

# LIMINAL AESTHETICS

## HOW TRISTAN MURAIL'S GONDWANA SUBVERTS HARMONY AND TIMBRE



Presented by Jackson Harmeyer  
University of Louisville

# Tristan Murail b.1947



*"I include [as traditional] serialism, aleatoric composition, stochastic composition, etc.: techniques that continue to use antiquated grids of parameters."*

*The Revolution of Complex Sounds, 1980*



# Tristan Murail b.1947



*“There is an entire category of sounds with previously unimagined characteristics—sounds that fall between two categories, paradoxical sounds, unstable sounds, complex sonorities that defy the traditional classification of harmony and timbre completely, inhabiting the unclaimed territory between them.”*

*The Revolution of Complex Sounds, 1980*



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*“There is a general abolition of limits [...] there is no precise line between pitch and noise, rhythm and frequency; harmony and sound color [i.e. timbre] are continuous phenomena.”*

*The Revolution of Complex Sounds, 1980*



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*“One can progressively separate timbres to create the effect of a harmony and, conversely, progressively fuse harmonic relations until they create a timbral effect.”*

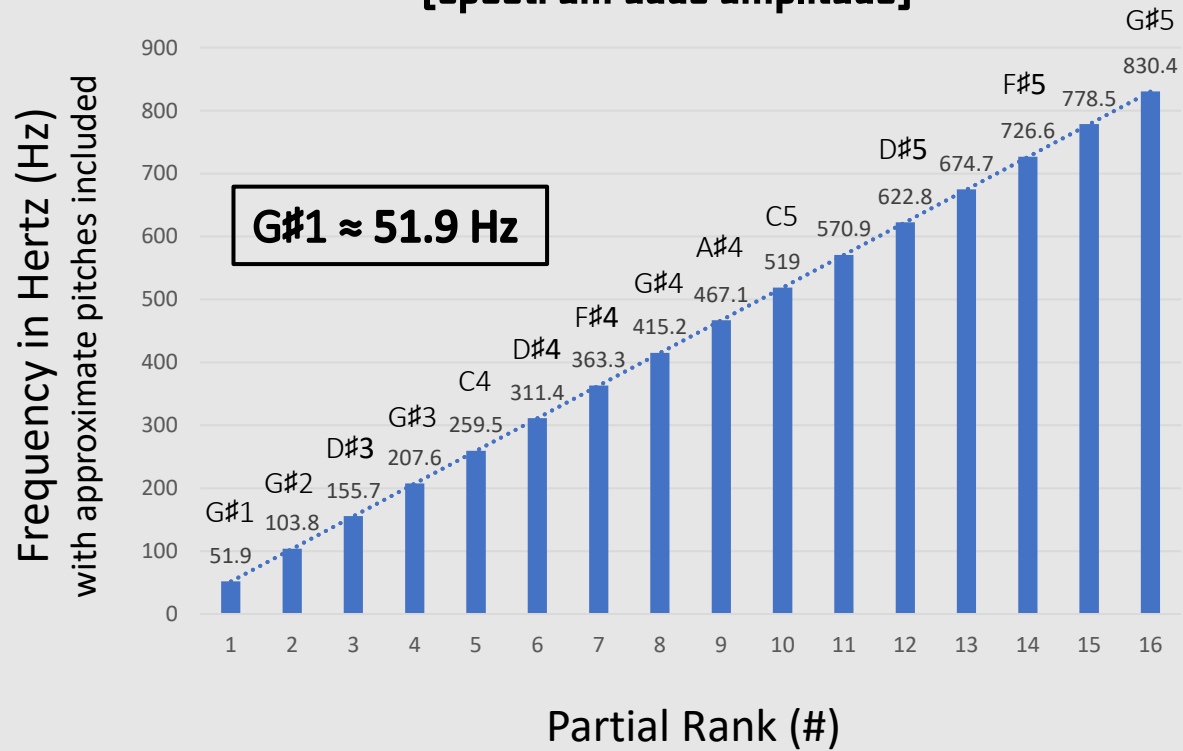
*Spectra and Sprites, 1982*



# Two Example Series: One exhibits Harmonicity, the other Inharmonicity

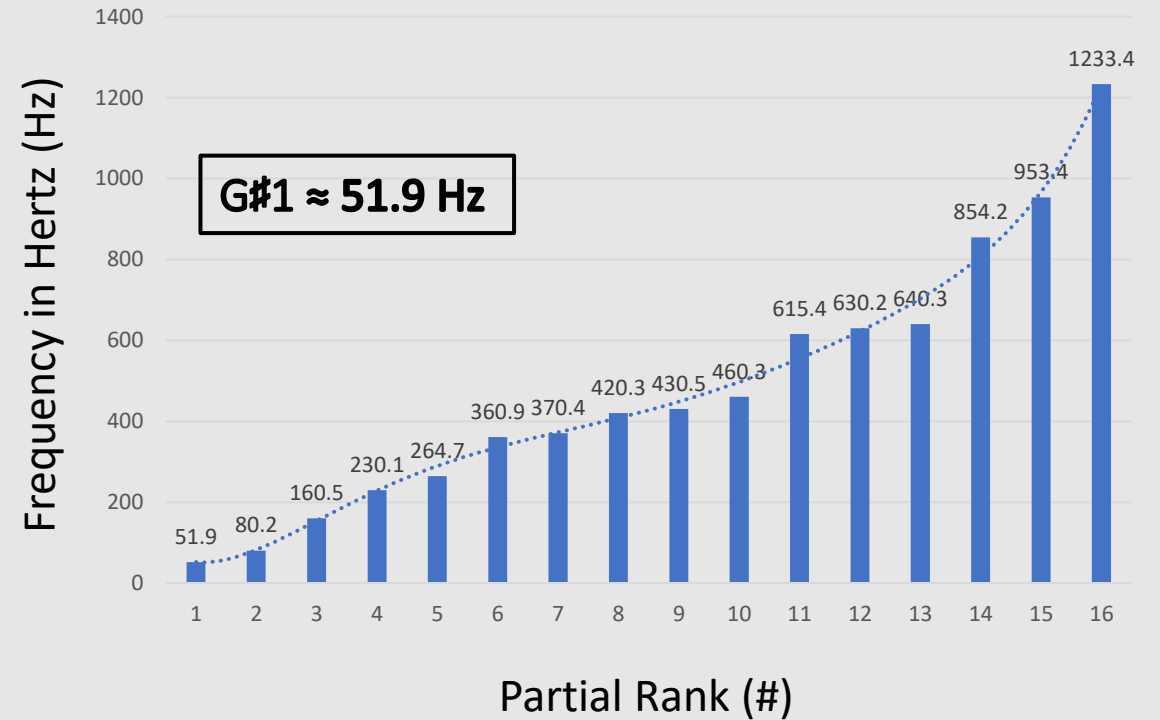
## Fig. 1 Harmonic Series

[spectrum adds amplitude]



## Fig. 2 Inharmonic Series

[spectrum adds amplitude]



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*"The [spectral] composer becomes like a sculptor:  
he disengages a form from a single mass, rather  
than constructing a form with a number of bricks  
like a mason."*

*Scelsi and L'itinéraire, 1988*



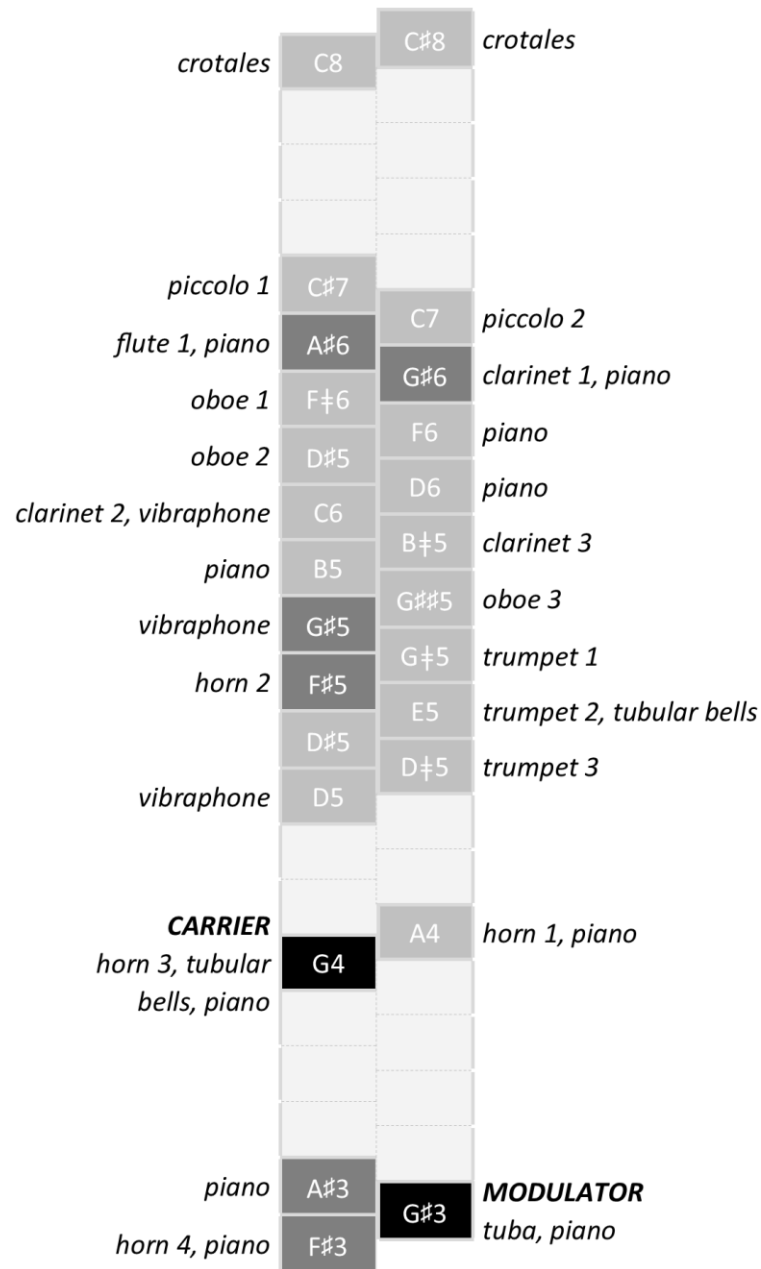


Fig. 3: First Aggregate,  
modeled after a bell  
spectrum

Graphic Representation  
of Pitch Content and  
Orchestration





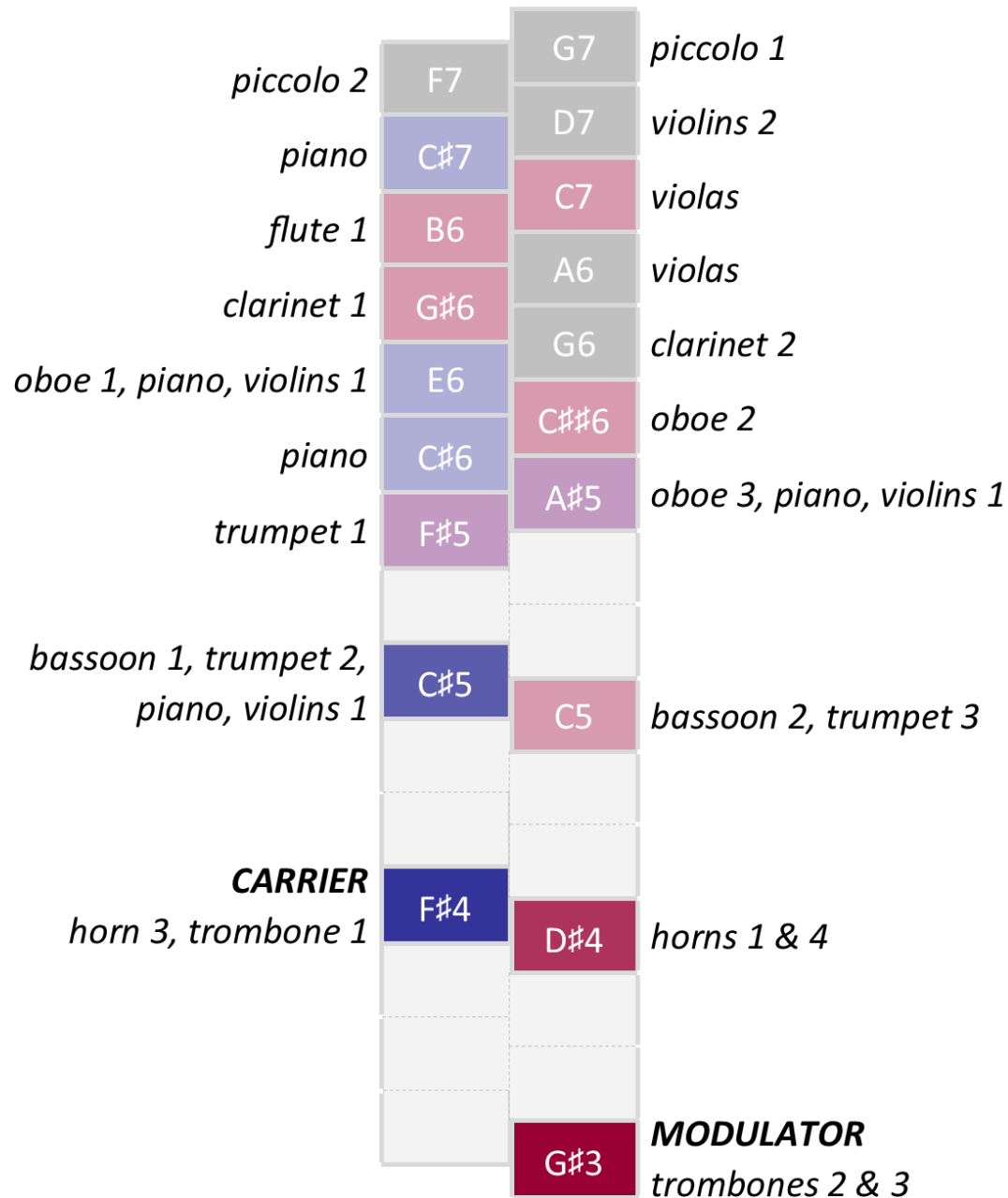


Fig. 4: Twelfth Aggregate, modeled after a brass spectrum

## Graphic Representation of Pitch Content and Orchestration

Note: Red indicates the G#2 series; Blue indicates the F#3 series; Violet indicates pitches which are present in both series



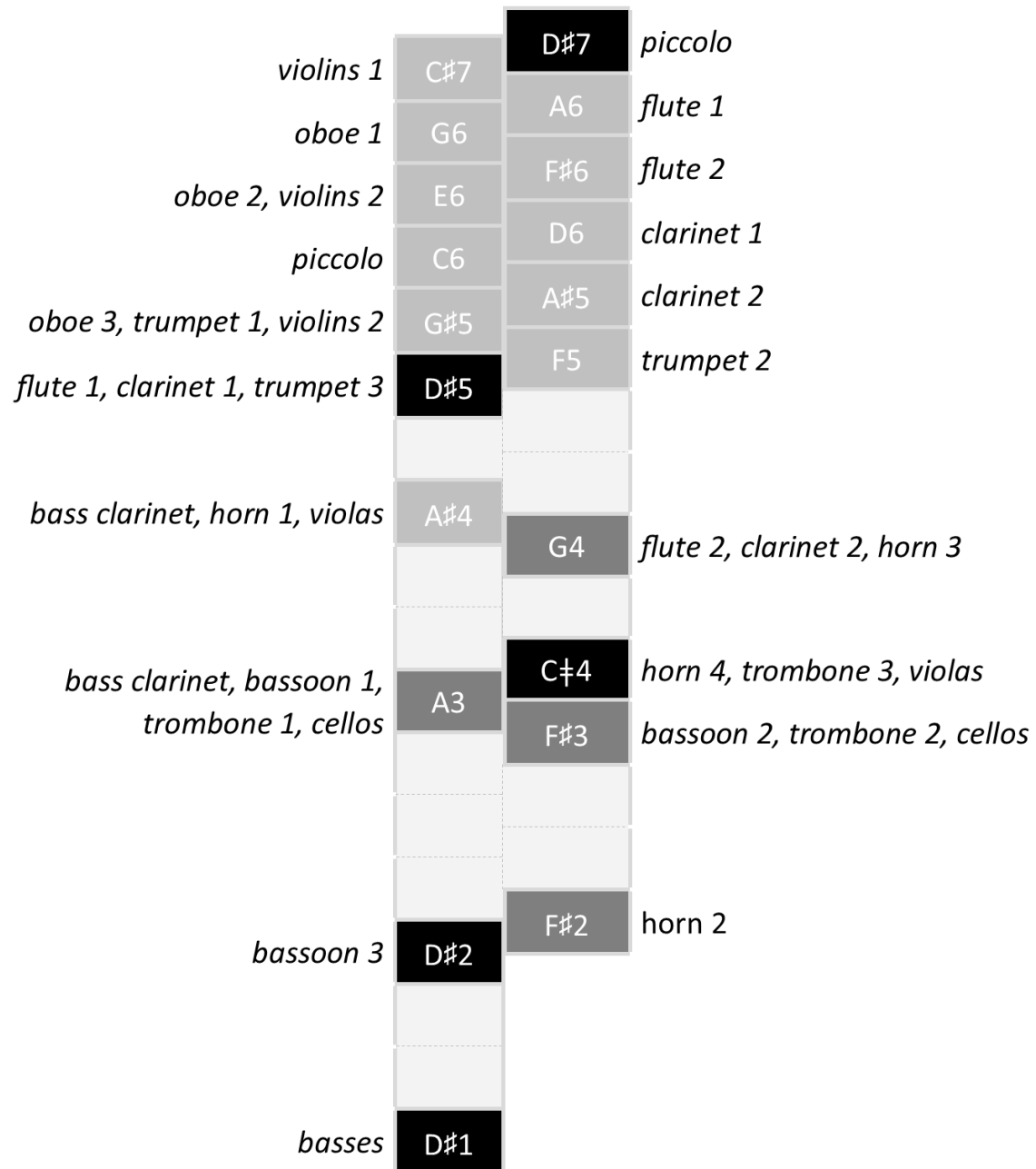


Fig. 5: Final, Inharmonic Aggregate in Section F

Graphic Representation of Pitch Content and Orchestration



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