

Performing Meter in Anthony Plog's *Postcards I*
Carl Burdick

Anthony Plog's 1994 composition *Postcards I* is a brief, three-movement, eight-page, six-and-a-half minute work for unaccompanied trumpet that has no bar lines or meter signatures. The score for the first movement is provided in Example 1. Despite the lack of standard metrical indicators, there are many surface parallelisms and phenomenal accent patterns that will create metrical implications in performance. But, as a non-tonal unaccompanied piece for a single-line instrument, the relative salience of these implications, and just what is being implied, will be largely dependent on the performer. In this paper, I will address and critique the ways that performers and the composer approach these rhythmic issues, and offer an analytical approach that aims to musically exploit the rhythmic potential of the piece. To understand the performer's point of view, I sent a survey to 125 university trumpet professors in the United States, and consulted the 16 professional and amateur recordings that are available commercially or online. I also corresponded with Mr. Plog via e-mail to gain insight on his perspective about the piece. My analytical approach is influenced philosophically by Nicholas Cook's criticism of the musical-score-as-text paradigm in much music analysis, and theoretically by principles of accent and grouping as described by Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard Meyer, and Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff in their respective rhythmic and generative musical theories.

The Performer's Perspective: *The Survey*

The survey is provided in Example 2. The response to the survey was underwhelming (see Example 3): four e-mail addresses were invalid, seven professors

told me they would distribute it to their students or participate themselves (the “yes” response), thirteen professors told me they didn’t know the piece or had no students working on it (the “no” response), and 101 have not responded.¹ From the seven positive responses to the initial email, I received four individual responses to the survey. While it will be difficult to derive statistically significant information from the survey, the remarks made by participants provide some useful insights.

The survey (Example 2) informs the participants that the primary interest of the survey and study of which is a part are the “musical and performative aspects of the work (and specifically...aspects of rhythm) with technical and pedagogical factors taking a secondary importance.” Accordingly, the information in the responses to question 3 is the most important for the present purpose.² Question 3 is as follows: “Without bar lines or meter signatures, regular grouping of pulses is not clearly indicated, yet there are notational devices like beams that seem to indicate some groupings of pulses. How do you approach rhythm in this piece, especially in the first and third movements?”³ Responses to question 3 are collected in Example 4. Responses are largely focused on technical aspects of practice, and don’t seem to recognize rhythm and meter as parameters for musical expression. For example, one respondent’s entire answer was “I

¹ One respondent suggested that the form of the survey as an e-mail attachment rather than an online survey was a poor decision. It seems relatively likely that this was a factor in the low response rate to the survey.

² The background information in questions 1 and 2, and the other musical question (4) would potentially be revealing if there had been a higher number of responses, and correlations could have been found between certain types of answers and performers. As it is, only the information in the rhythmic question will be of direct relevance in this context.

³ The third movement is included in the question as it ends with material derived from the first movement, and is similarly rhythmic. For the purposes of the present paper, the first movement is the main topic for consideration.

used slow practice with a metronome as my primary preparation strategy,” in effect, likening musical approach with technical preparation. In addition to this sort of basic rote response, listing basic practice strategies, respondents also indicated that the rhythm of the piece was not technically challenging, at least with familiarity of Plog’s work in general. Perhaps in my desire not to lead respondents to a specific sort of answer, I encouraged them to think more of the technical aspects of rhythmic performance in the piece. However, the prompt for the survey clearly indicates that this sort of answer is not primarily of interest. Based on the information I have received from trumpet players, it is difficult to draw any conclusions regarding their (lack of) musical decisions regarding rhythm. It is clear, through recordings, that rhythm does play a part in the musical approach of most trumpet players. But it is apparently not clear to some trumpet players that rhythm is a musical factor in their performance. Despite an apparent lack of awareness on the part of performers, the sixteen available recordings display a remarkably consistent approach to rhythm, suggesting that there is a more-or-less agreed upon consensus regarding how to perform rhythm and meter in the piece.

The Performer’s Perspective: *The Recordings*

The sixteen recordings include one commercial recording by Kevin Cobb, and fifteen amateur recordings of live performances, auditions, and other apparently homemade recordings. Information regarding these is collected in Example 5. For the most part, these recordings appear somewhat casual, especially in their recording technology. This, coupled with poor acoustics and the fact that many of them seem to be single takes and include wrong notes and other mistakes makes the detailed study of most

of these recordings not particularly rewarding. However, one of these online recordings, that of Philip Chase Hawkins, is at a high level, and along with Cobb's recording, it is one of two performances that are viable for detailed study.⁴

Though the average quality of the recordings listed in Example 5 is not high (which is not to say that the performances themselves are poor), one aspect of performance practice that can be easily extracted is the choice of tempo. The central column of Example 5 shows the approximate tempo range for the eighth note in each of these recordings.⁵ The tempi for these recordings fall in the range between approximately 140 and 200 beats per minute, with a majority centering around the 160–170 range. Most performances involve variation of around 20 beats per minute, but a few recordings, including those by Cobb and Hawkins, maintain a more-or-less consistent tempo throughout. The presence of tempo variation can sometimes be attributed to natural variation in the performer as an imperfect timekeeper, but in some cases (as in the Andon Markov recording), the wider tempo variations seem to be a consequence of technical constraints rather than careful planning, especially in those performances that choose faster tempi. In many of these tempo-variable recordings, the tempo is faster during simpler technical passages, as at the beginning, and slower during the more challenging passages, as where there are extended passages of arpeggiated triplet sixteenth notes, or angular sets of sixteenth notes, as at the end. Despite the substantial variation on many

⁴ In fact, even these two recordings still make a mistake, and the same one too. At the return of the opening material, both performers play six Gs, as at the beginning, instead of the written five.

⁵ For tempo extraction, I tapped along with recordings using the “Clockwork” metronome app made by Bitcount on my iPhone 6. Thus, all measurements are no more than approximations, but provide an accurate representation of characteristic tempo ranges for each performance.

performances, it seems that a general attempt is made to maintain a steady and even pulse throughout, which is executed successfully by Cobb, Hawkins, and Joaquin Molina, and usually in extended passages of homogeneous material by most other performers.

It is not entirely clear why performers seem to attempt to project an evenly articulated stream of pulses. The lack of bar lines and meter signatures may suggest that tempo should be more free and rubato, but at the same time, these same factors may also require a steady pulse so as to make their differentiation palpable. There also seems to be an intuitive aspect to it, given the prevalence of the approach, and in that none of the survey's respondents addressed this issue as a choice, but rather as a mere fact of practice. The emphasis on using a metronome, as well as one respondent's suggestion to implement "[s]low practice, slow preactice [sic] and then [to] creep up on your tempo" suggest an implicit desire for the evenness of pulses and consistency of tempo.

In addition to this perceptual evenness that notes seem to receive, I also tend to hear a duple default grouping to pulses, as if in most places the piece could be written in a time signature with "4" on the bottom. That is, in many places, performers seem to emphasize groupings of two eighth notes. I attribute this to a subtle accentuation pattern that occurs in these performances, which can be shown using the "onset curve" plugin in Sonic Visualiser. Example 6a shows the Onset Curve for the first line of the score in Cobb's recording. The waveform of the audio file is presented traditionally in stereo, and the curved line with peaks overlaid on the bottom of the waveform represents the onset curve measured by the program. The height of the peaks of the onset curve represents the intensity of the sound at those articulations, reflecting accent patterns in the performance. In several places, the intensity differentiations suggest a local duple grouping, most

obviously in the opening four notes, with a duple alternation of high and low peaks. A similar grouping can be seen at the opening of Hawkins' recording, shown in Example 6b. These sorts of effects can be seen in multiple other places throughout the recordings, one conspicuous example occurring at the third line of the second page of the score (Example 7). At the end of this line in the score, the broken beams visually group four iterations of a three-note motive. In Cobb's recording (Example 7a), there are two places where strength of articulation clearly project a duple grouping (circled on the example). While these groupings do not fit into a higher duple organization, at a local level, these patterns of articulation cut across the notated grouping in a way that is aurally apparent and visually demonstrable. The same grouping is also present in Hawkins' recording (Example 7b).

This consistency, which contradicts a clear visual and musical grouping is perhaps somewhat suspicious. It seems possible that this accentuation pattern has more to do with mechanical factors of the instrument than performance choices, whether conscious or otherwise. In the leap from the B4 to the G5 in the last four notes of the line, the performer must skip from the 4th partial of the instrument to the 6th partial of the valve position one half-step higher (skipping two partials of the valve position for the G5). In the other upward leaps in this passage, the performer skips from the 3rd to the 4th partial of the valve position three semitones higher (Eb4 to Cb5) and then from the 3rd to the 5th partial of the same valve position (G4 to E5). My (untested) hypothesis is that this accent pattern is the result of a greater impulse needed on the low note (B4) to achieve the skip of more partials and a higher valve position. This sort of contradictory or counterintuitive accent pattern can be seen in other places in both performances, and it seems that it may

be a general effect of the physical constraints of the instrument, but this is a topic for another paper. These constraints can easily be overcome by the attentive and able performer, and even if unintentional, the musical effect is still that of a duple grouping where it is not necessarily desirable.

With the limited but telling information gained from the survey, and the small number of adequate recordings available, I understand the performer's perspective on this piece to be mostly inattentive to what I refer to as the 'metrical implications' of the music. The focus does not seem to be on projecting any metrical patterns or rhythmic groupings that are implied by the notation or other factors of the music, but rather on presenting an uninterrupted and even flow of notes.

The Composer's Perspective

This approach, to some degree, is in accord with the composer's intentions. In support of the equal approach, Plog suggests that "if a set of the same notes is barred, such as the beginning, then my intent was to have all notes be equal."⁶ There are, of course many places in the movement where sets of different notes are beamed, about which Plog says "these are grouped in ways that either show the rhythm of at least the phrase or sequence (and although they should not be exaggerated there should be a certain rhythmic feeling to the way those passages are grouped)."⁷ Plog's position, overall, seems to be that evenness is to be strived for and that exaggerated articulations are not desired, and in this way corroborates the perspective of the performer, as it can best be understood.

⁶ Email interview

⁷ email interview

However, when asked about the idea of a performer intervening a bit more and imposing slight accentuation to bring out the notated groupings, or metrical implications, Plog responded, “I really like your phrase "metrical implications." That is exactly what I tried to do. So everything you suggest sounds right to me.”⁸ Having seen that performers do actually emphasize certain notes over others and thereby project certain groupings even when they are apparently not trying to perform metrically, I take it as an effectively mainstream approach to this piece to attempt to redistribute those slight accentuation differences to highlight the metrical implications that Plog has carefully composed in this piece.

The Analytical Approach

Because of the sparse texture, lack of tonality, and rather regular rhythmic activity, many interpretations of metrical implications will be possible. Analytical decisions of metrical and grouping criteria require the consideration of dynamic, registral, and agogic (or durational) phenomenal accents; contour high, low, and reversal points;

⁸ E-mail interview. My specific prompt for this response was: “It seems that most people who play the piece (or at least post videos of themselves on YouTube) are trying to play these pulses very evenly, like you suggest. In my listening and practice, though, I find that I often hear (or mentally imply?) a kind of default duple grouping with disturbances (the very opening could almost be counted "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 1 and 2 and 3..."). And in the passage on the second page, leading back to the opening material, where there are sets of 16th notes grouped in threes, I usually hear people maintaining a sort of duple grouping across the threes so that the first note of every group does not necessarily get an accent. I'm experimenting with playing the piece with very subtle accents on certain notes to try and kind of make the listener hear changing groupings, not necessarily trying to put the piece in a meter, but to make it play with metrical implications. I think some of this is implied by the notation, but I have heard in most performances, they really seem to focus on an even pulse stream, which always sounds duple to me. I don't want to undermine your musical intentions, so I've got one practical and one philosophical follow-up question: what do you think about my assessment and suggestion? And how much room for the performer's interpretation do you think there is in a score?”

proximity, similarity, and parallel grouping criteria; durational and parallel metrical criteria; and finally, notational criteria. In general, a preference is given to interpretations that are supported strongly by notation, that have a theoretically good chance of being metrically salient without the need for over-accentuation, that emphasize surprising or unexpected shifts, and that demonstrate a processual change in material wherever possible.

Defining ‘accent’ has been a persistent problem in music theory. Though the categories of dynamic, registral, and agogic (or durational) accent are understood as varieties of phenomenal accent (“any event at the musical surface that gives emphasis or stress to a moment in the musical flow”⁹), the precise nature of accent has been difficult to pin down. In Cooper and Meyer’s account of the dilemma, they note that

For while such factors as duration, intensity, melodic contour, regularity, and so forth obviously play a part in creating an impression of accent, none of them appears to be an invariable and necessary concomitant of accent. Accents may occur on short notes as well as long, on soft notes as well as loud, on lower notes as well as higher ones, and irregularly as well as regularly. In short, since accent appears to be a product of a number of variables whose interaction is not precisely known, it must for our purposes remain a basic, axiomatic concept which is understandable as an experience but undefined in terms of causes.¹⁰

Since the time of Cooper and Meyer’s early treatise on rhythm, much has been accomplished in our conception of the separate components of accent, but there is still some difficulty in defining accent in complex music in which many parameters are active. In this regard, *Postcards I* is a relatively easy piece to discuss from the perspective of phenomenal surface accent: there are four different dynamic levels (piano, mezzo

⁹ Fred Lerdahl and Ray Jackendoff, *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983. 17. I take “musical surface” to mean literally each individual note.

¹⁰ Grosvenor Cooper and Leonard Meyer, *The Rhythmic Structure of Music*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960. 7.

forte, forte, and fortissimo), four different notated note lengths (thirty-second note, sixteenth-note triple, sixteenth note, and staccato eighth note), and the entire piece is monophonic, so registral accents and contour criteria are merely objective matters. The criteria for assigning a note on the score with the label of “accented,” is not necessarily straightforward in all parameters, however. As Cooper and Meyer write regarding this issue,

In order for a tone to appear accented it must be set off from other tones of the series in some way. If all notes are alike, there will be no accents. At the same time, however, the accented tone must be similar and near enough to the other tones of the series that it can be related to these—that it does not become an isolated sound.¹¹

That is, differentiation will be necessary for a tone to appear accented and the only sorts of differentiation that are objectively observed and easily labeled as determining of accent are register and contour. In the score, where there is a string of otherwise un- or minimally-differentiated notes of the same duration and similar pitch level (as is characteristic of the surface of *Postcards I*), the accent patterns are not necessarily implicit, but rather an emergent property in performance. The musical surface here provides the performer with many opportunities and choices to impose these sorts of differentiations where none or few are strongly implied.

The nature of the first movement of *Postcards I* is such that many of the potential higher-order metrical and grouping criteria are not relevant factors. Of Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s metrical preference rules, only two are significantly relevant here:

MPR 1 (Parallelism)

Where two or more groups or parts of groups can be construed as parallel, they preferably receive parallel metrical structure.¹²

¹¹ Ibid, 7.

¹² Lerdahl and Jackendoff, 347.

MPR 5 (Length)

Prefer a metrical structure in which a relatively strong beat occurs at the inception of either

- a. a relatively long pitch-event,
- b. a relatively long duration of a dynamic,
- c. a relatively long slur,
- d. a relatively long pattern of articulation,
- e. a relatively long duration of a pitch in the relevant levels of the time-span reduction, or
- f. a relatively long duration of a harmony in the relevant levels of the time-space reduction (harmonic rhythm).¹³

For MPR 5, only conditions a., b., and d. are represented in the music. There are many parallelisms in the movement (MPR 1), which exhibits a high degree of motivic economy, and certain types of pitch event—such as repeated G or A-flat eighth notes—are common and salient enough to garner metrical attention. The condition of a “relatively strong beat” in MPR 5 can be replaced by the notion of a relatively strong accent, as locating a proper “beat” in the music is ontologically problematic.

Coupled with these metrical criteria, three of Lerdahl and Jackendoff’s grouping criteria can help make analytical decisions about metrical groupings, and therefore inform performance decisions about metrical implications. The three relevant grouping preference rules are

GPR 2 (Proximity)

Consider a sequence of four notes $n_1n_2n_3n_4$. All else being equal, the transition n_2-n_3 may be heard as a group boundary if

- a. (Slur/Rest) the interval of time from the end of n_2 to the beginning of n_3 is greater than that from the end of n_1 to the beginning of n_2 and that from the end of n_3 to the beginning of n_4 , or if
- b. (Attack-Point) the interval of time between the attack points of n_2 and n_3 is greater than that between the attack points of n_1 and n_2 and that between the attack points of n_3 and n_4 .¹⁴

¹³ Ibid, 348.

¹⁴ Ibid, 345.

GPR 3 (Change)

Consider a sequence of four notes $n_1n_2n_3n_4$. All else being equal, the transition n_2-n_3 may be heard as a group boundary if

- a. (Register) the transition n_2-n_3 involves a greater intervallic distance than both n_1-n_2 and n_3-n_4 , or if
- b. (Dynamics) the transition n_2-n_3 involves a change in dynamics and n_1-n_2 and n_3-n_4 do not, or if
- c. (Articulation) the transition n_2-n_3 involves a change in articulation and n_1-n_2 and n_3-n_4 do not, or if
- d. (Length) n_2 and n_3 are of different lengths and both bars n_1, n_2 and n_3, n_4 do not differ in length.¹⁵

GPR 6 (Parallelism)

Where two or more segments of the music can be construed as parallel, they preferably form parallel parts of groups.¹⁶

The last of these works similarly to its corresponding MPR (MPR 1). Though GPR 2 applies specifically to durational proximity, registral proximity is covered by GPR 3, condition a. Due to the relatively consistent musical surface and the monophonic texture, these rules should again be easy to apply for a grouping analysis of the piece. Also due to this consistency, a multitude of interpretations will be possible.

The role of the notation may be the most controversial in some sense, as it may potentially give undue value to an ambiguous text that is, at best, a visual representation of a desired sound. However, having contact with the composer mitigates this issue to some extent, as we can understand the intention behind the notation. And consulting the score in the context of the way it is performed can also expand the notion of the text from the score itself to the ways in which it is generally realized. Thus, given Plog's support for the idea of metric implications, it should be essentially unproblematic to derive basic performance directions from the score.

¹⁵ Ibid, 346.

¹⁶ Ibid, 346.

Under the rubric of accentual differentiation, and the metric and grouping preferences outlined above, it would be possible to assign accent values and relative strengths of grouping and metrical conditions for each pair of notes in the piece. Such a task would likely prove a tedious counting exercise, however, and one that is not terribly revealing. So rather than explain the rationale for each possible performance decision and the criteria involved at each new note, a more general commentary will follow. The suggestions I make are by no means intended as prescriptions for performance; rather they reflect my own performance decisions and could potentially serve as a model for another performer of this piece, regardless of whether they would make all of the same decisions that I did. I do maintain, however, that the available recordings seem to be ignorant to most of the types of considerations I am taking, and as such are lacking in musical content to a degree.

As I have emphasized throughout this discussion, due to the monophonic and relatively homogeneous texture through much of the movement, many of the higher-order criteria—that is the grouping and metrical criteria—will not appear to be inherently dominant. For example (see Example 8), in the middle section of the piece (page 1, line 7 through page 2, line 1), a series of five sixteenth notes with the interval pattern $\langle -1 +1 -1 -4 \rangle$ appears several times in different notational contexts, either occurring over groups of four sixteenth notes beamed, within groups of seven, or as groups of five. Despite this parallelism, the notation suggests at least three different possible interpretations. In the first case, the fifth sixteenth note (Eb4, within the first oval on Example 8) is clearly identified as the beginning of a new group by the beam. In the second and third instances, an internal parallelism suggests two possibilities: a $2 + 2 + 3$ grouping, or a $2 + 3 + 2$

grouping. This second option is even a possibility for the first set of sixteenth notes due to its sharing the same parallel structure, but the notation seems to preclude it as a true performance possibility. The final two groups only give themselves to one reasonable interpretation, 2 + 3. Thus, there is a transformation of this motive from a strictly duple interpretation, constrained by the notation, to a rather clear 2 + 3 grouping at the end of the passage. I prefer to interpret the two seven-note groups as 2 + 2 + 3 to emphasize the parallelism with the initial motive, which treats the low registral accent as the beginning of a note group.

Also within this passage, the set of sixteenth notes in the middle of Example 8 contain conflicting proximity and parallel criteria. Based on proximity (GPR 3a), the grouping is 1 + 3 + 2, but based on the parallelism of their intervallic structure (GPR 6) they are grouped in 3 + 3. Because this is a six-note group, there is a third possibility, that of 2 + 2 + 2. However, since this cuts across both proximity and parallelism GPRs, it should be rejected as an unrealistic option. I prefer the second option, 3 + 3, as it emphasizes this parallelism, sets this set of notes in relief against the prevailing duple organization thus far, and is probably the most likely to be heard saliently due to the equal duration of its constituent parts.

This six-note group takes part in an expansion that opens the middle section of the piece.¹⁷ The initial groupings are of four sixteenth notes; the group of three at the end of the first line of Example 8 foreshadows the three-note groups that follow; the six-note group just discussed transitions to the seven-note groups of line 2–3 of Example 8; the passage culminates in two five-note groupings combining in a ten-note group. The

¹⁷ I am indebted to my professor, Dr. Sam Ng for directing my attention to this compelling process.

remainder of this central section features a reversal of group size. Page 2, line 2 of the score (see Example 1) shows an initial set of seven-note groups, leading to three four-note groups that give way to an ascending set of three-note groups followed by a descending line grouped in twos, which heralds the return of the opening material. This passage, then, shows a rather clear musical process that depends on the performer to emphasize certain notes to project this grouping expansion and contraction.

In the interest of avoiding the tedious sort of exercise described above, the remainder of the analytical portion of this paper will be devoted to a few places where notation and other implications are in strong contrast. In most places in the movement, a group of eighth notes following a group of faster notes will begin with a new beam. For example, in the first two lines of the score (see Example 1), every set of eighth notes that immediately follows a set of quicker notes is notated with a new beam, except at the end of the second line. In this case, the question is whether to treat the third or fourth G from the end of the line as a beginning of a group. Notationally, the answer seems to be that the third eighth note should receive a slight accent to emphasize it as an initiating eighth note, but in terms of parallelism, the preceding eighth note is more likely to receive such an emphasis. When the notation contradicts the parallelism in the absence of dynamic, registral, and durational differentiation, I will choose to defer to the notation.

Other instances of this type of event involve a more marked contrast between notation and other parameters. In lines 4 through 6 on the first page, there are three instances of this situation. They all involve rapid arpeggios, and the first two involve line breaks. On line 4 of Example 1, a G-minor-major-ninth arpeggio is played twice, each time leading to an eighth note at a dynamic and registral extreme that is beamed together

with the eighth notes following. Due to these factors (dynamic, registral, and notational), these high notes are well-suited to begin a metrical grouping, and contradicting this by projecting the following G4 as initiating a grouping would require substantial intervention on the performer's part. But that is just what is implied by the notation surrounding the high C at the end of this line. The high C6 is the upper registral extreme of the entire movement, and is set up in this context as a parallel grouping initiation, but notationally appears as an end to a group. I take this to be due largely to editing: placing the C6 on the next line and beaming it with the G4's would diminish its appearance as part of this arpeggio and visually complicate an already difficult technical passage.

Similar considerations inform my understanding of the descending F-minor-major-ninth arpeggios in the next two lines. Because the first instance of this arpeggio is in a group whose duration is two eighth notes long, a parallel interpretation for the next two iterations is logical. The second instance of this arpeggio, at the end of the second line on the slide is not connected to the following eighth notes following a similar logic to that employed with the high C above. This and the following arpeggio also lead to eighth notes at a higher pitch level, thus diminishing the effect of the low dynamic accent.

The final instance of this eighth-note grouping mismatch with notation occurs at line 7 on page 2 (see Example 1). This is in many ways a very subtle notational issue, as the only indication is the dynamic marking placed under the second eighth note of the group. Here, despite the visual organization of the notation, the second Ab4 is the best candidate for the start of a grouping due to the dynamic contrast with first Ab4 on the line. This first Ab4 is best understood as the end of a descending compound line at a forte dynamic level, and is thus set off from the following note.

To reiterate: I do not mean to suggest that my conclusions about these and other groupings are the only viable ones. Indeed, the very fact that the score is written in the way it is gives credence to many alternative approaches. Furthermore, the current performance tradition does not seem to place a high value on the sort of questions I am asking about the piece. There is thus a conflict between the score as a set of possibilities that have some tangible reality in incredibly realistic performance opportunities that are in line with the composer's intentions and as part of textual tradition that extends beyond the page into real-world performance by practicing musicians. Perhaps the problem is in the relative disinterestedness that trumpet players show toward musical applications of rhythm. But this cynical view may align too closely with the negative position that the field of performance and analysis has been moving away from over the past 30 years. More positively, it may be the case that the types of performance directions that I advocate for here are too disruptive to the aesthetic priority of the evenness of pulses that is valued by most performers. But this position is weakened by the fact that the score and composer both indicate the importance of these metrical implications. Perhaps as a piece that is still relatively young, and one that is surprisingly unfamiliar to its intended audience (trumpet players; see Example 3), a proper text has not yet been established. It will be the duty of future performers to expand the meanings of the text, and hopefully find a place for the inherent musicality of the rhythm in the score.



Example 2 The survey

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Performance Survey
Anthony Plog, *Postcards I*

I am conducting a survey to learn how trumpet players at universities in the USA approach the performance of Anthony Plog's 1994 composition, *Postcards I*.¹ For the purposes of this project, I am primarily interested in musical and performative aspects of the work (and specifically about aspects of rhythm) with technical and pedagogical factors taking a secondary importance. If you have performed the piece in whole or in part, assigned the piece to a student, practiced and learned the piece without performing it, or are in any way familiar with it, please fill out this survey and send it to caburdick@gmail.com by Friday, April 24, 2015. (If you are willing to answer a longer survey, please contact me directly.)

Affiliation

Institutional Affiliation: _____

Experience

1. Which of the following best describes you as a trumpet player? Check all that apply by marking 'X' on each applicable blank.

College/University Instructor	_____	Orchestral Focus	_____
College/University Student	_____	Solo (Classical) Focus	_____
Professional Performer	_____	Jazz Combo Focus	_____
Amateur Performer	_____	Jazz Big Band Focus	_____
Freelance Performer	_____	Commercial/Pit Focus	_____

2. Which of the following best describes your experience with the piece (*Postcards I* by Anthony Plog)? Check all that apply by marking 'X' on each applicable blank.

Performed Publicly or Privately	_____	Assigned to Student	_____
Practiced without Performing	_____	Familiar through listening	_____

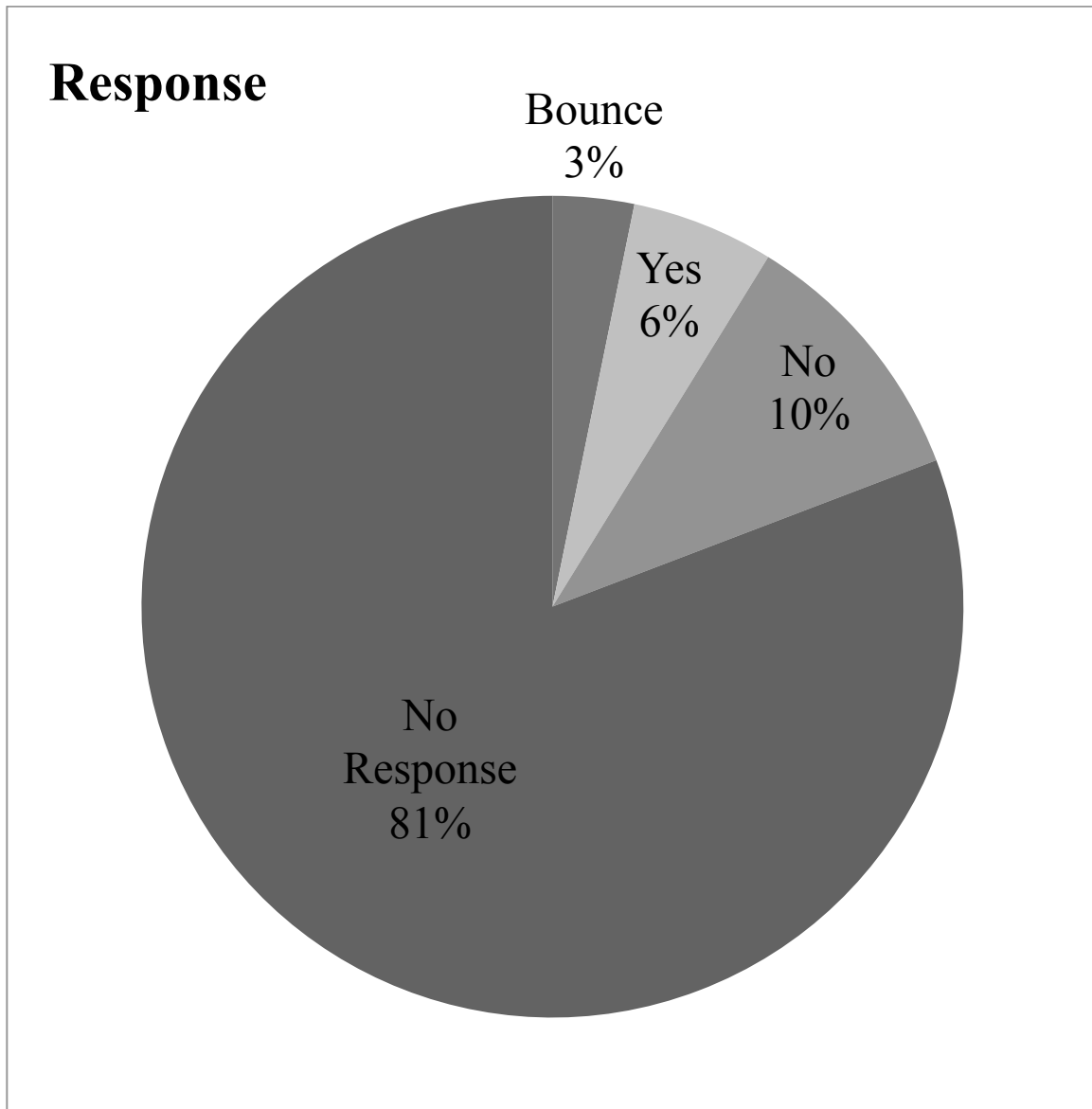
1. The purpose of the survey is to inform a paper and lecture recital that are course requirements for a class on Performance and Analysis that I am currently enrolled in. I have no plans for this project beyond this class, and I cannot offer compensation beyond my gratitude for your participation. Names of respondents will not appear in writing, but professional position and performance experience will be associated with answers. The piece can be found here: <http://anthonyplog.com/?compositions=postcards>.

Musical Approach. Please answer in the text boxes below each question.

3. Without bar lines or meter signatures, regular grouping of pulses is not clearly indicated, yet there are notational devices like beams that seem to indicate some groupings of pulses. How do you approach rhythm in this piece, especially in the first and third movements?

4. What other considerations (e.g., technical, pedagogical, programmatic, study of recordings/performances, etc.) are important to your approach to the performance of this piece?

Example 3
Survey Response rate



Example 4
Responses to question 3 of the survey (Ex. 2)

Through consistent note groups (yes...sometimes beams) and by following a phrase structure. Once you've played enough of Tony's music, you begin to understand his phrasing – and, you can better work out the technical issues.

I used slow practice with a metronome as my primary preparation strategy.

The rhythm of the piece seems quite obvious despite the lack of bar lines. The main thing

in the piece is practice practice practice! Slow practice, slow practice and then creep up on your tempo. Not necessarily Tony's tempos.

The first movement of this piece I actually was able to gain some insight from Mr. Anthony Plog himself. He visited and did a masterclass at the University of Northern Iowa in the Fall of 2014, and I was able to perform the first movement of this for him. What he had to say about the first movement was that it was meant to signify a walk. The moving eighth notes were used to describe someone going for a stroll.

The interpretation that I and my studio professor had for the first movement was actually quite different. We imagined that the eighth note figure was more of a sneaky approach to the triplets. Starting from a quieter dynamic and then crescendoing to the triplet. The whole movement was imagined as if I was a spy sneaking around until the definitive end where I either was captured, or perhaps completed my mission.

I think what was easiest for me was to group the phrases. Especially in the chromatic part that starts at piano, that was very much grouped together in order to create some shape of the line and also make some more sense of the chromatic material.

For the third movement, I also thought about it similarly to the first movement. Phrasing was also key to making this movement musical, and easier to learn. I thought about it a little differently than the first movement because the dynamic relationships to this material was quite different.

As the rhythms became more aggressive and faster, I approached the rhythms as a thought of "moving forward".

Example 5

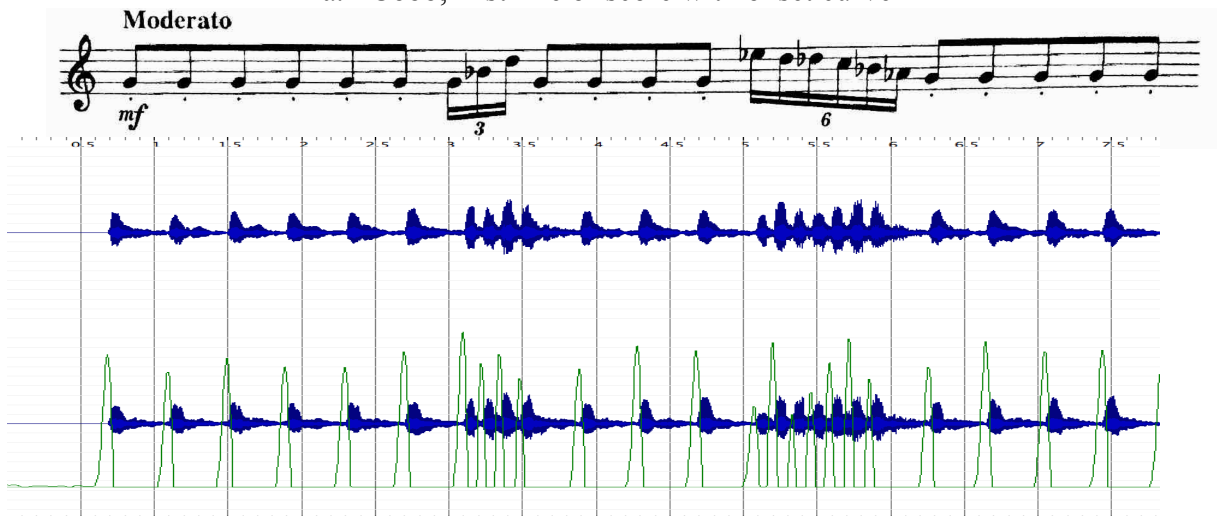
Available recordings (links current as of 4/11/2015)

Performer	Approx. BPM	Context of Recording
Adams, Dan https://soundcloud.com/danadamstrumpet/postcards-i-mvt-i-anthony	160–170	N/A
Cobb, Kevin "One", Summit Records, 2004	~150	Professional
Fonseca, Erico https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uF39bYCtcIM	170–190	Home Video
Hawkins, Philip Chase https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDSUd0F50bw	~170	N/A
Inzi, Gli https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-YoFG65gQc	150–160	N/A
Markov, Andon https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88F7Elhsaqc	170–200	Video Performance
Mateo, Ruben Gonzalez https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gpt337jbczg	150–190	Audition
Miller, Katie	150–180	Live Performance

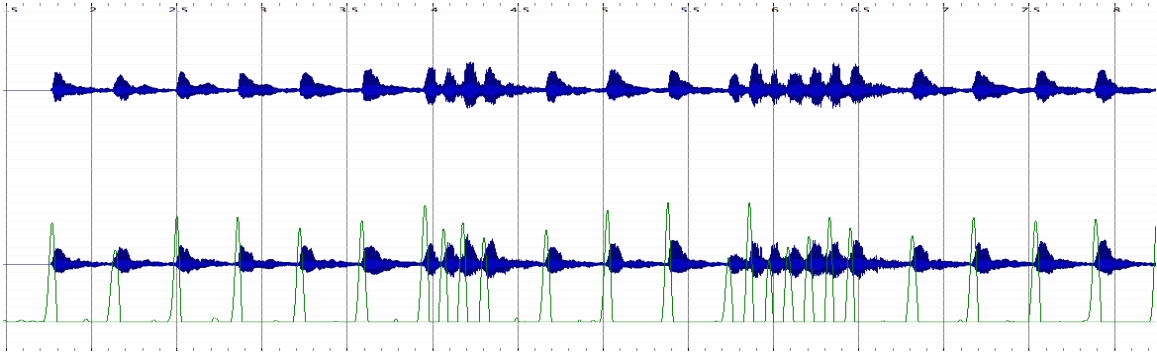
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wr6T8PHJrBE		
Molina, Joaquin	~160	Live Performance
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wXLkX18wS4		
Morales, Danel	170–180	Home Video/Audition
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2NBAmWLHv0		
Oelers, Anne	170–190	Live Performance
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPY84ru6T8s		
Ott, Selina	170–180	Live Performance
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyesmMh84hM		
Peralta, Juan	160–170	Home Video/Audition
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CV7CjdI5y_Y		
Sessink, Jared	140–150	Audition Recording
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-NRsNATJic		
Vilariño, Victor Manuel	150–170	Home Video/Audition
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E23YHatjCvM		
Vizzutti, Allen	170–200	Live Performance
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4NLj4Hi2J-U		

Example 6

a. Cobb, first line of score with onset curve

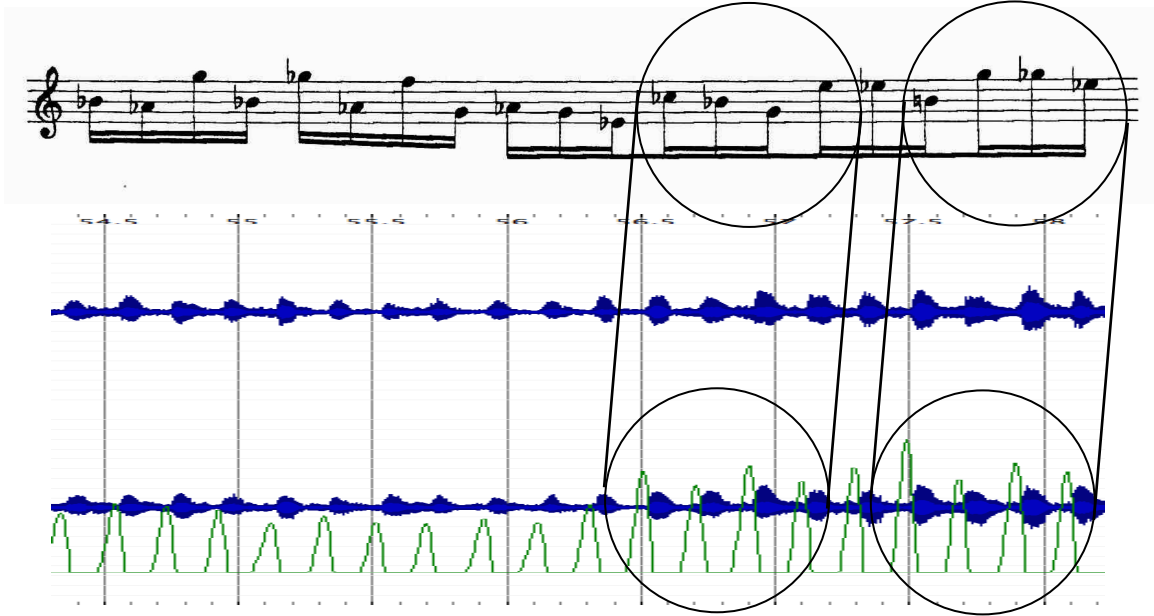


b. Hawkins, onset curve for the same passage

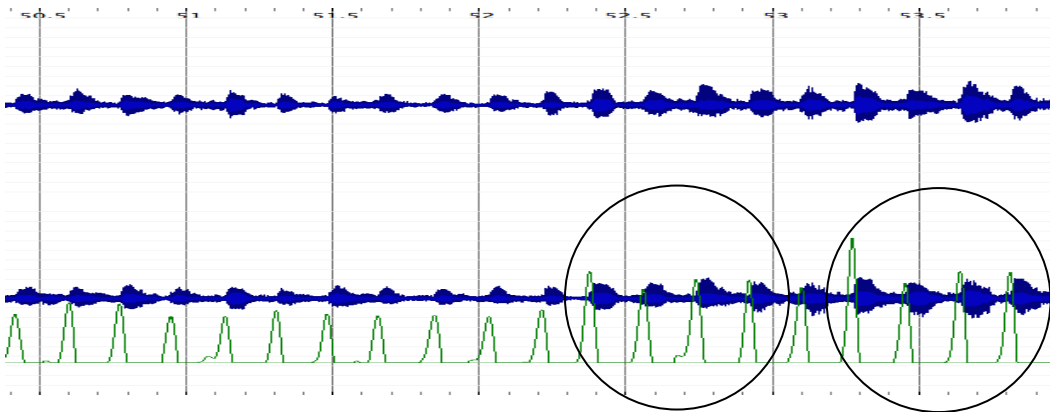


Example 7

a. Cobb, page 2 line 3 of score with onset curve



b. Hawkins, onset curve for the same passage



Example 8

Page 1 line 7 through page 2 line 1 with indications of interval pattern <-1 +1 -1 -4> and variants

The image displays three staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff begins with a dynamic marking of *mf*, followed by a crescendo to *ff*. A circled section of the first staff is marked *p* and *sempre staccato*. The second staff features a circled section marked *cresc.*. The third staff contains three circled sections, with dynamic markings *f* and *p* appearing below the staff. The notation includes various rhythmic values and accidentals, with the circled areas highlighting specific interval patterns.

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Discography (all accessed 3/29/2015)

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDSUd0F50bw>
- . Recording of Movement 2, video on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXrk1E86HmA>
- . Recording of Movement 3, video on YouTube:
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Miller, Katie. Live Performance, video on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wr6T8PHJrBE>

Molina, Joaquin. Live Performance, video on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wXLkX18wS4>

Morales, Danel. Video Recording, video on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2NBAmWLHv0>

Oelers, Anne. Live Performance, video on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DPY84ru6T8s>

Ott, Selina. Live Performance, video on YouTube:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyesmMh84hM>

Peralta, Juan. Video Recording, video on YouTube:
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Sessink, Jared. Recording, video on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-NRsnATJic>

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