed.

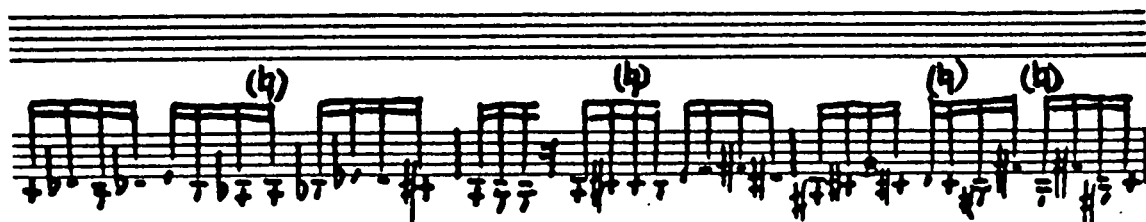
⁴ At that time, composition studies were not offered so Sitsky, like fellow students Nigel Butterley (b. 1935) and Richard Meale (b. 1932), studied piano and went privately for unofficial advice to Raymond Hanson (1913-76), then a teacher of aural training and harmony and counterpoint at the Conservatorium; for details see the entries on each composer in James Murdoch, *Australia's Contemporary Composers* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1972) and Frank Callaway & David Tunley, eds, *Australian Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1978).

⁵ Although recorded by Jan Sedivka around 1974, the work is as yet unpublished. The autograph manuscripts are found in Sitsky Papers, Folios 3.31 and 5.18. Sketches for the work are located in Folder 213. All of Sitsky's works not yet published have now been assigned to Seesaw Press, New

[Prestissimo]



[pp]



Example 4: Sitsky, "Mysterium Cosmographicum", bars 539-41, solo violin only.

York.

⁶ See entry for 13 August 1959 in Sitsky's US diary (Sitsky Papers, Box 27).

⁷ Sitsky's original plan was a four-movement sonatina, but four days before finishing the work he decided to add a Postlude 'as a necessary balancing factor'; entries for the 2 and 20 August 1959 in US diary (Sitsky Papers, Box 27).

⁸ Ed. Benjamin Suchoff, trans. M.D. Calvocoressi, annotated Zoltán Kodály, New York Bartók Archive Studies in Musicology 13 (Budapest, 1924; Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1981), p. 253.

⁹ Manikin had apparently changed his name from Menuhin for professional reasons, since he was a distant relative of Yehudi; one might however wonder at his choice of new name. Larry Sitsky, personal communication, Canberra, 21 April 1994.

¹⁰ Szigeti in fact played the 'Petri' Guarneri, which had belonged to Egon's father Henri (1856-1914); see Spike Hughes, Preface to *Szigeti on the Violin* (London, 1969; New York: Dover, 1979), p.vi.

¹¹ Larry Sitsky, personal communication, Canberra, 21 April 1994. Szigeti's annotations are to be found on the score in Sitsky Papers, Folio 5.18.

¹² This concert was a long time in the planning and had been postponed from 25 May 1960; details in US diary (Sitsky Papers, Box 27).

¹³ According to reviewer Jack Loughner, the concert showed that 'modern Australian composers have heard of Alexander Scriabine but haven't got far beyond that... The one exception... was the music of Larry Sitsky... [whose] musical vernacular is up to date and meaningful, rooted in the best European and American trends in composition plus, I thought, endowed with a few ideas of his own'. In contrast, while Loughner praised Sitsky's performances of Agnew's *Capricornia: Sonata Legende* and a set of preludes by Hanson, he concluded that '[n]either work justified the effort'. 'Aussie Sitsky's Music Has Ideas', *San Francisco News-Call Bulletin*, 15 June 1960, p.38.

¹⁴ Begun on 24 September 1959, the flute sonata took three months to complete and the music often did not come easily, as diary entries reveal: 'This flute sonata is quite a headache' (26 October) 'Almost given up—the exultation present in the writing of the Violin Sonata is missing' (1 December); US diary (Sitsky Papers, Box 27).

¹⁵ Sitsky, personal communication, Canberra, 21 April 1994.

¹⁶ The March of the Sonata for Solo Violin in fact uses a twelve-note row fairly strictly throughout. This is somewhat atypical for Sitsky and reflects his recent discovery of twelve-note techniques. More often, he uses note and chord rows of varying lengths, often basing them on a cypher of the name of the dedicatee or intended performer, and manipulates these rows fairly freely.

¹⁷ Sitsky, personal communication, Canberra, 21 April 1994. See also Wendy Penny, 'The Music of Larry Sitsky' (MA diss., University of Queensland, 1980), p.12.

¹⁸ Sitsky, personal communication, Canberra, 21 April 1994.

¹⁹ Quoted in Marcia Ruff, 'Sitsky: the man and his music', *Canberra Times*, 9 September 1984, p.11-12.

²⁰ According to Ruff, p.12.

²¹ In a letter of 7 September 1971, when he was preparing to learn the Sonata for recording, Sedivka asked Sitsky to send

him a copy of this tape and wrote that he intended to play the work very differently, implying that he had heard the tape before (Sitsky Papers, 5/52).

²² *Five Improvisations* was performed at the Queensland Conservatorium graduation concert and ceremony in 1963, at which Sedivka was presumably present. It is not known exactly when the other works were performed.

²³ The quartet was received in a hostile fashion as 'an elaborate hoax', according to one anonymous reviewer ('Composers' "Exciting" Seminar', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 April 1963). Even the tabloid press noticed the work which had 'caused a storm in Australian musical circles' (anon., 'His Quartet Draws Hisses!', *Sunday Truth* [Brisbane], 28 April 1963, 25). James Penberthy, also present at the conference, claims that Sitsky 'shook the world of Australian music, and it will remain shaken until composers respond to his strong influence, and purify their methods and aims'; 'Composers' Seminar', *Music and Dance*, May/June 1963, p.13.

²⁴ See letter from Sitsky to Sedivka, 31 August 1969 (Sitsky Papers, 5/52). Sitsky had, however, moved to Canberra only 18 months before and didn't feel he should leave so soon.

²⁵ See letter from Sedivka, 3 May 1966 (Sitsky Papers, 5/52).

²⁶ In a letter of 4 January 1972 (Sitsky Papers, 5/52).

²⁷ Larry Sitsky, personal communication, Canberra, 21 April 1994. Letters mentioning this work date from 30 January 1967, around the time Sitsky moved to Canberra (Sitsky Papers, 5/52).

²⁸ As early as 1959 he had developed a 'rapid composition process', which he noted in his US diary on 28 July (Sitsky Papers, Box 27).

²⁹ Larry Sitsky, personal communication, Canberra, 21 April 1994.

³⁰ Apart from works already mentioned, these were *Improvisation and Cadenza* (1963; rev. 1969) for solo cello or viola and *Narayana* (1969) for piano trio.

³¹ Letter 30 January 1967 (Sitsky Papers, 5/52).

³² Letter 17 November 1970 (Sitsky Papers, 5/52).

³³ The son of White Russian émigrés, Sitsky was born and grew up in the French concession of Tianjin [Tientsin], arriving in Australia only in 1951.

³⁴ According to Egon Petri; quoted in Sitsky, *Busoni and the Piano* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986), p.95.

³⁵ See Sitsky's sleeve notes to 'Mysterium Cosmographicum' on EMI, YPRX 2041 (c.1974).

³⁶ Sitsky already had the idea for the book when he returned from the USA in 1960, and began it in Brisbane. It was finally published in 1986.

³⁷ Petri was well acquainted with Busoni and his concerto, having prepared the two-piano reduction published in 1906 and premiered it in England under Busoni's baton in 1909. He had also taken up the cause of the unusual Piano Concerto after its composer's death in 1924. See Sitsky, *Busoni and the Piano*, pp. 89-95.

³⁸ Letter, 12 September 1971. When he heard the final edit of this recording, Sitsky wrote to point out five small errors, but decided they should be left in 'as they were done so convincingly'; letter 22 March 1976 (Sitsky Papers, 5/52).

³⁹ Letter, 4 January 1972 (Sitsky Papers, 5/52).

⁴⁰ Letter, 14 February 1974 (Sitsky Papers, 5/52).

⁴¹ Letter, 21 February 1974 (Sitsky Papers, 5/52).

⁴² Letter, 7 March 1987 (Sitsky Papers, 44/314).