



# Twistonality: A Personal Exploration

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VOLUME TWO

Portfolio of Original Compositions and Exegesis  
submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

~  
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Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
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# VOLUME THREE: Recordings

## CD 1

### Five Love Songs

*Guila Tiver (voice), Diana Weekes (piano)*

Live recording, Scots Church, Adelaide, 22 August, 2000.

Tr. 1.	The Flea	3'14"
Tr. 2.	Breake of Day	2'54"
Tr. 3.	A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day	6'30"
Tr. 4.	The Apparition	2'24"
Tr. 5.	The Expiration	3'07"

### Concertino for Chamber Ensemble

Computer generated recording

Tr. 6.	I. <i>Moderato</i>	5'45"
Tr. 7.	II. <i>Lento</i>	5'08"
Tr. 8.	III. <i>Spiritoso</i>	3'30"

Total time: 32'32"

## CD 2

### Sensambulations

Computer generated recording

Tr. 1.	Scene 1: Awakenings	6'21"
Tr. 2.	Scene 2: Awareness	6'07"
Tr. 3.	Scene 3: Anguish	9'44"
Tr. 4.	Scene 4: Anger	5'21"
Tr. 5.	Scene 5: Alienation	7'28"
Tr. 6.	Scene 6: Abandon	5'34"

### Sensambulations, Scene 1

*Elder Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra. Conductor Keith Crellin*

Live recording, Elder Hall, The University of Adelaide, 1 August, 2005.

Tr. 7.	Scene 1: Awakenings	6'33"
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### Sonata for Violoncello and Piano

Computer generated recording

Tr. 8.	I. <i>Moderato</i>	9'05"
Tr. 9.	II. <i>Andante semplice</i>	5'18"
Tr. 10.	III. <i>Scherzando</i>	3'20"
Tr. 11.	IV. <i>Energico</i>	6'41"

Total time: 71'33"

## CD 3

### String Quartet

*Australian String Quartet. Sophie Rowell, Anne Horton (violins), Sally Boud (viola), Rachel Johnson (cello).*

Live recording, Hartley Concert Room, The University of Adelaide, 26 October, 2006.

Tr. 1.	I. <i>Adagio—Moderato</i>	7'13"
Tr. 2.	II. <i>Scherzando</i>	4'57"
Tr. 3.	III. <i>Andante</i>	6'14"
Tr. 4.	IV. <i>Lento—Moderato</i>	7'04"

### Rhapsody on Russian Themes

*Paul Rickard-Ford and Natalia Sheduliakova.*

Live recording, Music Workshop, Sydney Conservatorium, 13 March 2006.

Tr. 5	Rhapsody on Russian Themes (live recording)	10'46"
Tr. 6	Rhapsody on Russian Themes (computer generated recording)	10'45"

### Six Holy Sonnets\*

*Adelaide Chamber Singers. Conductor Carl Crossin.*

Live recording, Elder Hall, The University of Adelaide, 14 November 2003.

Tr. 7.	I. Thou hast made me	3'24"
Tr. 8.	II. I am a little world	2'23"
Tr. 9.	III. At the round earth's imagined corners	4'57"
Tr. 10.	IV. Batter my heart	3'50"
Tr. 11.	V. Death, be not proud	3'34"
Tr. 12.	VI. This is my playes last scene	3'00"

Total time: 68'08"

## CD 4

### Four Dualities

*Amy Ellks (flute) and James Bailey (marimba); Philip Hall (horn) and Carolyn Burgess-Johanssen (harp); Bruce Stewart (cor anglais), Tim Kersten and Linda Seymour (guitars); Paul Backman and Ryan Simm, (xylophones), James Bailey (snare drum).*

*Dualities 2* was recorded in the Electronic Music Unit, The University of Adelaide, on 17 November 2006.

*Dualities 1, 3, & 4* were recorded in the Madley Percussion Studio, The University of Adelaide, 2 December 2006.

Tr. 1.	Dualities 1 for Alto Flute and Marimba	7'35"
Tr. 2.	Dualities 2 for Horn and Harp	6'21"
Tr. 3.	Dualities 3 for <i>Cor anglais</i> and 2 Guitars	6'41"
Tr. 4.	Dualities 4 for 2 Xylophones and Snare Drum (live recording)	5'42"
Tr. 5.	Dualities 4 (computer generated recording)	5'02"

\* Recording reproduced by permission of Radio Adelaide, 101.5 fm.

### **The Sun Rising\***

*Eve Vocal Trio.*

*Christie Anderson, Greta Bradman and Emma Horwood with Philip Hall (horn) and Steve Peterka (percussion).*

Live recording, Elder Hall, The University of Adelaide, 15 April 2005.

Tr. 6. The Sun Rising 3'43"

### **A Carol Trilogy\*\***

*The Kapelle Singers. Conductor Colin Curtis.*

Live recording, St. Peter's Cathedral, 16 December 2005.

Tr. 7. I. Chaucer's Carol 2'38"

Tr. 8. II. Shakespeare's Carol 2'50"

Tr. 9. III. Ben Jonson's Carol 3'08"

### **Four Corner Fanfare**

*The Elder Conservatorium Brass Ensemble. Conductor Howard Parkinson.*

Live recording during Graduation Ceremony, Bonython Hall, The University of Adelaide, 4 August, 2003.

Tr. 10. Four Corner Fanfare (live recording) 2'45"

Tr. 11. Four Corner Fanfare (computer generated recording) 2'50"

Total time: 49'16"

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\*\* Recording reproduced by permission of *The Kapelle Singers*, Adelaide.

# ABSTRACT

This doctoral submission comprises three volumes and is entitled *Twistonality: A Personal Exploration*. Volume One consists of a portfolio of eleven original compositions, Volume Two is an exegesis and Volume Three contains live and/or computer-generated recordings of the music. The works are scored for a variety of instrumental and vocal combinations and presented in the following order:

1. *Five Love Songs* (for voice and piano)
2. *Concertino for Chamber Ensemble*
3. *Sensambulations*, an Orchestral Ballet
4. *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano*
5. *String Quartet*
6. *Rhapsody on Russian Themes* for 2 Pianos
7. *Six Holy Sonnets* (SSAATBB)
8. *Four Dualities* (fl/mba; hn/hp; c.a/gt; xyl/S.D.)
9. *The Sun Rising* (for 3 female voices, horn and bongos)
10. *A Carol Trilogy* (SSAATBB)
11. *Four Corner Fanfare* (for brass ensemble and organ)

The compositions explore the use of tonality as a basis for the creation of a unique style which incorporates musical gestures encountered in both traditional and contemporary performance practice. The term 'twistonality', devised for this submission, refers to a musical language in which a composer may express original ideas by twisting forms and tonal structures already resident in the conscious or subconscious memory in order to reflect his or her emotional reality as experienced through music.

The exegesis presents a separate chapter on each of the compositions in order to explain its origin (Genesis), how it was composed (Method) and what was learnt when the work was performed (Performance and Revision). The chapters are self-contained and explore different aspects of the compositional process. The discussions include: text-setting

for solo voice and choirs; the reworking and expansion of original material; arranging techniques; orchestration and instrumentation; sonata, variation and ternary forms; the use of modes; tonal/rhythmic structures and formal design; improvisation and intellectual planning; the significance of programmatic and/or emotional content, and adherence to performance criteria. There is also detailed reference to works by other composers (Comparative Exploration). These include: John Mitchell's *La Corona* song cycle (Ch. 1); Bach's *Italian Concerto* and Stravinsky's *Concerto en Ré* for violin and orchestra (Ch. 2); Rodion Shchedrin's *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano* (Ch.4); Shostakovich's String Quartet No. 8 (Ch. 5); Rachmaninoff's *Russian Rhapsody* and Suite No. 2 (Ch. 6); Monteverdi's *Il Sestino* and Benjamin Britten's *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* (Ch. 7); Elizabeth Maconchy's *The Sun Rising* (Ch. 9); Beethoven's *Concerto in D* for violin and orchestra and Bach's *Prelude and Fugue No. 4* from Book I of *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (Ch.11). The final chapter is a review of selected writings chosen in order to illuminate the author's personal aesthetic and to place the research in a wider context.



# DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the musical compositions and the supporting exegesis that comprise this submission are my original work.

They contain no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief contain no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the exegesis.

I give consent to this copy of the complete submission being made available for loan and photocopying when deposited in the University Library. It should be noted that permission for copying does not extend to the compositions in their entirety or to the CDs in Volume Three without consultation with the author.

**Diana K. Weekes**

March 2007

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the course of this research I have had generous support from family members, friends and colleagues without whose advice and encouragement this submission would never have been completed. My sincere thanks are due, first and foremost, to all those who were prepared to listen to my music even in its early stages, and whose constructive comments—both favourable and otherwise—provided the incentive for me to continue. I am particularly indebted to my sister, Virginia Weekes, and to my friend Dr. Geoffrey Moon for their valuable support, patience and advice as well as for the enormous amount of time they have spent listening to, reading and commenting on innumerable draft versions both of the compositions and the relevant chapters of the exegesis.

Sincere thanks are also due to my supervisors at The University of Adelaide: to Prof. Charles Bodman Rae for his initial suggestion that I should embark on this project, and for lively discussions which continually challenged me to think outside the square; to Prof. Graeme Koehne for his unfailing ability to stimulate my enthusiasm while uncovering the enormous gaps in my knowledge, and for suggesting specific yet palatable remedies; and to Assoc. Prof. Kimi Coaldrake for her meticulous proof-reading, sound editorial advice and inspirational guidance. Special thanks are extended to the staff and students of the Elder Conservatorium of Music, whose company and companionship have helped to keep me in good spirits and provided on-going moral support. I am also greatly indebted to the current cohort of postgraduate students for their enlightening seminar presentations and their infectious enthusiasm for the pursuit of new knowledge.

The real music in this submission is contained in Volume Three. This would not have been realised without the help and support of the performers, all of whom have offered invaluable advice and given generously of their time in rehearsals leading to public performances and/or recordings of my works. I would therefore like to extend special thanks to the *Australian String Quartet*, Keith Crellin and the Elder Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra, Carl Crossin and the *Adelaide Chamber Singers*, Colin Curtis and

*The Kapelle Singers* of Adelaide, Howard Parkinson and the Elder Conservatorium Brass Ensemble, the Vocal Trio *Eve*, Paul Backman (percussion), James Bailey (percussion), Caroline Burgess-Johanssen (harp), Amy Ellks (flute), Philip Hall (horn), Tim Kersten (guitar), Steve Peterka (percussion), Paul Rickard-Ford (piano), Natalia Sheludiakova (piano), Linda Seymour (guitar), Ryan Simm (percussion), Bruce Stewart (*cor anglais*) and Guila Tiver (voice). I would also like to thank Hilary Kleinig (cello), Lesley Lewis (harpsichord), Graham Strahle (viol) and Jayne Varnish (recorder) for their performance of the Trio which served as a model for the *Concertino for Chamber Ensemble*.

In terms of the technology associated with this submission, several people have provided me with expert advice and reliable assistance. I therefore wish to thank Steve Richards for his willingness to be virtually 'on call' and for upgrading my computer to the required specifications on a regular basis; Keith Huxtable and Christian Haines for their advice on music software and their help in installing new programs; and John R. Clevenger for providing the special music fonts C.S. Times and ChordSymbol. In addition, I would like to thank the recording engineers Don Balaz, Tom Harrer, Silver Moon, Ray Thomas and Terry Truman for their patience, understanding and technical expertise.

Last but not least, I extend a very warm and special Thank-you to Maiah and Hallie Stewardson, for it is they who have proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the orchestral work, *Sensambulations*, is indeed a ballet—by dancing so expressively to 'Grandma's music'.

# EDITORIAL NOTES

## Tables, Figures and Examples

In the first eleven chapters of the exegesis, musical examples form an integral part of the discussion. Of the three types of captions, each has been used for a specific purpose.

**Tables** are used for diagrams, charts, lists, and structural analysis. They are numbered according to the Chapters, e.g. **Table 1.1, 1.2** etc. and a complete List of Tables is given on page xiv. The label '**Figure**' (Fig.) is used for all musical excerpts which correspond closely (or are identical) to passages in the final version of the score. Even when referring to earlier versions of a particular score, bar numbers shown in the label refer to the version published in Volume One, e.g. "**Fig. 1. *Concertino I*, v.1: = bars 10-16**". Where the score is incomplete, or where re-barring has been undertaken at a later stage, the '=' sign is also used so that the reader may easily refer to the identical passage in Volume One. Excerpts from works by other composers—discussed under the heading 'Comparative Exploration'—are also labelled as 'Figures'. These works are given full citations in footnotes at the first reference to the relevant score. '**Example**' (Ex.) is used to label those musical examples which have been created specifically for inclusion in the exegesis and which are therefore not immediately recognisable as excerpts from the scores. They include outlines of motivic cells, thematic material, and passages which are shown in piano reduction in order to save space. Bar numbers refer consistently to the equivalent sections in Volume One, e.g. **Ex. 1. "The Sun Rising": = bars 4-6**".

## Notation

Most of the musical quotations in the text of the exegesis were created before the final editing of the scores. Where the text refers to the final version of a particular work (especially the ballet, *Sensambulations*), any notational disparities have usually occurred only as a result of enharmonic change. While the rationalisation of key-signatures and accidentals was considered of paramount importance in the preparation of scores, it was not possible to include all of this revision in the figures and examples in Volume Two.

With regard to enharmonic equivalents, full use has been made of their functional ambiguity in order to obtain maximum clarity for the performer. Thus, in passages where accidentals contradict the key signature for any length of time, the alternative spelling has been used either to facilitate reading (e.g. vocal and choral works), to increase legibility (e.g. cluster chords in piano writing) or to influence intonation (e.g. Cello Sonata). Examples of unconventional notation are discussed more thoroughly in the exegesis.

## Accidentals

Courtesy accidentals have been included in all scores, but might at times appear too prolific. The *Sibelius* setting used is one which 'add[s] courtesies to notes of the same pitch in different octaves'.

## Duration

The timings of individual works and movements indicated on the back of the title page are those published by *Sibelius* at the end of each score. Thus there are minor discrepancies between the durations listed in Volume One and those of the live performances presented in Volume Three.

## Italicisation

Some of the compositions have been given generic titles (Sonata, String Quartet etc.) which, under normal circumstances, would not be italicised. For the sake of clarity, however, titles of all the works in the portfolio have been italicised throughout the exegesis as they have not yet been identified by number, key or Opus (e.g. String Quartet No.1 in D minor, Op. 7). Although this might appear to represent a deviation from standard practice, it allows chapter and page headings to remain consistent in appearance throughout Volume Two.

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# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

In preparing a portfolio of compositions for this doctoral submission, many questions have arisen concerning the nature of the research and how it might be articulated. It is therefore important to state that, from the outset, the motivating force behind the investigation has been the desire to discover what constitutes—in musical terms—an individual voice, or a personal style. While it would be rash to imagine that there is any proven recipe for the composition of ‘good music’, the notion of essential ingredients seems less far-fetched. This submission therefore represents a personal investigation into the creative act of musical composition, an exploration of the technical and psychological processes involved, and a search for stylistic identity.

If a written document is to be of value to human society, and if it is to make a lasting impression, the author will present material in such a way as to promote in the reader’s mind either an active and ongoing acceptance of facts and ideas, or the “willing suspension of disbelief”.<sup>1</sup> The manuscript will have a sound formal structure, a cogent argument or coherent narrative, and a distinctive—even authoritative—tone of voice. Where research is involved<sup>2</sup>, the process will be subservient to the end product. In the case of literary fiction, the work is likely to be aesthetically pleasing, well proportioned, stylistically homogenous, well-informed and morally challenging. It might contribute little to an existing body of knowledge, but its existence is justified as a donation to the array of individual, imaginative insights which are known, collectively, as art.

Much the same can be said about music. Although composition is now taught to a high level at most reputable music institutions, there are those who argue that art is unteachable. How may scholarship inform art? Does it encourage and nurture the artist, or could it stifle creativity? Should there be an emphasis on originality, or a concession to the illusion of originality masquerading as a currently fashionable technique? If an individual style is recognisable, is this because a composer has been well taught, self-taught, or both? If the craft of composition may be learned by reference to existing works, at what point does

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *Biographica Literaria*, Chapter XIV. In *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. (New York: Random House, 1951) 264. This expression encapsulates, exquisitely, the mechanism by which we enter the world of make-believe. The surrounding text clearly reveals the context in which it was first used: “In this idea originated the idea of the ‘Lyrical Ballads’; in which it was agreed, that my endeavours should be directed to persona and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.”

<sup>2</sup> Examples would include history, biography, the modern historical novel, or the ficto-critical essay.



a student begin to resist such conventions and speak from experience, in his or her own (musical) language? If a compositional technique leads to inaccessibility, what are the practical consequences? Is creativity an intuitive or intellectual process, or a combination of both? Does the process define the product, and if so, how? These are some of the questions that have stimulated (and occasionally threatened to constrain) the creative endeavours represented here by the compositions themselves and this accompanying exegesis. Definitive answers to such controversial issues, however, lie well beyond the scope of this submission.

In more specific terms, the main purpose of the research has been to investigate the ways in which functional and/or non-directional harmony might be combined with more recent compositional techniques in order to create something new. The word 'twistonal' has been coined to describe a style which is informed by historical conventions and formally dependent on audible harmonic progression and /or linear narrative, but which also makes use of contemporary idioms. Within a tonal context the use of cadences invariably helps to establish musical structure, but there are many other ways in which this can be accomplished. Functional chord progression is a powerful tool, one which can be consciously avoided but is difficult to replace. Alternate structural devices or artificial techniques, when strictly adhered to, tend to limit the recognition of emotional content by way of reference to the "known".<sup>3</sup> In acknowledging the fact that compositional activity may be nurtured and inspired by the knowledge of existing works written during the last five hundred years, it seems reasonable to believe that prevailing tonal structures resident in the conscious (and perhaps subconscious) memory might be twisted to incorporate more recent techniques<sup>4</sup> and, by a process of cross-fertilization, lead to the evolution of a unique style—an audible signature, as it were. While the music in this portfolio represents a search for stylistic identity, the research concludes that this involves a combination of factors including a knowledge and appreciation of great musical literature from the past, an

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<sup>3</sup> While this statement is intended to be taken simply at face value, it is important to recognise that an enormous amount of scholarship has been devoted to this subject. The School of Music at Ohio State University currently offers a course entitled 'Music and Emotion', for which the Selected Bibliography is divided into five sections: Music & Emotion – General (49 references), Music and Emotion – Philosophical (6), Music and Emotion – Cross-cultural (9), Emotion and Sound (15) and General Literature on Emotion (50). <http://musiccog.ohio-state.edu/Music829D/music829D.html>, (7 August, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> I have, however, deliberately avoided the use of total serialisation, believing it to be an intellectual process devoid of emotional interest; and minimalist techniques have been used only sparingly as a technical device to create tension rather than to extend the duration of a typically miniscule idea.

understanding of compositional techniques, an awareness of contemporary culture and a recognition of the emotional significance of performance as a social reality.

Of course the term 'twistonal' might be applied to the work of numerous composers: Franz Liszt, Hugo Wolf, Ravel, Prokofiev, Britten and many others, most of whom were practising musicians and often pianists. They themselves have found other ways to explain their music, and musicologists have used standard terms such as 'impressionistic', 'neo-classical' etc. to place them within an historical context. The notion of 'twistonality', on the other hand, is an attempt to account for the fact that performer-composers, being both enriched and encumbered by music (perhaps even of a specific era or style) from the past, cannot easily distance themselves from all that has gone before. Instead, they must twist an inherited tonal language to accommodate new ideas, to express their own emotional experience, informed as it is by current aesthetic trends, contemporary art and the prevailing cultural environment. 'Twistonality', therefore, might be regarded as the performer-composer's solution, the expressive outcome of the classical performer's search for a personal style, or musical identity. It is neither a new (theoretical) approach to composition, nor a reference to any particular compositional procedure. Rather, it appears as a result of the process of natural selection whereby creative musicians attempt to wrest something new from the immense legacy of the past.

Perhaps it is peculiar to the Australian temperament to write 'serious' music which caters for 'Everyman' in a distinctively parodic or popular style, and which is at the same time both innovative and experimental. Percy Grainger (1882-1961) is a good example: nothing will prevent the public's lasting enjoyment of *Country Gardens* or *Shepherd's Hey*, but audiences are also intrigued and amused by *The Warriors*, which is a much more complex work. By association, however, one might also cite the American, Charles Ives (1874-1954) who, despite his dual career as composer and businessman, is remembered as one of the most enterprising writers of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. His famous *Piano Sonata No.2* was, in his own words, an attempt "to present an impression of the spirit of the literature and the philosophy of the men of Concord"<sup>5</sup>, but in terms of its rhythmic and harmonic complexity it has been hailed by many as a very important work. Both Grainger

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Crossley-Holland. "Charles (Edward) Ives". In *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Vol.4. Eric Blom, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1954) 560.

and Ives were practising musicians and in each case their compositional style might easily be described as ‘twistonal’. In a more contemporary context the Russian composer, Rodion Shchedrin (b.1932), is just one example of those who today can be regarded as experimenting within the vague confines of a tonal context and whose music is equally distinctive. Although one would not wish to compare the works in this portfolio with those of Shchedrin, it appears that our personal agenda is almost identical. In an introduction to his *Old Russian Circus Music*, he writes:

My *Circus* is directed straight at the listener, the audience, at the skill of the instrumental player, the soloist, at the joy that can be derived from well coordinated and virtuoso ensemble playing. In this work I deliberately strove for colour, musical painting, and humour, and also for those things which are effective, superficial and entertaining. In a word, I flew in the face of what is now considered to be good taste, i.e. depicting oneself as an ascetic, ruminating philosopher, or a monk who has taken the vows of schema.<sup>6</sup>

In the course of this research it should become abundantly clear that I feel a close affinity with Shchedrin, and it therefore seems logical to quote this passage as representative of my own views in general. It could easily relate to any of the works in this portfolio, and therefore provides an excellent summary of my compositional intentions.

Thus the concept of ‘twistonality’ provides the framework for an investigation into the act of musical composition and the creation of a personal style. The aims were to uncover problems associated with the use of a tonal language which has long been considered *passé* and to explore and articulate various possible solutions. Reginald Smith Brindle writes that “the number of possible twelve-note series is 479,001,600, but each composer designs the series he uses to suit each individual composition.”<sup>7</sup> In imagining the number of combinations possible with the use of free twelve-note composition underpinned by audible harmonic progression, one would have to regard 479,001,600 as the tip of the iceberg. It would therefore seem logical to assume that good music may still be written within a tonal context, and that—depending on the chosen solutions—it might reveal distinguishing features worthy of public attention.

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<sup>6</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, trans. Phillip Taylor. Notes to *Old Russian Circus Music*. Music by Rodion Shchedrin. Cond. Vassily Sinaisky. BBC Philharmonic. CD (Chan 9552) 4.

<sup>7</sup> Reginald Smith Brindle. *Serial Composition*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 4.

This submission is in three parts. The primary content resides in Volume One, a portfolio of eleven compositions ranging from an orchestral ballet of forty-five minutes' duration to a simple fanfare lasting less than three minutes. The scores have been published double-sided using the *Sibelius* software and an extra copy of the orchestral score, wire-bound in A3 portrait format, has been provided in order to prevent the use of a magnifying glass. Volume Two is submitted in the single-sided format normally used for dissertations. It is hoped that the two volumes will make it comfortable for the reader to refer to the final version of scores while reading the commentary and musical examples, some of which are taken from earlier versions (see also Editorial Notes, p. xii). Volume Three consists of four CDs containing live and/or computer-generated recordings of the compositions in the portfolio. The works and their component parts are presented on separate tracks in the same order as they appear in Volume One (Portfolio of Compositions) and Volume Two (Exegesis).<sup>8</sup>

The exegesis contains a detailed discussion and analysis of the portfolio, its primary aim being to examine the process by which the compositions have evolved. A separate chapter is devoted to each work in order to provide explanatory commentary and, where possible, to indicate what has been learnt by hearing it in rehearsal and/or performance. Reference is also made to the works of other composers, where comparative analysis has helped to provide a healthy perspective on these endeavours, or to indicate new directions for future exploration. In the case of contemporary works and/or settings of the same or similar texts, such research has been undertaken only after the compositions were already completed. Attempts have been made to avoid 'deadly' prose and—with some exceptions—to restrict formal analysis to those aspects of the work which relate to pre-compositional design. While much of the musical writing was spontaneous, reflective analysis also played an important part; indeed, the way in which these two approaches were combined forms the basis for much of the ensuing discussion. Each chapter follows a similar pattern, with headings for Genesis, Method, Performance and Revision, and Comparative Exploration; while the content varies according to the nature of the works themselves, different aspects of the compositional process are addressed in each chapter.

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<sup>8</sup> The only exception occurs in Chapter One, where the third song in the cycle, "A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day" (CD 1, Track 3) is the first one to be discussed.

In assembling the finished product, some thought was given to the ordering of the compositions. Volume Two is divided into four sections which, with the reader's indulgence, might be interpreted as follows.

#### **PART A: Exposition**

Chapters One and Three deal with the *Five Love Songs* (2000, revised 2002) and an extended realisation of the same material in the form of an orchestral ballet, *Sensambulations* (2004-2006). Chapter 2 presents the *Concertino for Chamber Ensemble* (2003-2006) which was the required set work for the degree program. (This was based on a much earlier work which is referred to in the discussion, but not included in the submission.) Part A, therefore, immediately exposes both the earliest and most recent works in the portfolio.

#### **PART B: Development**

Chapters Four to Eight cover the *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano*, the *String Quartet*, the *Rhapsody on Russian Themes for Two Pianos*, the *Six Holy Sonnets*, and the four *Dualities*. These works best represent the developmental phase of the compositional activity, and—apart from the *Rhapsody*, which was written last—they are presented in approximately reverse chronological order.

#### **PART C: Recapitulation**

Chapters Nine to Eleven contain shorter works which are perhaps less crucial to the submission as a whole. *The Sun Rising*, *A Carol Trilogy* and the *Four Corner Fanfare* are all examples of music which has been written for special occasions, or by request. They are included in order to show how the compositional process was affected by specific performance criteria, although the *Fanfare* may be regarded as marginal.

#### **PART D: Coda**

Chapter Twelve is intended to summarise the portfolio's rationale and the cultural environment from which it springs. In terms of the exegesis it might be regarded as a postscript. With regard to the submission as a whole, however, it attempts to place the research within a broader, humanistic framework and therefore stands in *lieu* of a formal Conclusion.

## INTRODUCTION

Volume Three consists of four CDs which contain recordings made either during public concerts or in the recording studio. For those works which have not yet been performed, musical realisations have been created with a combination of sounds from *Native Instruments Kontakt Player Gold*, the *Roland SoundCanvas SK-500* and the *Garritan Personal Orchestra*. It should be noted that during the compositional process, synthesised (computer) playback has often acted as a catalyst for experimentation with various combinations of instrumental timbre and tonal intensity. Although the *Roland SoundCanvas SK-500* has an extensive range of percussion sounds and sound effects, the *Garritan Personal Orchestra* was found to have better quality individual string samples and—for the *Concertino* in particular—the use of this software led to a number of minor adjustments in the balancing of parts.

Computerised playback has a small advantage in terms of accuracy, so several works have been included in both their live and synthetic versions. The sanitised intonation and mechanised rhythm, however, are clearly major drawbacks. In addition, while the *Sibelius Kontakt Player* is able to translate most dynamic markings and ‘hairpins’ into appropriate MIDI messages, it does not yet recognize terms such as *crescendo* or *diminuendo*. This effectively means that—for the most realistic playback—all use of such terms needs to be supported by hidden ‘hairpins’ and/or suitable instructions for MIDI controllers. Given the time-frame for the preparation of this submission, the artificial realisation of scores has not been regarded as a high priority—rather, the intention has been to provide a synthesised version of sufficient quality to stimulate the listener’s imagination. Were it not for the advent of new technology, this research is unlikely to have materialised, as the reader will discover in Chapter One.



# PART A

# EXPOSITION

# 1

## THE METAPHYSICAL MUSE

### *FIVE LOVE SONGS*



## Genesis

Some years ago I spent time during the summer months learning to use the *Finale* publishing program. Having reached “Tutorial 3: A Lead Sheet” and finding myself typing the lyrics to “Oh Susannah”, I suddenly realized that more might be gained by writing a song myself—a snap decision which proved to have long-term consequences. Having quickly located my favourite poem, John Donne’s “A Nocturnall Upon S. Lucies Day”, within an hour I found myself completely engrossed in the spontaneous act of composition for which the software merely provided a tool. When the song was finished, I immediately chose another poem (“The Flea”) and then another (“The Apparition”), until I realised I now had three texts representing different stages in a central human relationship. “A Nocturnall”<sup>1</sup> is concerned with the death of a partner, grief and loss; “The Flea” relates to courtship, flirtation and pre-marital frustration; and “The Apparition” describes a situation where rejection leads to thoughts of anger and revenge, albeit in the realm of fantasy:

When by thy scorne, O murdresse, I am dead,  
And that thou thinkst thee free  
From all solicitation from mee,  
Then shall my ghost come to thy bed . . .<sup>2</sup>

It soon became apparent that two more songs might produce an effective song cycle in which “A Nocturnall” could stand as the central work, this being the longest poem and the most serious in tone. My next choice was “Breake of Day”, in which a female narrator describes her frustration with a new husband who has to get up and go to work each day; this proved suitable for insertion between “The Flea” and “A Nocturnall”. And finally, to end the cycle (and bring us back to reality) “The Expiration” seemed appropriate because it encapsulates so succinctly the painful and drawn-out process of final separation. Thus, although four of the songs were written in a different order from the one in which they appear in the portfolio (i.e. the completed cycle), each poem was deliberately chosen to represent a different aspect of love and its emotional consequences.

Apart from this initial impetus, two other motivating factors gradually emerged. For some years I had been working regularly with a professional singer, a friend and colleague for whom I now imagined these songs were actually being written. In addition, there was an opportunity for us to present the song cycle publicly later that year, so the thought of

<sup>1</sup> “A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day” has been abbreviated to “A Nocturnall” throughout the exegesis.

<sup>2</sup> John Hayward, ed. *John Donne, A Selection of his Poetry*. (Ringwood: Penguin, 1967) 52.

our collaboration involved taking into account various practical considerations relating to our strengths as practising musicians, and the limited time available for rehearsal.

## The Texts

Because the texts were chosen on the basis of their literary merit, it is relevant to explain briefly the nature of my preliminary investigations into the poems themselves, some of which occurred much earlier in my experience. For those unfamiliar with the language, metaphysical poetry can be difficult at first because it is full of pun and paradox, but as a student of English Literature I had already spent many hours pouring over these poems with the help of the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary.<sup>3</sup> One of its most impressive features is the extent to which Donne's poetry extracts multiple meanings from the simplest of analogies. For example, "A Nocturnall" begins with a description of the mid-winter solstice:

Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes,  
*Lucies*, who scarce seaven houres herself unmaskes,  
 The sun is spent, and now his flasks  
 Send forth light squibs, no constant rayes;<sup>4</sup>

It is almost impossible to feel the full impact of this passage without knowing that the word "flask" in Old English meant a vessel for carrying liquor, but also, by 1549, a metal or leather container for carrying gunpowder; literally, a "powder-flask". The word "squib" in 1530 meant a type of firework whose charge usually terminated in a slight explosion and, according to Theodore Redpath, the term was "regularly used in Donne's time for the half-charges on which military recruits were trained".<sup>5</sup> By 1579, however, it also meant "to use smart or sarcastic language (a type of shooting out at people or things, hence 'to squib in the journals')", which adds another dimension altogether. The word "ray", apart from its obvious reference to light, also meant the "order or array especially of soldiers, their line or rank (1587)". Thus we discover that the opening lines contain a myriad of visual and

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<sup>3</sup> The texts were all originally taken from the Hayward version, but later I referred to another edition, i.e. Redpath, Theodore, ed. *The Songs and Sonets of John Donne*. (Methuen: London, 1964). Redpath claimed to have published Donne's own revised editions of some of the poems. Here I found a few minor changes in word order and in the interpretation of certain phrases, but in general the dictionary provided most of the clues to the complexity of the language itself. Unless otherwise stated, the meanings given here are from *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd edition.

<sup>4</sup> Hayward 50.

<sup>5</sup> Redpath 71.

verbal connotations, any or all of which might affect the artistic choices made by a composer wishing to set the poem to music.

Quite apart from these layers of poetic implication, however, it is of fundamental importance to understand the syntax which, in metaphysical poetry, is often quite convoluted. Sometimes even the simplest passages prove treacherous, such as lines 22–27 of “A Nocturnall”:

Oft a flood  
 Have we two wept, and so  
 Drowned the whole world, us two; oft we did grow  
 To be two Chaosses, when we did show  
 Care to aught else; and often absences  
 Withdrew our souls, and made us carcasses.<sup>6</sup>

At first I had interpreted the phrase “when we did show care to aught else” as meaning “when we showed no interest in anything else”.<sup>7</sup> However, I later found Redpath’s interpretation to be correct: when we *worried about* anything else, or in his words “when either of us made the other jealous by showing an inclination for someone or something else”.<sup>8</sup> On an emotional level, this was an essential discovery which gave much clearer meaning to the passage as a whole, although in this instance I did not feel obliged to make any musical correction.

Last but not least, anyone familiar with Donne’s poetry will realize that the language is meticulously scanned using speech rhythms which are bold, direct and uncomplicated. Unlike the works of T.S. Eliot or Gerard Manly Hopkins with their sophisticated inner rhythms and changeable meters, Donne’s poetry invariably suggests a time signature. Furthermore, if the speech patterns are strictly adhered to, it even implies varied but well-defined segments within longer phrases which lend themselves perfectly to musical amplification. In an article written for *The Times* in May 2005, arts correspondent Dalya Alberge reports the recent discovery of four new musical scores, all settings of poems by John Donne, whom she calls “the Cole Porter of his day”.<sup>9</sup> The manuscripts were found in the British Library in London and the Bodleian in Oxford by Donne scholar Dr Jonathon

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<sup>6</sup> Hayward 50.

<sup>7</sup> This would have been appropriate if Donne had written “when we did show care to *naught* else”.

<sup>8</sup> Redpath 73.

<sup>9</sup> Dalya Alberge. “John Donne, 17<sup>th</sup> century poet of pop”. *The Times* 9 May, 2005.  
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2-1604129,00.html>, 16 November, 2005.

Holmes, who has apparently identified at least seven contemporary composers who set Donne's words to music. He is reported to have said that "No other playwright, poet or prose writer had received such attention from musicians and composers".<sup>10</sup> Thus while some poetry is intrinsically musical, it is often difficult to conceive in musical terms; Donne's poetry, for all its strength and imagery, is quite the opposite, and was clearly recognised even in his day as suitable song material.

## Method

Turning now to the compositional process, it is important to re-emphasise that these songs were directly inspired by the poems themselves. The act of setting words to music involves quite a different process from purely instrumental writing in so far as it engages one's literary as well as one's musical imagination, and in these songs it is the former which stimulates and disciplines the latter. While the degree of interconnection between the two might vary greatly amongst individual composers and in accordance with the nature of the work in question, a strophic song (and especially one with many verses) is unlikely to contain the same degree of correlation between text and music as one which is through-composed. On the other hand, a composer might simply choose to depict the overall mood or atmosphere of the poem rather than to become involved in the kind of superficial word-painting which could easily lead to *clichés*. Although I have certainly used descriptive techniques to highlight certain words and phrases, I now realise (after the event) that while some of this was quite deliberate, some of it seems to have occurred quite spontaneously at a subconscious level.

Bearing in mind its linguistic complexity, one might well question my decision to begin with "**A Nocturnall**"<sup>11</sup> rather than with one of the shorter, simpler *Songs*, but as I was relatively unfamiliar with the software and primarily concerned with the lyrics, it offered an opportunity to focus on the vocal line and write a relatively simple accompaniment. The length of the poem recommended that it be through-composed, and that any melismatic treatment of words should be reserved for occasional rhythmic or melodic emphasis; also, the dense imagery of the opening lines actually dictated sparse

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<sup>10</sup> Alberge.

<sup>11</sup> The name of the song is printed in **bold** in order to alert the reader to the fact that, from this point on, the discussion is focussed on this particular work. This practice has been maintained throughout the exegesis in order to avoid the use of extra headings.

piano writing to underline the significance of the text. It seemed logical to adopt a slow rhythm and a recitative-like vocal line which could be manipulated to suit the nature and pace of the argument as it progressed (see Fig. 1). The descending pairs of chords were chosen partly to enhance the fragile, sombre mood (a type of sighing?) and also to allow time for the text to make its full impact on the listener.

Fig. 1. "A Nocturnall": bars 3–6

At first glance it might seem odd that the key signature and the accompaniment indicate D $\flat$  major while the vocal line is written in sharps, but the alternative (see Ex. 1) looked very uninviting for the singer.

Ex. 1. "A Nocturnall": = bars 3–6

This was of some concern as F $\flat$  and E $\flat\flat$  are found on strong beats during the opening stages of the song. In any case, I believe that where legibility is concerned, singers are more easily intimidated than instrumentalists by angularities or tonal aberrations in the melodic line, and therefore an enharmonic equivalent seemed justified. A musicologist might also assume that the tonal emphasis on G $\flat$  and/or F $\sharp$  throughout the song is intended to highlight the idea of a mid-way point, being a tritone away from C; however, although this might be considered an added subtlety, it happened either at a subconscious level, or by chance.

In all of the songs, the choice of key was largely determined by the sound qualities of the piano in certain registers, but physical comfort or ease of execution (for the pianist) also played a part. As the score was improvised and entered with the aid of an electronic keyboard, suitable fingerings and comfortable chord patterns could be readily established. Efforts were made to use a harmonic structure flexible enough to illuminate certain thoughts or arguments programmatically while at the same time retaining the essential unity of the poem. The idea of using augmented chords in bars 12–16 probably originated

unity of the poem. The idea of using augmented chords in bars 12–16 probably originated in a desire to ‘collapse’ the harmony later on, in keeping with the words “life is shrunke” (bars 16–17), and to resolve the tension at the end of the stanza with the word “Epitaph”. The second stanza (bars 22–38) is quicker in tempo and the *Più mosso*, combined with the *ad libitum* marking in bar 26, was designed to allow the singer to pace the narrative correctly. The augmented chords (see Fig. 2) return to introduce the section quoted above, “Of a flood have we two wept”.

Fig. 2. “A Nocturnall”: bars 50–53

Here I have tried to create a musical texture which highlights the underlying sexual metaphor, where weeping and drowning are traditionally linked with the emission of fluids and the concept of orgasm itself.

Without wishing to dwell unnecessarily on isolated examples of word-painting, it is also relevant to observe how the form of the song was largely dictated by the poem’s structure and content. The recurrence of the words “Sunne” and “midnight” in the last stanza (apart from its rhythmic similarities with the first verse) provoked a natural return to the opening material which is now partially inverted (see Fig. 3), for although all is lost for the protagonist there is still hope for lovers, and this in turn invites an echo of previous melodic activity.

Fig. 3. “A Nocturnall”: bars 85–90

contd.

89 *cresc.*  
 this time to the Goat is runne, to fetch new lust and give it you  
*cresc.* *p*

As for the subject matter, it is worth noting that some passages in the text have inspired the same musical treatment even though at the time of writing this was not a matter of conscious choice but (presumably) one of intuitive association. For example in bars 29–30, where Donne describes the alchemy of death or loss<sup>12</sup>, and in bars 73–74, where he mentions the mysterious and magnetic powers of the natural world<sup>13</sup>, I have used triplet crotchets in the vocal line against normal quavers in the accompaniment, a variation which—despite a lack of conscious planning—occurs nowhere else in the song. Similarly, the emotional impact of bars 14–16<sup>14</sup> seems to be reflected in bars 94–96<sup>15</sup> and consequently these parallel contrasts between life (or after-life) and death (or hibernation) are evoked not just by the text but by the music itself. Even though the song was already quite long, a tiny ‘play-out’ at the end seemed rhythmically (and emotionally) appropriate, whereas the 2-bar introduction was added at a much later stage to establish a new mood and prepare for the dramatic opening statement.

Although it seemed appropriate to begin with the song which was written first, the remaining songs will be discussed in the order in which they appear in the cycle. “The Flea” was, in any case, my second choice, and here again there is a mixture of planned (conscious) and intuitive (unconscious) writing. For example, since a flea is very tiny, I deliberately chose to begin the introduction with *staccato* minor seconds in a high register (see Fig. 4), one of the smallest (harmonic) sounds available.

<sup>12</sup> “For his art did express/A quintessence even from nothingness”

<sup>13</sup> “Yea plants, yea stones detest and love”

<sup>14</sup> “The general balme th’hydroptique earth hath drunke/Wither, as to the bed’s-feet, life is shrunk,/Dead and interr’d;”

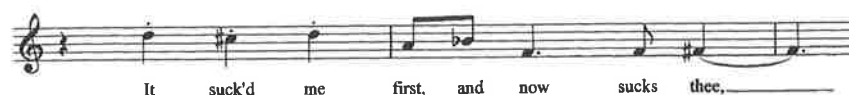
<sup>15</sup> “Since she enjoys her long nights festival/Let me prepare towards her, and let me call/This hour her Vigil, and her Eve”.

Fig. 4. “The Flea”: bars 1–6



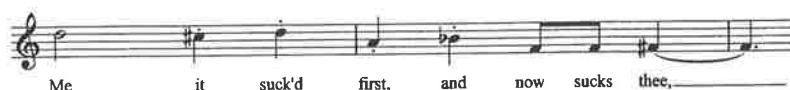
Once this pattern was established I simply wrote a tune for the left hand, not realizing until well after the song was finished that the melody itself also had a “jumping” character. If this seems hard to believe, I venture to suggest that it is the language itself which is *staccato*, and that the quick repetition of the word “mark” in line 1 and the sharp consonants in the words “sucks” and “suck’d” in line 3 were contributing factors! In the John Hayward version of this poem, lines 3–4 read: “It suck’d me first, and now sucks thee,/And in this flea, our two bloods mingled bee”<sup>16</sup>, whereas the revised version published by Redpath gives the narrator a more audacious character: “Me it sucked first, and now sucks thee,/And in this flea our two bloods mingled be”.<sup>17</sup> The meaning is the same, but the tone has changed. The vocal line as it now stands (see Ex. 2) tends to promote the temporal aspect of the narrative by lengthening the word “now”.

Ex. 2. “The Flea”: = bars 17–18



Had I taken the text from Redpath, this would almost certainly have been replaced by something which would match the opening phrase (bars 10–11) and promote the *dramatis personae* (see Ex. 3).

Ex. 3. “The Flea”: = bars 17–18



Then we come to the line “Thou know’st that this cannot be said a sinne, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead”.<sup>18</sup> This is quite different in the later version, which reads: “Confess it:

<sup>16</sup> Hayward 48.

<sup>17</sup> Redpath 64. Note that Redpath uses simplified spelling, some of which I have now adopted for the final version of the *Five Love Songs*. I have also used his (simplified) punctuation, though it differs only slightly from the Hayward version.

<sup>18</sup> Hayward 48.



this cannot be said a sin, or shame, or loss of maidenhead”.<sup>19</sup> Such a disparity between gentle logic and a blatant imperative would call for a change not only in the vocal line, but in the underlying harmony.

Fig. 5. “The Flea”: bars 22–23

Fig. 6. “The Flea”: = bars 22–23

Figure 5 shows the two bars in their original form, while Fig. 6 represents a likely outcome were I to adopt the alternative version of the text. Here there is no gentle harmonic progression, but simply an inversion of the  $E^{(b9)}-[E-G\#-B-(D)-F]$  which has already announced what follows, just as the narrator boldly assumes his partner's conspiratorial agreement with the argument he is about to advance. However, since the songs were recorded in their original version, I have chosen on this occasion not to alter the score.

As I recall, the first stanza was already completed before I decided to enter any key signature, and this was changed to F major for the setting of the second verse. The quotation from Ravel's *Bolero* was simply a humorous gesture on my part, since that work is often associated with the idea of sexual climax, but only now have I realized that it comes at bar 51, almost exactly half-way through the song. A return to D major at bar 68 brings a piano interlude where, for the first time, the main melody is heard in minor seconds. This is intended to reinforce the concentrated nature of the topic under discussion, the ludicrous complexity of which is now indicated by the imitative treatment in bars 72–75. It is also relevant to observe that as the argument is brought to its logical conclusion (bars 91–97), the accompaniment becomes more sparse, allowing the message (a cleverly designed imitation of 'the moral of the story') to be clearly understood by the listener. The final chord was initially placed on the first beat of the bar; its subsequent delay and the addition of the grace were a light-hearted afterthought.

<sup>19</sup> Redpath 64.

The Introduction to “Breake of Day” (see Fig. 7) was intended to suggest a gentle sunrise and to provide material capable of further development.

Fig. 7. “Breake of Day”: bars 1–4



In terms of the cycle as a whole, the longer introduction provides a convincing change of mood, and the contrasting rhythm of the vocal line is intended to stress the discursive nature of the poem. The argument proper begins in bar 13 (see Fig. 8), where slight rhythmic distortion and off-beat accents are used for dramatic effect.

Fig. 8. “Breake of Day”: bars 13–16

Much of what follows is concerned with the stupidity of a situation where darkness and light threaten to become figurative equivalents for togetherness and separation, so the opening material is used in various ways to colour the argument as it proceeds. For example, the idea of a *quasi* ground bass (bars 16–21) literally describes a ‘sticky situation’; the fragmentation in bars 25–28 conjures up a certain hesitance which demands further explanation; the uninterrupted quavers (bars 33–44) underline the self-perpetuating nature of artificial rationalisation (for this is what Light would say, if it could speak!); and finally the use of the triplet diminution from bar 45 suggests a slight surge in the anxiety level. The breathlessness of bars 50–51 is intended to prepare the listener for what could be considered the peak of the argument, where a second outburst of rhythmic distortion (see Fig. 9) seemed justified.

Fig. 9. “Breake of Day”: bars 52–54

The poor, the foul, the false, love can admit, But not the busied man

The last two lines of the poem express a coolly resigned summary of the narrator’s quandary which evokes not only a return to the ground bass but dormant repetition of the musical figuration, and the song ends with an echo of the opening bar, perhaps confirming the fact that this is, indeed, a no-win situation.

“Breake of Day” is unusual in that it is the only poem in which the narrator is a woman. Furthermore, although this is a relatively short poem, Redpath proposes quite a few changes in the text which he says are based “on the authority of a number of manuscripts, including some which may embody corrections by Donne himself”.<sup>20</sup> These alterations are given in Table 1.1, where the earlier version, according to Hayward and others, is given in brackets.

Table 1.1: Textual variation in “Breake of Day”

Line number	Redpath (Hayward) versions
6	Should in despite of light hold (keep) us together
9	This is (were) the worst that it could say
10	That, being well, I fain would stay,
11	And that I love (lov’d) my heart and honour so
12	That I would not from him, that hath (had) them, go.
17	He which hath business, and makes love, doth do
18	Such wrong, as if (when) a married man should (doth) woo.

In relation to lines 9–12, Redpath argues that the present tense gives greater vividness, and that “it also seems to give something like a double effect to the stanza, i.e. this is what she *would* say in the hypothetical circumstances, but it is also what she is *in fact* saying now”.<sup>21</sup> His justification for the change in line 18 is that it avoids the repetition of ‘doth’, and

<sup>20</sup> Redpath 35.

<sup>21</sup> Redpath 35.

“makes the end of the poem sharper, more cynical, than the other reading would”.<sup>22</sup> Returning for a moment to Dalya Alberge’s article in *The Times*, when referring to contemporary settings of John Donne’s poems she notes that “*Break of Day* [sic] was set and printed simultaneously by three composers—John Dowland, Orlando Gibbons and William Corkine”.<sup>23</sup> Although such an idea could not be easily proven without further extensive research, I venture to suggest that some of Donne’s own corrections might have actually been carried out as a result of suggestions from the composers of the day, or indeed the performers themselves. Since most of these changes appear to create a vocal line that is actually easier to sing, and because (unlike those in “The Flea”) they do not require any musical alteration, all of them have been adopted in the final version.

After the sombre mood cast by “A Nocturnall”, “**The Apparition**” represents a complete change of pace and texture. This is no flirtatious or reasoned argument addressed to a real partner, but an impassioned, private monologue hurled at a vividly imagined ex-lover. Consisting of just one 17-line stanza which, in both versions, is made up of one long sentence, the poem called for an altogether more virtuosic approach to both the vocal line and the accompaniment, so it begins in 6/8 time with fistfuls of cluster-chords (see Fig. 10) to create a sense of outrage combined with some impetuosity.

Fig. 10. “The Apparition”: = bars 3-6

A strong, declamatory style was also required for the singer so an octave leap was immediately followed by a duplet (see Ex. 4) to create a more supple speech rhythm.

Ex. 4. “The Apparition”: = bars 9-14

<sup>22</sup> Redpath 35.

<sup>23</sup> Alberge.

The flow-on effect of this was that, as soon as the situation became complicated by the suggestion of further visits from the narrator, cross-rhythms could be brought into play (see Fig. 11) to highlight the dangers of any future “solicitation”.<sup>24</sup>

Fig.11. “The Apparition”: bars 15–20

The musical score for bars 15–20 of "The Apparition" consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are: "And that thou thinks thee free From all so-li-ci-ta-tion from me,". The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. It features complex rhythmic patterns, including accents and slurs, and is labeled "Pno." on the left.

Thus the writing continued apace, dictated solely by Donne’s thought processes (or those of the protagonist) and my own will to express them in music, something which has here produced a few pictorial escapades just for the fun of it. When it was time for a break, the Tschaikowsky *Romeo and Juliet* overture happened to be playing on the radio, and sensing that this was some kind of omen, I decided to weave snippets of its most sentimental theme into what was becoming a somewhat busy texture. The first obvious opportunity came at bar 35 (see Fig. 12), where any clearly recognisable tune could quickly be scotched, in keeping with the scandalous idea being expressed in the poem.

Fig. 12. “The Apparition”: bars 35–38

The musical score for bars 35–38 of "The Apparition" consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are: "thy sicke ta - per will be - gin to winke, and he,". The piano accompaniment is in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with the same key signature and time signature. It features complex rhythmic patterns, including accents and slurs, and is labeled "Pno." on the left.

However, there are other echoes in bars 53–54, and again in bars 91–92, so they are fairly evenly spread throughout the song, and in the end they provided a useful ballast which allowed me to keep both the vocal line and the accompaniment alive despite the repetition of certain phrases and harmonic progressions. It is important to stress that this was never intended as a serious song, but that I was nevertheless serious about getting it to work as

<sup>24</sup> A similar example can be found in bar 87, where the word “painfully” is set to four crotchets in the vocal line against six quavers in the accompaniment, although at the time I did not consciously connect the two.

the musical expression of an unusually outspoken text, and in this respect I was thankful for the overtones which Tchaikowsky provided. The song was finished in less than a day.

After such excitement it was clear that “The Expiration” would need to begin with a longer introduction, and since the poem basically describes the reluctant dissolution of a partnership, a meandering melody in compound quadruple time seemed appropriate. Although this is the shortest of the five poems, the language is very dense and difficult to follow at first, so the setting is deliberately slow. The faltering, rather uncertain nature of the circumstances outlined here have been reflected not just in the circular motion of the quavers but also in the bass line, which begins on the subdominant, and moves chromatically through scale degrees  $\hat{2} - \flat\hat{2} - \hat{1} - \sharp\hat{1} - \hat{2} - \flat\hat{3}$  before finally settling on the dominant  $\hat{5}$ . A harmonic analysis of the introductory bars in the key of F major (see Fig. 13) also reveals a certain amount of instability.

Fig. 13. “The Expiration”: bars 1–5

The image shows a musical score for the piano accompaniment of 'The Expiration', bars 1-5. The score is in compound quadruple time (9/8) and the key signature has one flat (B-flat major). The piano part consists of a treble and bass staff. Below the bass staff, a harmonic analysis is provided for each bar, listing chords in Roman numerals with figured bass notation. The chords are: Bar 1: II<sup>7</sup> v<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>; Bar 2: ii II; Bar 3:  $\flat$ VII<sup>6</sup>; Bar 4:  $\flat$ ii<sup>sus4</sup>; Bar 5: I<sup>sus4</sup>; Bar 6:  $\sharp$ I<sup>sus4</sup>; Bar 7: II<sup>sus4</sup>; Bar 8:  $\flat$ III<sup>sus4</sup>; Bar 9: V<sup>7</sup>; Bar 10: I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>.

Although some enharmonic adjustments have been made, it could easily be argued that the analysis is somewhat approximate, since many of the chords have no 3rd (meaning their quality is ambiguous) and the suspended 4ths are never resolved. There is some suggestion of cadential idioms<sup>25</sup> at each end, although the II<sup>7</sup> is by no means well-defined, the v<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> is minor and the  $\flat$ III<sup>sus4</sup> (which might also be interpreted as a  $\flat$ VII<sup>9</sup>) does not really lead smoothly to the V<sup>7</sup>.

Once the voice enters, *portamento* is used as a braking device (although it might also be seen to announce the slippery nature of the subject matter), and the melismatic treatment of the word “lamenting” (bar 8) further strengthens the idea of a slow process. At the end of the first stanza there is a quotation from a song which I knew as a child,

<sup>25</sup> By ‘cadential idioms’ I refer to three or more consecutive chords centred around the tonic (temporary or otherwise), for example: II–V–I, I–IV–I, VI–ii–V–I etc.

“Inchworm”<sup>26</sup>, and which by association seemed a suitable insertion at this point. Anyone who remembers or recognises the song would also know that the first two chords are repeated, and that the harmonic progression is quite static.<sup>27</sup> (This is quite apart from the verbal connotations inherent in the title!) There were some problems with harmonisation as much of the work is based on pedal points, these being on the dominant for the first stanza and the subdominant for the second. In view of the fact that the song is intended to reflect and amplify the narrator’s distress as a result of separation from a loved one, it seems relevant to consider its structure simply on the basis of the bass line. This is described in Table 1.2, where the dominant and subdominant pedal points are shown in bold.

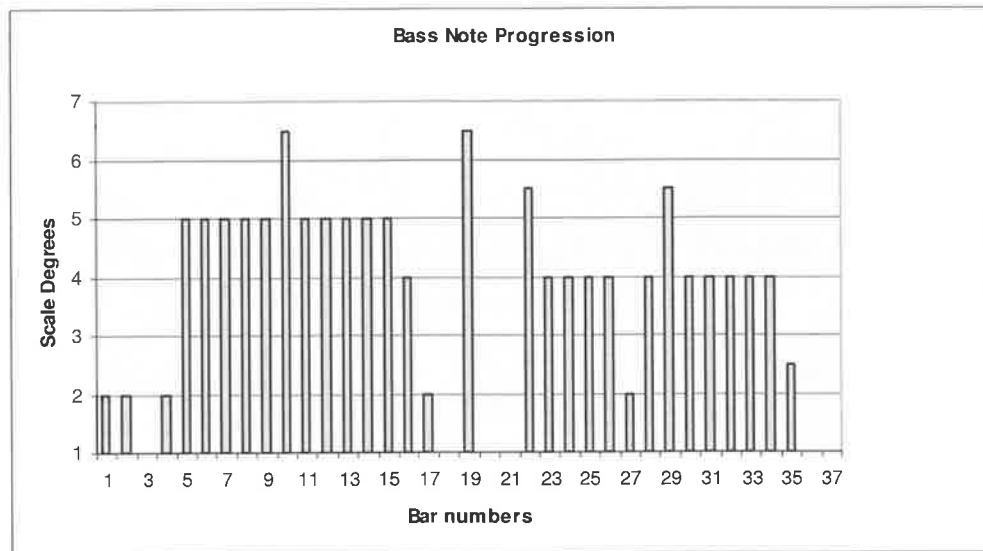
**Table 1.2: “The Expiration”—Bass line**

Bar numbers	Scale Degrees
1–8:	2 2 2 2   2 2 <b>b2</b> <b>b2</b>   1 1 #1 #1   2 2 <b>b3</b> <b>b3</b>   <b>5 5 5 5</b>   <b>5 5 5 5</b>   <b>5 5 5 5</b>   <b>5 5 5 5</b>
9–16:	<b>5 5 5 b2</b>   <b>b7 b6 5 5</b>   <b>5 5 5 5</b>   <b>5 5 5 5</b>   <b>5 5 5 5</b>   <b>5 5 5 5</b>   <b>5 5 b5 b5</b>   4 4 3 3
17–24:	2 2 <b>b2</b> <b>b2</b>   1 1 1 1   <b>b7 b7 b7 b7</b>   1 1 1 1   1 1 <b>b7 b7</b>   <b>b6 b6 b5 b5</b>   <b>4–4–</b>   <b>4 4 – –</b>
25–32:	<b>4 4 4 4</b>   <b>4 4 b3 b3</b>   2 2 2 2   - 4 4 3   <b>b6 b5 4 4</b>   - <b>4 4 4</b>   <b>4 4 4 4</b>   <b>4 4 4 4</b>
33–37:	<b>4 4 4 4</b>   <b>4 4 3 3</b>   <b>b3 b3 2 b2</b>   1 1 1 1   1 1 1 1

In this particular song, where chromatic movement often necessitates the use of enharmonic equivalents, it is perhaps better to look at it contrapuntally, rather than harmonically. From the above information we can create a graph by simply plotting the scale degrees of the first bass note in each bar (“y” axis) against the timeline in bar numbers (“x” axis). This is shown in Table 1.3, where the bottom line (clearly visible as a gap in the columns) represents the tonic F.

<sup>26</sup> A quick Internet search has confirmed my recollection that this was sung by Danny Kaye. It is from the Samuel Goldwyn Technicolor Production of Hans Christian Andersen, with words and music by Frank Loesser, and it is still available on cassette tape. (Other songs include “Thumbelina”, “Wonderful Copenhagen” and “Tubby the Tuba”.)

<sup>27</sup> My own recollection of the harmony is as follows: I – **bVII** – I – **bVII** – I – IV – I<sup>6</sup> – V % etc.

**Table 1.3: “The Expiration”—Bass Note Progression**

What has become clear from this analysis is that, apart from its brief appearances in the piano part in bars 3 (Introduction) and bars 20–21 (introduction to stanza 2), the tonic F has in fact been reserved for the two settings of the word “Go” at the end of each stanza (bars 18 and 36–37), neither of which is an imperative.<sup>28</sup> The “Go” at the beginning of the second stanza (bar 23) parallels (one might even say musically) the “So” at the beginning of the poem. Here it is a command, and although the bass note is actually the subdominant B $\flat$ , an F appears quite prominently as the doubled 5th in the chord. It is, of course, quite possible that such subtleties might have been developed in the planning stages, before the work was written, but as this was not the case it is hoped that such examples will give evidence for my claim that the text itself played a vital role in stimulating an intuitive approach to the composition of the *Five Love Songs*.

## Performance and Revision

The songs were rehearsed over a period of about eight weeks in preparation for performance in August 2000. On this occasion they were sung by a mezzo-soprano

<sup>28</sup> At the end of each stanza, the text is complex. “Nor will we owe any so cheap a death as saying Go” is interpreted by Redpath as meaning “we will not give anyone the easy task of killing us by telling us to part”; in the second stanza, “Except it be too late to kill me so, being double dead, going and bidding Go” is paraphrased as “unless it is too late to kill me in this way, since I am already doubly dead, through leaving you and through telling you to leave me”. Redpath 123.



although four of the songs are more ideally suited to a male voice.<sup>29</sup> A number of issues were discussed and addressed during rehearsal but of these the most important were questions of tempo, especially in relation to “A Nocturnall” where the original markings were generally found to be too slow. In some cases rhythms were altered slightly to create a more dramatic or a more natural effect, but in general very little of the vocal line was changed as the commas allowed for adequate breathing. Dynamic markings, infrequent in the original version, were added in each song. In addition, many of the piano solos were adjusted so as to become either less predictable, or to lend greater support to the text. For example, the rests in the first and last bars of “The Flea” and the 2-bar Introductions to “A Nocturnall” and “The Apparition” were all added at this time, and the ending for “The Expiration” was also slightly modified. In the original version it had been rather ordinary (see Fig. 14), whereas the revised version (see Fig. 15) represents a different solution which better supports the idea of a tedious and lengthy separation.

Fig. 14. “The Expiration”: bars 36–37

Fig. 15. “The Expiration”: bars 36–37

Finally, while dozens of enharmonic alterations were necessary for better legibility, there were a few occasions on which it was felt that the voice needed more support, especially where the tonality became temporarily ambiguous. There is a clear example in “The Flea” (see Fig. 16), where the vocal line was left unsupported at the end of the first stanza.

Fig. 16. “The Flea”: bars 64–67

<sup>29</sup> Having neglected to consider this aspect in my enthusiastic selection of texts, I am now resigned to the fact that since neither the male nor female voice will suit the complete cycle, either would be appropriate.

Aware that this passage occasionally caused intonation problems, I was prepared in the performance to take the number 3 rather more literally in order to eliminate all margin for error—in other words, to double the line in the piano part as shown in Fig. 17.

Fig. 17. “The Flea”: = bars 64–67

The musical score for "The Flea" (bars 64-67) is presented in two systems. The top system is the vocal line, written for soprano, with the lyrics: "And sac-ri-lege, — three sins in kill - ing three." The bottom system is the piano accompaniment, labeled "Pno.", which consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). The piano part features a complex rhythmic pattern with many beamed eighth and sixteenth notes. In the final measure, the right hand of the piano part has a double line, indicating a doubling of the line as mentioned in the text.

## Comparative Exploration

We have already seen that John Donne was popular with musicians in his own day, but there are also many 20<sup>th</sup> century settings of his poems, the most famous of which are Benjamin Britten’s *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne*, Op. 35, written in August 1945. These will be discussed more fully in Chapter Seven, in conjunction with my own settings of some of the same poems for mixed chorus (SATB *divisi*). It is interesting, nevertheless, to note that in an article on “Britten and Donne: *Holy Sonnets Set to Music*”<sup>30</sup>, Bryan Gooch writes:

Michael Kennedy rightly points to an affinity with Wolf<sup>31</sup> though the linkage there, I suggest, goes well beyond a simple unity of voice and piano; further, it embraces earlier nineteenth-century German composers, including Schubert – especially because of repeated figures in the piano part – and Schumann – because of the intense emotional unity of voice and piano and the employment of the piano to introduce and to conclude a song, to suggest or to finish a mood while the singer, as it were, gives voice to coherent thought (in the middle) arising out of the emotional state.<sup>32</sup>

It was this passage which suggested that my own familiarity with this literature—i.e. through the study and performance of many songs by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Wolf, and others—has undoubtedly played a significant role in determining both the compositional process and the style of writing which is so dependent on the text. There are, however, some composers for whom the text is of secondary importance, not perhaps

<sup>30</sup> Bryan N.S. Gooch. “Britten and Donne: *Holy Sonnets Set to Music*.” *Early Modern Literary Studies Special Issue 7* (5) 2001: 6 pp. Online. Internet. 11 November, 2005

<sup>31</sup> Michael Kennedy. “Britten”. In *The Master Musicians*. (London, Toronto and Melbourne: J.M.Dent & Sons, 1981) 177. Cited in Gooch, see fn. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Gooch.

in relation to the work as a whole, but certainly in terms of its compositional method. John Adams provides one example in his *Harmonium* (1981), a work for mixed chorus and orchestra which uses texts by John Donne and Emily Dickinson. He makes the comment:

I cast far and wide for a text to satisfy a musical image that I had in mind. That image was of human voices—many of them—riding upon waves of rippling sound. Ultimately, I settled on three poems of transcendental vision. ‘Negative Love’ by John Donne examines the qualities of various forms of love, ascending in the manner of Plato’s *Symposium*, from the carnal to the divine.<sup>33</sup>

While it is not possible here to give an exhaustive list of 20<sup>th</sup> century settings of John Donne texts, the selection illustrated in Table 1.4 (see below) shows that many composers have chosen to set more than one poem. The last work, *La Corona* Op. 89 by John Mitchell<sup>34</sup>, is intriguing since the settings are relatively recent, and this is a true cycle made up of seven Holy Sonnets in which the last line of the first poem becomes the first line of the next, just as the last line of the final poem also begins the first sonnet.

**Table 1.4: Selected 20th Century settings of John Donne texts**

Composer	Work	Date
Samuel Adler	<i>Unholy Sonnets</i> (texts by John Donne) for tenor and piano	1985
Malcolm Arnold	<i>Two John Donne Songs</i> Op.114b for voice and piano	1974
Allen Brings	<i>Three Holy Sonnets</i> for Chorus and Orchestra	1988
Geoffrey Burgon	<i>Five Sonnets of John Donne</i> for Soloists and Ensemble	1967
Dorian Le Gallienne	<i>Four Divine Poems of John Donne</i> for Voice and Piano	c.1950
John Mitchell	<i>La Corona</i> Op. 89. Seven Songs by John Donne	1993

<sup>33</sup> John Adams. *An Annotated Thematic Guide*. [http://www.schirmer.com/composers/adams\\_thematic.html](http://www.schirmer.com/composers/adams_thematic.html). 16 November, 2005.

<sup>34</sup> John Mitchell studied at UCLA with Dr John Vincent, who succeeded Arnold Schoenberg as professor of composition there. His web-site includes the following personal comments on music and culture:

There is also in the last few years what seems to be a new trend toward a simplified neo-classicism, with the apparent goal of getting back to the real strengths of classical music. . . Friday, July 9, 2004

So-called "high culture" (with emphasis on the quotation marks, and the word so-called), since the start of the spread of minimalism in the late 1970's (that great palliative meant to lessen the suffering of the dying patient) has been flailing about desperately trying to latch on to some kernel of life along the 360-degree circumference of the circle of creativity—occasionally touching one, probably by accident. However, culture in this century and those to come will have no "high" or "low". The ever-increasing power of the core of humanity (as opposed to the present surface manifestations) will hold sway over our music. Popular genres since the 1950's that have become universal are a foreshadowing of this core influence.
























John Mitchell, Saturday, March 16, 2002.

<http://www.abm-enterprises.net/biography.html>, 14 April, 2006.

The title *La Corona* actually belongs to the first poem, “Deign at My Hands”, which Mitchell describes as an Introduction. The remaining six songs he names according to the first lines of each sonnet, giving Donne’s titles in brackets, e.g. “Salvation to All” (Annunciation). Although the songs are still in manuscript, recordings can be downloaded from the Internet, and since the scores have now been made available to me it has been interesting to compare them with my own work.

*La Corona* is a cycle in which all the songs have a tonal centre, and all except the second have key signatures. They are all through-composed in keeping with the formal structure of the sonnet, and there is a general avoidance of melismatic treatment, with most of the vocal line being set in a straightforward rhythmic fashion. While the songs clearly reveal a consistent personal style, they are not as heavily dependent as the *Five Love Songs* on 19<sup>th</sup> century *Lieder* traditions. Harmonic changes usually occur at the beginning of the bar or on strong beats while simple rhythms and textures prevail, although these are varied throughout the cycle to reflect the general meaning or mood of the text. At first glance both the rhythmic and harmonic aspects seem unadventurous but they become increasingly sophisticated (and the piano accompaniments more active) as the cycle progresses. While there is no need for an extensive analysis of each song, Table 1.5 provides an overview of their main characteristics. I shall then look briefly at the first and last songs as possible examples of ‘twistonality’. The first page of each song is included as **Appendix A**. I am greatly indebted to the composer for granting permission to “scan and quote at will”.

Table 1.5: “La Corona” Song Cycle— Overview of Main Characteristics

<i>Song Title</i>	<i>Time &amp; Tempo</i>	<i>Key Signatures (Keys)</i>	<i>Piano Texture</i>	<i>Features</i>
“Deign at My Hands. . .”(La Corona)	4/4 Slowly	D minor	Block     chords and melody imitating vocal line	Solemn, steady repeated chords. Climax involving ascending    scales (2 bars) hinted at 5 bars earlier. <b>Form A-B-A</b> D $\flat$ bass at climax.
“Salvation to All. . .” (Annunciation)	2/2 Medium	None (G major/ G minor)	Arpeggios in     figures, $\infty$ and  chords in middle section.	Very simple chord structure (G maj & min diatonic.) <b>Form A-B-A plus mini-Coda</b> derived from slower middle section. D $\flat$ major and D $\flat$ pedal point at climax. Piano inactive (sustained chords) for last line of text.
“Immensity Cloistered. . .” (Nativitie)	4/4 & 6/4 Medium slow	A minor/major (F $\sharp$ major for “B” section with no change of Key Signature)	Mainly block & arpeggiated chords.	Slow harmonic progression. <b>Form A-B-A-B.</b> Some  movement in Coda. Word painting of “general doom” in sharps (accidentals) and polytonal chord stacking. Ends with <i>Tierce de Piccardi</i> .
“With His Kind Mother. . .” (Temple)	3/4 Medium	C minor (C major with change of Key Signature for “B” section)	Diatonic Chords with repeated chord factors in RH in      pattern. Two-part texture in middle section (arpeggio figures in LH)	Fairly static harmony. <b>Form A-B-A-B</b> but with vocal line through composed. Longer piano interludes, tempo changes and a strong (diatonic) ending.
“By Miracles Exceeding Power of Man. . .” (Crucifying)	3/8, 4/4 & 3/4 Medium fast	A $\flat$ minor (B $\flat$ minor for middle section with change of Key Signature)	Contrary motion 8ves and repeated notes in     patterns [f] plus sustained tones in bass [p]	More active piano part and interesting dynamic contrasts. <b>Form A-B-A-C-A</b> where last “A” is 4 bar postlude. 3/4 “C” section uses $\downarrow$ chords over repeated A $\flat$    in bass to reflect “He bears His own cross, with pain” etc. Solo voice delivers last line before dramatic ending by piano.
“Moist With One Drop of Thy Blood. . .” (Resurrection)	4/4 & 3/4 Medium	C $\sharp$ major	Mostly two-part with <i>staccato</i>     (“A”) and <i>legato</i>     (“B”) rhythmic features. Long pedal points especially on tonic and dominant .	More convincingly <b>through-composed</b> . Many double sharps in more lyrical section. Some featured descending scales, fast changing time signatures and a quiet ending. Double climax, first by the voice, then by the piano. The song begins and ends on the dominant G $\sharp$
“Salute the Last and Everlasting Day. . .” (Ascension)	4/4	C major	Unison or two-part with strong rhythmic features in piano accompaniment:     or even quavers	Contrary motion figures providing dissonance in 2nds. Rising semiquaver scale (piano) prepares for delivery of two last lines. A strong ending, voice and piano together. Simple structure & vocal line. <b>Form A-B-A-B-A</b>

The first song, “Deign at my Hands” (42 bars in 4/4 time, c. ♩ = 60) begins squarely in D minor (see Fig. 17) with a solemn, measured accompaniment in block chords.

Fig.17. Mitchell, “Deign at my Hands”: bars 1-5

These continue with the bass moving by tone and semitone steps until the dominant is announced in bar 12, and the piano presents a tonally modified version of the singer’s opening phrase. The harmonic progression throughout this first verse is rather static, and quite plagal in character. Table 1.6 provides an analysis of the first 13 bars in the key of D minor and shows the plagal cadences (iv-i) in bold.

Table 1.6: “Deign at my Hands”—Harmonic Analysis, bars 1-13

Bars	Chord Progression
1-5:	i i i i   i i i i   ii <sup>#4</sup> ii <sup>#4</sup> ii <sup>#4</sup> ii <sup>#4</sup>   v <sup>3</sup> iv <sup>6</sup> v <sup>7</sup> iv   <b>i i i i</b>
6-9:	VII <sup>7</sup> VII <sup>7</sup> ♯VI <sup>#4</sup> ♯VI <sup>#7</sup>   iv <sup>6</sup> iv <sup>6</sup> iv <sup>6</sup> iv <sup>6</sup>   VII <sup>7</sup> VII <sup>7</sup> ♯VI <sup>#4</sup> ♯VI <sup>#7</sup>   iv <sup>6</sup> iv <sup>6</sup> iv <sup>6</sup> iv <sup>6</sup>
10-13:	i <sub>2</sub> <sup>(+9)</sup> i <sub>2</sub> <sup>(+9)</sup> V <sup>6(+4)</sup> V <sup>6(+4)</sup>   i i i i   V V V V   i <sub>2</sub> i <sub>2</sub> i <sub>2</sub> i <sub>2</sub> etc.

There is little obvious evidence of word-painting to this point, but “melancholy” is set to the minor iv<sup>6</sup> and a rather sudden dissonance in bar 11 (V<sup>6(+4)</sup>, where the added 4th is doubled) certainly throws light on the words “*all-changing unchanged* Ancient of Days.” At bar 12 the bass rhythm changes to a new pattern for the second quatrain (♩ ♩ ♩ ♩) and the harmonic progression consists of I-V in alternating bars over a dominant pedal point (bars 12-19). In bar 19 an ascending scale in semiquavers introduces yet another version of the opening phrase as a piano solo, and this rising semiquaver movement returns at the climax of the song (see Fig. 18) where the words “The ends crown our works, but Thou crown’st our ends” generate a gradual change in tempo.

Fig.18. Mitchell, “Deign at my Hands”: bars 23–31

The last section beginning at bar 30 (lines 10–14) is a repetition of the first 11 bars, although the rhythm of the vocal line is changed to accommodate the syllabic pattern of the new text, and the last musical phrase is repeated for an emphatic setting of the last line. Here Mitchell includes a short pause on the aforementioned dissonance (see Fig. 19), which reoccurs in bar 39.

Fig. 19. Mitchell, “Deign at my Hands”: bars 39–42

The analysis  $V_3^{(+4)}$  seems justified because at this point we have in the piano part a first inversion of the dominant chord (A - C# - E) together with a doubled 4th (D) against the vocal line E - D - G - F (♩♩♩♩), which amounts to quite an unusual version of the perfect cadence, one which—like much of the rest of the song—seems to have plagal over-

tones. It might, however, be equally convincing to describe it as a  $V\frac{6}{5}/i$ , where the ‘i’ is actually in the upper voice.

There is no attempt to connect the songs in any way musically commensurate with Donne’s own repetition of the last line of each sonnet at the start of the next. However, the settings of the texts are very clear and most of the word- and/or thought-painting is subtle, using contrasting textures, combinations of major and minor triads, seventh and ninth chords and the occasional dissonance (or in some instances deliberately awkward voice leading) to draw the listener’s attention. The last song, “Salute the Last and Everlasting Day. . .”, begins with a fanfare motif suggestive of heraldic trumpets (see Fig. 20), and after the soloist’s entrance the first beat of every second bar is marked with an accent, possibly to emphasize the repetition of a 2-bar ‘tonguing’ pattern.

Fig. 20. Mitchell, “Salute to the Last and Everlasting Day”: bars 1-5

**FAST MEDIUM**

*mf* SA-LUTE THE LAST — AND EV — ER —

A more lyrical variation of this idea is introduced for lines 3-4, “Yee, whose just tears or tribulation have purely washed, or burnt your drossy clay . . .”, where a *subito pianissimo* and slur (see Fig. 21) indicate a *legato* texture more appropriate to the idea of “tears”, and the emphasis shifts to the relative minor or 6th scale degree, A, while at the same time presenting the dominant, G.

Fig. 21. Mitchell, “Salute to the Last and Everlasting Day”: bars 11-16

*mp* YEE WHOSE JUST TEARS — OR TRI-BU-LA-TION

*subito pp*



The stark juxtaposition of tonic and dominant in this song gives it a strong, triumphal quality, but this is interrupted at bar 26 by a series of arpeggiated semibreve chords (see Fig. 22) and wispy ascending grace notes to accompany the description of the Ascension in the second quatrain, “Behold the Highest, parting hence away,/ Lightens the dark clouds, which he treads upon”.

Fig. 22. Mitchell, “Salute to the Last and Everlasting Day”: bars 27–31

The return to the opening fanfare motif at bar 30 initiates a long *crescendo* (bars 30–38) leading to the reprise (return of section “A”), where the opening material suits line 9, “Oh strong Ram, which hast battered Heaven for me”, just as the following, more lyrical idea befits line 10, “Mild Lamb, which with thy blood hast marked the path”. The idea of the Ascension is most literally depicted by a rising scale towards the end, already presaged in Fig. 22 and reminiscent also of Fig. 18, where it musically forecasts the idea of human resurrection embodied in the words “Thou crown’st our ends”. The last 16 bars (see Fig. 23) show how a strictly diatonic approach (with not an accidental in sight) is used to achieve a sense of finality.

Fig. 23. Mitchell, “Salute to the Last and Everlasting Day”: bars 60–75

QUENCH THY OWN JUST WRATH *f* AND IF THY *f*

HO- LY- SPIR-IT, MY MUSE DID RAISE, DEIGN AT MY

HANDS THIS CROWN OF PRAYER AND PRAISE.

9-24-93  
612

One last example reveals a more unusual compositional device. Mitchell’s familiarity with the tonal system is nowhere better exemplified than in the song, “Immensity Cloistered. . .” where, after the first two lines (“Immensity cloistered in Thy dear womb, now leaves his well-beloved imprisonment”) a 16-bar foray into the key of F# (melodic) minor—without the use of a key signature—makes a strong visual impact on the reader. By the end of the section, Mitchell conjures up a real sense of alienation by centering the vocal line (and piano RH) in G# minor while the accompaniment continues to tonicise F#, and at the same time the single G#s in bar 26 suggest that these keys are simply the subdominant (a 5th below) and dominant of C#. Figure 24 demonstrates what might almost be interpreted as a graphic representation of prison bars, as well as the audible painting of Herod’s “general doom”.

Fig. 24. Mitchell, “Immensity Cloistered”: bars 21-27

In conclusion, although these songs are completely different in style from my own, I believe they might also be described as ‘twistonal’. While it is a style which cannot be said to imitate the work of any other well-known composer, the writing is consistent and (despite certain rhythmic limitations) contains a variety of expressive musical gestures which mirror the chosen texts. There is frequent use of conjunct (often chromatic) bass movement alternating with pedal points to delay or disguise any classical cadential idioms, and the use of dissonance and colour chords is often reserved for special effects. There is sometimes evidence of chord stacking that produces pockets of bitonality (or even polytonality), something which is part and parcel of the idea of ‘twistonality’. The songs are carefully planned in terms of formal design and are uniform in style, although the sonnet has a predefined formal structure and these sacred texts belong together, whereas the *Five Love Songs* involve randomly chosen secular poems of vastly different length and tone. That Mitchell’s musical language has a more populist flavour only confirms his belief in the fact that “culture in this century and those to come will have no ‘high’ or ‘low’”<sup>35</sup>, whereas the *Five Love Songs* are more strongly linked to past classical traditions. The comparison has been rewarding in that it demonstrates how, when setting words to music, any two composers might technically twist the tonal system in various ways to produce remarkably different but quite distinctive musical outcomes.

<sup>35</sup> See fn. 34, p. 29.

# 2

## BAROQUE AND BEYOND

### *CONCERTINO FOR CHAMBER ENSEMBLE*

## Genesis

The *Concertino for Chamber Ensemble* had a very long gestation period. Conceived in the year 2000 as a *Trio for Recorder, Harpsichord and Viol*<sup>1</sup>, it was intended as a short work in three movements—medium, slow, fast—utilising stylistic elements of the Baroque period: it would have a strong bass line, be rhythmically straightforward and use a simple melodic structure suitable for ornamentation. It would include virtuosic writing for the recorder and incorporate ‘mixture’, or an interesting modal scheme (or both). For a number of reasons, however, all this was fraught with problems. First, I was unfamiliar as a performer with all three instruments. In addition, having just completed the *Five Love Songs*, I was unprepared for the responsibility of creating suitable musical material without the help of any text; it became clear that without any direct inspiration from literary sources, spontaneity was much harder to achieve and formal considerations became an overwhelming preoccupation. In the absence of any overriding architectural plan I became infatuated with the idea of the ‘musical palindrome’ or ‘melodic reversal’<sup>2</sup>, where a single line has the potential to be played backwards for the purposes of musical extension. As it was important to write interesting parts for all three players, the first movement gradually took on the character of a theme and variations and the slow movement became virtually a comment on the first. The last movement appeared suddenly, with a spontaneous, dance-like character which easily propelled itself forward; however, with no real contrasting material it was difficult to sustain for very long.

A modified version of the *Trio*<sup>3</sup> was performed in public in August 2000. Three years later it was used as the basis for a *Concertino for Chamber Ensemble*, the required set work for the program. On the one hand, as this was my first attempt at orchestration, it seemed sensible to use material that was already familiar and did not need to be substantially expanded in content. On the other hand, with larger forces now at my disposal (flute,

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<sup>1</sup> This work was originally written for a friend, an excellent recorder player experienced in Baroque repertoire and also interested in contemporary music. Since the titles of both works are rather long, they are referred to throughout the chapter simply as the *Trio* and the *Concertino* (versions 1 and 2).

<sup>2</sup> I have avoided the use of the term ‘retrograde’ because many of the examples are not strictly reversed, as is usually the case with serial music.

<sup>3</sup> During early rehearsals it became evident that some of the more virtuosic passages needed minor adjustment in order to facilitate execution by the performers. The most radical change, however, was the addition of a cello part, as the double-stopping proved too difficult—or impractical—for the bass viol. This in turn opened up possibilities for the harpsichord part to be lightened, and for a more effective balance to be achieved by the group as a whole.

oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, percussion, string quartet and double bass), there was little incentive to develop the ‘Baroque’ gestures already inherent in the music. In fact, quite the reverse: the emphasis on conventional ‘rhythmic hierarchy’<sup>4</sup> and the use of hemiolas now seemed strangely out of place. However, while there was often a need to thicken the harmonic texture in order to effectively utilise all the instruments, there were also opportunities for the written-out ornamentation contained in the original material to be adapted for a small group of professional musicians. The real challenge was to apportion the figuration as democratically as possible, allowing all the players to contribute equally to the performance in terms of technical display. Of the three movements, the last was almost certainly the most successful, but overall the result was disappointing.

Finally, after another three years, the *Concertino* was revised—or rather, overhauled—for inclusion in the portfolio. In the first version, the percussion had consisted solely of triangle and snare drum, but since the triangle was deemed unsuitable for use in such a small ensemble it has now been replaced by a small set of Chinese bells.<sup>5</sup> The snare drum has been retained and a vibraphone added in the first two movements. While the latter instrument was chosen primarily to lend harmonic support to the ensemble as a whole, it changed my idea of the work significantly and helped to create textures more suitable for a chamber ensemble of this nature. The following discussion includes references to all three versions of the work.

## Method

It is difficult to remember exactly how the *Trio* was constructed, but there were certainly problems associated with translating the first movement into viable textures for a contemporary chamber ensemble. In order to ‘feel my way’ into the new sound spectrum, I decided (quite instinctively) on the repetition and expansion of the first melodic cell, G $\flat$ –F. The *Trio* began with a 5-bar phrase (see Fig. 1) in which these two notes formed part of the initial melodic statement.

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<sup>4</sup> By this I refer to the performance convention of creating an audible stress on the first beat of the bar, and/or on other similar strong beats.

<sup>5</sup> On a visit to China in 2001 I had purchased two pairs of small (pear-shaped) brass bells, roughly 4cm and 5cm at their widest point. Strung together in order to strike each other, they can also be played with metal beaters in order to produce a reliable trill, and a greater range of dynamics.

Fig. 1. *Trio I*: bars 1–9

Despite the key signature, there was an attempt here to create tonal ambiguity, with the bass F sounding either as the dominant of B $\flat$  minor or as the tonic of the F minor mode. This effect was not lost by extending the passage to form a short introduction for the *Concertino* (See Fig. 2).

Fig. 2. *Concertino I*, v.1: = bars 1–10

In the final version, it will be seen that in some parts the resolution to F is delayed, and that the overlapping suspensions (emphasised by the vibraphone) provided a new dimension capable of further development during the course of the movement.

While it is unnecessary to show in detail (and difficult to document accurately) every example of the ‘melodic reversal’ at work in the first movement, Example 1 shows how this was implemented. It should be noted that each line represents an entire melodic phrase.

Ex. 1. *Trio/Concertino I*: Examples of melodic reversal

The image displays six staves of musical notation in a single system, illustrating melodic reversals. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Brackets above the notes group segments labeled A, B, C, D, E, and their reversals. Segment A is a four-note phrase. Segment B is a six-note phrase. Segment C is an eight-note phrase. Segment D is a six-note phrase. Segment E is a six-note phrase. The reversals are labeled 'A in reverse', 'B in reverse', 'C in reverse', 'D in reverse', and 'E in reverse', showing the original sequence of notes played backwards. The reversals of C and B are shown as two separate phrases on the same staff.

Although this is a very basic compositional technique, it was nevertheless rewarding in the sense that some of these ‘reversals’ needed careful harmonisation. When a melody is played backwards (and often with changes in the note values), there is no guarantee that the same harmonies will be convincing, and in most cases, with a new chord progression in place, the listener is (hopefully) unaware of the intellectual processes at work. There is, however, an audible correlation, so in terms of the overall design the use of this technique helped to bring some cohesion to a movement which was originally conceived in the style of a Baroque “Fantasia”—the emphasis being on expansive improvisation rather than on structural refinement. While it is unnecessary to describe in detail the process by which the *Trio* gradually evolved into the *Concertino*, Table 2.1 provides information regarding the changes which took place in the first movement.



Table 2.1: *Concertino I*—Evolutionary development

Work/version	No. of bars	Duration	Tempo markings	Comments
<i>Trio I</i>	88	c. 4' 15"	Moderato ♩ = 100	No introductory or transitional material. One tempo throughout. Emphasis on baroque rhythmic hierarchy, with first beats clearly audible at all times.
<i>Concertino I, version 1</i>	116	6' 57"	Moderato ♩ = 100	Introductory and transitional material from opening G♭-F, but without any delayed resolution. Rhythmically square. Lower parts sitting heavily on barlines. Few changes of register, and very few countermelodies added. Use of triangle only.
<i>Concertino I</i>	117	5' 42"	Moderato ♩ = 44 Poco meno mosso (bar 29) Meno mosso (bar 68) Poco più mosso (bar 90) Largamente (bar 96) A tempo (bar 98)	Introductory and transitional material developed by delayed resolution to F, creating various levels of dissonance. More countermelodies, especially from horn, trumpet and pizzicato bass. More off-beat writing in lower parts, and some string tremolo to add textural interest. Triangle part rewritten for Chinese bells. Addition of vibraphone for harmonic and melodic support.

In the first version of the *Concertino*, the main theme was first delivered by the oboe (see Ex. 2) with a very light accompaniment from the strings, Violin 1 playing dotted minims and the others playing *pizzicato* as in the final version.

Ex. 2. *Concertino I, v.1: = bars 29–36*



Resisting the temptation to recast the material with more acidic doublings at the 4th or 5th, I chose instead to erase the ‘ordinary’ first violin part in favour of a simple countermelody for the horn (see Fig. 3). While this still sits rather heavily on the beat, the idea was to give a sense of warmth and gentle spontaneity in anticipation of the variation which begins in bar 68.

Fig. 3. *Concertino I*: = bars 29–36

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Oboe (Ob.) and Horn (Hn.). The Oboe part is in the upper staff, starting with a dynamic marking of *9*. It features a melodic line with various intervals and rests. The Horn part is in the lower staff, providing a harmonic accompaniment with sustained notes and some rhythmic movement.

Similarly from bar 76, where the violins join the oboe and clarinet in melodic figuration, there was an opportunity for the double bass to make a more significant contribution. In the first version (see Ex. 3) this part had been very uninteresting.

Ex. 3. *Concertino I*, v.1: bass line, bars 76–79

The image shows a musical score for the Double Bass (Db.) part, labeled 'pizz.' (pizzicato). The bass line consists of a series of quarter notes and rests, providing a simple harmonic accompaniment.

The addition of melodic quaver movement (see Fig. 4) was intended to alleviate the feeling of measured imitation and bring a more playful quality to this section.

Fig. 4. *Concertino I*: bars 76–79<sup>6</sup>

The image shows a musical score for multiple instruments: Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), and Double Bass (Db.). The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the Oboe, Clarinet, Violin 1, and Violin 2 parts, with the Double Bass part below. The second system shows the Oboe, Clarinet, Violin 1, and Violin 2 parts, with the Double Bass part below. The Oboe and Clarinet parts feature melodic quaver movement, while the Violin 1 and Violin 2 parts provide harmonic accompaniment. The Double Bass part is also present in both systems.

One of the criticisms levelled at my first attempt was that the ending was “rather lame”, but this was difficult to rectify as a considerable amount of time had already been spent on ‘voicing’ the final chord. Under these circumstances—given one’s intense involvement—it is possible to be deserted by one’s imagination, and to hear the result as

<sup>6</sup> Although not all the parts are shown in this example, the other players are simply involved in sustaining the harmony, as can be seen in the final version (see Volume One).

‘definitive’. The following examples indicate how the ending was eventually transformed. Figure 5 shows the *Trio I* ending with its conventional arpeggiation.

Fig. 5. *Trio I*, last 4 bars

The placement of the final chord here basically functioned as a written-in *rallentando*, since the rest simply functioned as a pause, and the chord was heard as the completion of a 4-bar phrase.

Fig. 6. *Concertino I*, v.1: last 3 bars

Figure 6 indicates the next stage of development where, because of the staggered entries, the rhythmic effect is of a 5-bar phrase, and therefore slightly more interesting. In the penultimate bar there is a final statement of the  $G\flat$ -F motif, echoed in major mode by Violin 1 (G-F), and the melody ends on the dominant instead of on the 3rd. However, the last chord is now F6, the major 7th having been omitted.

In the final version, descending scales have been added for the vibraphone (bars 106–111) and double bass (bars 108–111) in order to announce ‘closure’, and also to suggest a—perhaps tenuous—link with the opening of the third movement. In addition to this, one more bar was added in order to delay the ending and involve more players in the action. There are now ascending runs in the flute and clarinet parts, *staccato* ‘final statements’ by the oboe and bassoon, and a soft *tremolo* from the vibraphone to create more warmth. Violin 1 has a descending *portamento* from the middle of bar 115, matched at the end of bar

116 by an ascending slide from the cello to the major 9th (G), and the melody ends on the 6th (D) rather than on the dominant. Figure 7 shows only the upper parts but the reader may refer to the final score for a complete comparison with Figure 6.

Fig. 7. *Concertino I*, v.2: bars 115–117

The musical score for Figure 7 shows seven staves for a chamber ensemble. The instruments are Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn (Hn.), Trumpet (Tpt.), and Violin (Vib.). The score is for bars 115 to 117. The tempo is marked 'poco rall.'. The dynamics are marked as *mp* for the Flute, *p* for the Oboe, Clarinet, and Horn, *mf dim.* for the Bassoon, and *pp dim, al niente* for the Violin. The music features a falling semitone motif in the upper parts.

The idea for the **second movement** sprang initially from a desire to use rests and pauses as a contrast to the melodic exuberance of what had gone before, and to create a more static, more contemplative mood. Here, the falling semitone (originally an ‘introductory’ motif) assumed a more dominant role in order to provide a connection between the two movements, although this idea was clearly more credible in the *Trio* where it had not yet been developed to any extent. Set in the key of B $\flat$  major, the opening of the original slow movement (see Fig. 8) was tonally ambiguous in that there is no definition of the mode until bar 6, where the major 3rd and the major 7th appeared simultaneously.

Fig. 8. *Trio II*: opening bars

The musical score for Figure 8 shows three staves for a Trio. The instruments are Treble Recorder, Harpsichord, and Bass Viol. The score is for the opening bars of the Trio. The tempo is marked 'Andante con moto'. The music is in 3/4 time and features a falling semitone motif.

While such material was surprisingly effective for the combination of three ‘early’ instruments, its translation into material suitable for a modern chamber ensemble proved problematic, and the end result was somewhat dull. The addition of a triplet figure and the use of a faint snare drum seemed, at the time, to make it more appealing. The consequences, however, were rather alarming as this was to set up quite different musical expectations which, one way or another, had to be fulfilled! Figure 9 shows the first draft of the opening for the chamber ensemble.

Fig. 9. *Concertino II*, v.1: = bars 1–10

The musical score for Figure 9 shows the first ten bars of the first movement of Concertino II. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 80. The score includes parts for Flute, Clarinet in Bb, Bassoon, Horn in F, Side Drum, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The Side Drum part features a triplet figure. The Violoncello part also has a triplet figure in the first few bars. Dynamics range from *mp* to *pp*.

The second movement was referred to earlier as “a comment on the first”. Having set up subtle connections I now found that there were too many similarities, and that the slow movement—especially in its new setting—did not have a sufficiently independent character. With a group of this size, pauses became dull rather than dramatic; regular (slow) chord changes took on a monotonous quality; the use of the snare drum incited premature climaxes and provoked the intrusion of militant outbursts from the brass. In short, the quiet contemplation which I had envisaged now contained latent aggression, and the material developed contrary to my original intentions. When it came to the final revision, the use of the vibraphone helped to define (and in some ways tame) the new character which had evolved. In particular, the use of the bow for an ‘eerie’ sound—especially at either end of the movement—was intended to underline the more haunting qualities inherent at the start. This helped initially to presage and then to counteract the more dramatic developments, so there is now a sense in which the opening pauses warn of what is to come, and the ending returns us only to a state of artificial calm.

In terms of its form, the second movement is also an example of the “Fantasia”, in which everything develops from one long—though interrupted—melodic line (see Ex. 4). While the tonality wanders between the major and minor modes suggesting various key centres, a real shift occurs at bar 27 (A $\flat$  major) largely as a result of the melodic figuration. In this example, brackets and dotted lines are intended to clarify the phrase structure.

#### Ex. 4. *Concertino II*: melodic structure

The image shows three staves of musical notation for Clarinet (Cl.). The top staff is labeled 'Cl.' and has a 'Bsn.' marking above it. The middle and bottom staves are also labeled 'Cl.'. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and phrasing brackets and dotted lines to indicate phrase structure. The music is in a 4/4 time signature and features a mix of major and minor modes.

Table 2.2 summarises the three stages in the compositional process.

Table 2.2: *Concertino II*—Evolutionary development

Work/version	No. of bars	Duration	Tempo markings	Comments
<i>Trio II</i>	96	c. 4' 55"	<b>Andante con moto</b> ♩ = 88	One tempo throughout. All chords placed squarely at the beginning of bar or on main beats. Triplet rhythms only in melodic lines. Melodies involving variety of groupings given separately to each instrument. Real melodic counterpoint restricted to harpsichord (RH & LH). Imitation reserved for second main theme (climax)
<i>Concertino II, version 1</i>	95	4' 56"	<b>Tempo</b> ♩ = 80	Use of triplet figures at various speeds to add interest to sustained harmonies. Some melodic imitation introduced, and melodic material shared. Doublings and countermelodies added. Use of snare drum and trumpet (dotted rhythms) to initiate and sustain climax.
<i>Concertino II</i>	96	5' 00"	<b>Lento</b> ♩ = 80	Addition of vibraphone (bowed and struck, soft and medium mallets) to add colour. Snare drum part revised to include tapping on metal rim. Bars 46-48 reworked to provide more satisfactory lead into climax. More doublings and use of string tremolo.

The **third movement** is a lively dance. The main theme was written very quickly and seemed to lend itself to the possibilities of rhythmic nuance, with the result that no contrasting material was deemed necessary. Although the inclusion of a real second subject might have allowed the work to be extended for several more minutes, a short (*quasi-*) *moto perpetuo* seemed an appropriate *finale* after the melodic elaborations of the first and the sudden mood swings of the second movement. The prolonged pedal points and completely static harmony were designed to highlight rhythmic changes in the melodic structure, while unison ‘interludes’ in various time signatures provided formal breaks between the various sections. The opening descending scale is not found in the *Trio* at all, but served a purpose in helping to expand the movement to more suitable proportions. It is used here in much the same way as the G<sub>b</sub>-F motif in the first movement, as introductory and transitional material capable of some development (it returns towards the end in ascending form). In many ways this movement was the easiest to orchestrate, possibly because it was the most definitive in character and because, by this time, I was gaining confidence in writing for a larger ensemble.

The opening of the third movement of the *Trio* shows the use of a double time signature (see Fig. 10), a practice which seemed unwarranted and was subsequently relinquished for the *Concertino*. The lack of beams in the original version also makes the score very difficult to read.

Fig. 10. *Trio III*: opening bars

The musical score for the opening bars of *Trio III* is presented in three systems. The first system is marked 'Vivace' and features a double time signature of 2/4 and 3/4. The Treble Recorder part begins with a descending scale. The Harpsichord part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords. The Bass Viol part plays a steady eighth-note pattern. The second system continues the same material, and the third system shows a change in the time signature to 3/4.

This tune was intended to have a folk-like character<sup>7</sup>, and variation was achieved mainly through rhythmic manipulation. Example 5 shows how the tune takes on a different character when the strong beats (crotchets) fall either at the beginning or at the end of the bar, or when grace notes are converted to even quavers.

**Ex. 5. *Concertino III*: = bars 7–14; = bars 24–30**

The effect is quite different, however, when the material is rewritten in 4/4 time (see Ex. 6). Here, the first phrase (and/or each bar in turn) is subjected to ‘melodic reversal’, although one exception—in the penultimate bar—has been made in order to retain the final semitone step.

**Ex. 6. *Concertino III*: = bars 32–35; = bars 40–43**

While some phrases (or bars) were also inverted in order to provide new material, more use was made of the reversal technique, the most obvious example being the unison transition passages—bars 47–50 (see Ex. 7) and bars 59–62 (see Ex. 8)—which form a mirror image of one another. The material is shown as it appeared in the first version, where the unusual time-signatures help to advertise the process, although the note-grouping is very unclear.<sup>8</sup>

**Ex. 7. *Concertino III*, v.1: = bars 47–53**

<sup>7</sup> Some resemblance to folk music is also exhibited in the first movement, at least in terms of its modal implications.

<sup>8</sup> For the sake of legibility, this passage has been re-barréd in the final version.



Ex. 8. *Concertino III*, v.1 = bars 86–92

Between these two transition sections there is a more lyrical development of the material, although it hardly warrants being labelled as a secondary, or even contrasting theme (bars 54–67). Finally, at bar 78 the main theme returns (thinly disguised in yet another rhythmic variation), and with the help of augmentation as a ‘braking’ device, the movement whirls itself to a rather manic close in 6/8 time. Table 2.3 contains a summary of the adjustments which were made to the third movement.

Table 2.3: *Concertino III*—Evolutionary development

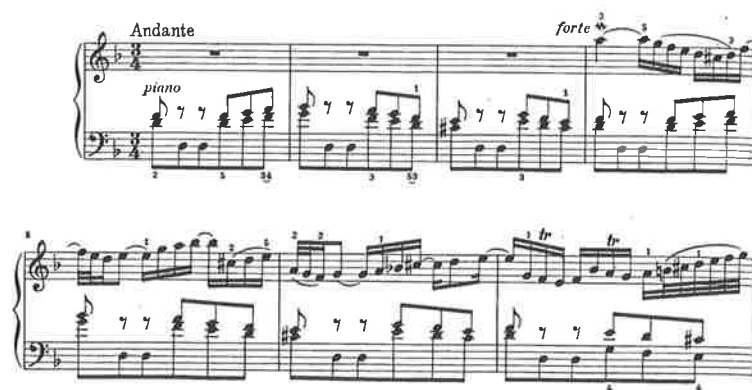
Work/version	No. of bars	Duration	Tempo markings	Comments
<i>Trio III</i>	93	c. 2' 25"	<b>Vivace</b> ♩ = 138	2-bar Introduction. Contrapuntal activity restricted to recorder and harpsichord (RH). Three <i>pizzicato</i> chords from the viol/cello as dramatic gesture before final return of the theme.
<i>Concertino III</i> , version 1	136	3' 59"	<b>Tempo</b> ♩ = 138	Addition of introductory material (descending scales) and expansion of transition sections. Thematic material shared between instruments. Development of doublings and <i>pizzicato</i> bass lines. Use of snare drum and triangle.
<i>Concertino III</i>	123	3' 26"	<b>Spiritoso</b> ♩ = 138	Further refinement of part-writing. Complete revision of percussion parts (S.D. and Chinese Bells). Some expansion of material, to include additional humorous touches. Rationalisation of beams and numerous enharmonic changes for better legibility. Ending rewritten to minimise <i>cliché</i> effect.

Although the original material was perhaps not entirely suitable for a chamber ensemble of this nature, the exercise has been valuable because it suggests that more rigorous planning in the initial stages might have brought greater structural cohesion to the work as a whole.

## Comparative Exploration

Since the origins of the *Concertino* involved a ‘Baroque’ orientation, it seemed logical to take a closer look at Stravinsky, whose writing often revealed the influence of Bach—especially during his ‘neo-classical’ period. One of the most obvious examples is the second movement of his *Sonata for Piano* (1924), which is audibly modelled on the slow movement of Bach’s *Italian Concerto* and beautifully illustrates his own statement that “the principle of the endless melody is the becoming of a music that never had any reason for starting, any more than it has any reason for ending”.<sup>9</sup> If there is a sense in which Stravinsky’s music can be called ‘twistonal’, this is readily illustrated by a comparison of the first few bars of these two works. Bach bases his composition on the conventional (but highly functional) tonic/dominant chord progressions over a tonic pedal point (see Fig. 11).

Fig. 11. Bach, *Italian Concerto II*: bars 1–7<sup>10</sup>



By contrast, Stravinsky manoeuvres a twisting bass line and abrupt chromatic shifts (see Fig. 12) to produce a tonal astringency that is nonetheless held in check by baroque rhythmic discipline.

<sup>9</sup> Igor Stravinsky. Cited at [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/i/igor\\_stravinsky.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/i/igor_stravinsky.html) (23 April, 2006). Although there seems no reason to doubt the validity of the two quotations found on this site (see also fn.14), I have been unable to locate the original sources within the required timeframe.

<sup>10</sup> J.S. Bach. *Italian Concerto*. (Munich: Henle, 1962).

Fig. 12. Stravinsky, *Sonata [1924] II*: bars 1–3<sup>11</sup>

II

Adagletto

The image shows a musical score for Stravinsky's Sonata [1924] II, bars 1-3. The score is in 3/4 time and features a complex melodic line in the right hand with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and a more rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The tempo is marked 'Adagletto'. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system containing bars 1-2 and the second system containing bars 3-4. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat).

Here, as in the Bach example, the smaller note values are found mainly on the weaker beats and serve to propel the melody forwards. Stravinsky's ability to extend a melodic line almost indefinitely appears to be associated with his skilful manipulation of rhythmic subdivisions, his willingness to steer away from cadential idioms and his ability to make chromatic detours which are at once surprising and safe: we are always returned to an audible key-centre before losing our way completely. If Bach's superbly satisfying melodic construction could be likened to a refreshing tour of the countryside from the safety of the main highway, Stravinsky's might be described as an exhilarating adventure on narrow paths through mountainous terrain, fraught with danger but highly rewarding.

Other works by Stravinsky which exhibit 'Baroque' features include the *Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments* (1924), the *Serenade in A major for piano* (1925) and the *Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra* (1929); but there is also the *Concerto en Ré* for violin and orchestra written in 1931, a work which is particularly interesting because—despite its generous instrumentation<sup>12</sup>—much of it is effectively written for chamber ensemble. In the miniature score, very few pages are restricted to one system since there are many passages where smaller groups of instruments (often involving section leaders) are chosen to accompany or 'concertise' with the soloist. While there is no need to include an analysis of this colourful work, it is worth noting that the score is remarkably detailed. Quite apart from revealing Stravinsky's insight into the possibilities of different instrumental

<sup>11</sup> Stravinsky, Igor. *Sonata pour piano (1924)*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, 1925.

<sup>12</sup> Pic, 2 Fl, 2 Ob, CA, 3 Cl, 3 Bsn, 4 Hn, 3 Trb, 3 BTrb, Tba, Timp, Str (8/8/6/4/4)

combinations, it confirms his awareness of the need to write with absolute precision for each individual player or section. While one would expect detailed instructions for the soloist, the following excerpt (see Fig. 13) shows that, in a passage with typically light accompaniment, the bassoon part is also carefully marked.

Fig. 13. Excerpt from Stravinsky's *Concerto en Ré I*<sup>13</sup>

The image shows a musical score excerpt for three instruments: Bassoon (Fag.), Violin Solo (Viol. Solo), and Violoncello (Vcl. uel. vcl.). The score is for measures 22 and 23. The Bassoon part is marked 'sf sempre' and 'staccato-marcato'. The Violin Solo part has dynamic markings like 'mf', 'pp', 'mf', 'pp', 'mf', 'pp', 'mf', 'p', 'mf', 'p'. The Violoncello part is marked 'p pizz.'

The score is profusely littered with markings such as *f ma non troppo*, *sf sempre*, *sempre ben cantabile*, *mf ma marcato*, *mf staccato accompagnando*, *p leggiero staccatissimo*, *sempre p e legato possible*, or *subito meno f dolce cantabile*; and even the conventional markings such as accents are at times marked *sempre poco*. Stravinsky is always careful to indicate not just the dynamic level, but the exact way in which the passage (or phrase) is to be performed. Many composers (notably Schumann, who kept a detailed diary) have complained bitterly about editorial work, as distinct from the compositional process itself. There is no inspiration involved, no adrenaline rush. This can be a problem, as the temptation to develop new material is often greater than the will to revise or tidy up an existing score, to add dynamics, or to think about details of phrasing, breathing or bowing. Stravinsky is reported to have said that “the more constraints one imposes, the more one frees one's self. And the arbitrariness of the constraint serves only to obtain precision of execution”.<sup>14</sup> In other words, if one is to be fully responsible, if there are expectations of performance at a professional level, then such decisions almost certainly need to be taken—and included in the score—at the time of writing. Indeed, it is very difficult to imagine that the precise tempo markings indicated towards the end of the second movement (see Fig. 14) could have come as an afterthought. Rather, they strike one as part of the original conception.

<sup>13</sup> Igor Stravinsky. *Concerto en Ré*. (Mainz: Schott, 1931. Copyright renewed 1959). Pocket Score.

No bar numbers are given for excerpts from this work as they do not appear in the score, and the boxed figures are believed to be adequate.

<sup>14</sup> Igor Stravinsky. Cited at [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/i/igor\\_stravinsky.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/i/igor_stravinsky.html), 23 April, 2006.

Fig. 14. Excerpt from Stravinsky's *Concerto en Ré II*, 'Aria I'

Lasting for over five minutes, the slow movement (*Aria II*) is only 30 bars long, but the score is remarkably efficacious. One passage in particular (see Fig. 15) reveals how 4/4 time can be effectively loosened while still retaining a sense of 'rhythmic hierarchy'.

Fig. 15. Excerpt from Stravinsky's *Concerto en Ré II*

The Baroque features of the work, already evident in the titles (*Toccata*, *Aria I*, *Aria II*, and *Capriccio*), also include frequent use of the hemiola. After the first three chords, which are repeated in various ways at the beginning of each movement, the first theme of the *Toccata*

(see Fig. 16) audibly belies the new 2/4 time signature by beginning on the second beat of the bar.

Fig. 16. Excerpt from Stravinsky's *Concerto en Ré I*

Following this, the soloist enters in bar 10 with the rhythm of (effectively) three dotted minims spread over four bars of 2/4 time followed by a bar of 5/8, and there are many other examples of hemiola throughout the movement.

As for the orchestration, there are more than a few humorous touches—not least of which can already be seen in Figure 16 above. In the first movement there are also distinct echoes of real ‘circus music’ and at times the jaunty rhythms (see Fig. 17) even suggest a kind of interrupted waltz.

Fig. 17. Excerpt from Stravinsky's *Concerto en Ré I*

In his notes for the 1988 *Deutsche Grammophon* recording<sup>15</sup>, Volker Scherliess summarises the work as follows:

<sup>15</sup> Igor Stravinsky. *Concerto en Re pour violon et orchestre*. Cond. Paul Sacher. Philharmonia Orchestra, Anne-Sophie Mutter, violin. CD (Deutsche Grammophon 423 696-2)

*Toccata* und *Capriccio*—zwei schnelle Sätze in motorischer Bewegung—umrahmen *Aria I* und *II*, in denen die reichverzierte kantable Linie bestimmend wirkt. Wie ein Motto steht am Anfang jedes Satzes derselbe Akkord des Solisten d' – e" – a", im übrigen aber geht es dieser Musik nicht um thematischen Zusammenhang, um Entwicklung aus einem Kern und Steigerung zu emphatischen Höhepunkten, sondern um Reihung bunter Elemente nach Art einer Collage. Dabei bewußt auf subjective Stimmungen, auf Ausdruck und Gefühle zu verzichten, statt dessen eine heiter erfrischende, lebensvoll sprühende, gleichsam objektive Musik zu schreiben, eine Musik ohne 'Aussage' oder 'Idee' (es sei den eben die virtuosen Spiels)—das war das Anliegen Strawinskys.<sup>16</sup>

In an essay on the Neo-Baroque, Manfred Bukofzer points out that "the interplay of tonal and non-tonal sections finds its most felicitous application in the *concerto grosso*"<sup>17</sup>, and that this form has been adopted by "a great number of modern composers . . . because it does not develop harmonically like the classical concerto, but by the juxtaposition of sections".<sup>18</sup> He includes Stravinsky's Violin Concerto in his small list of examples "which are in form and style baroque concertos pure and simple"<sup>19</sup>, and he then goes on to describe the stylistic features of the late Baroque so clearly that one can relate each of them directly to this particular work:

There is the desire for objectivity and 'distance' manifested by the use of structural devices like ostinatos, quasi-ostinatos, consistent rhythmic patterns and sequences, and contrapuntal rather than harmonic voice leading.

There is the contrapuntal 'terraced' orchestration that uses contrasting colors [sic] for the sake of melodic independence, as opposed to the palette orchestration.

There is the emphasis on chamber music, on small orchestral and chamber ensembles.<sup>20</sup>

Although the Violin Concerto is, in many ways, a miracle of musical engineering, it has not survived as one of Stravinsky's greatest achievements. In 1932 Aaron Copland had already discussed the work with remarkable insight:

But it is just this seriousness of tone . . . which is lacking in the Violin Concerto. Not entirely lacking, for it is unmistakably present at moments throughout the work, and

<sup>16</sup> Volker Sherliess. Notes to *Concerto en Ré* (see fn. 15), 4. I have translated this as follows:

*Toccata* and *Capriccio*—two fast, motoric movements—frame *Aria I* and *II*, in which richly decorated cantabile lines create the mood. The same chord d' – e" – a" from the soloist stands like a motto at the beginning of each movement, but apart from that the music is not about thematic connections, or about development from a single seed mounting to emphatic climaxes, but about the linear arrangement of colourful elements in the manner of a collage. To consciously renounce subjective moods, expression and feelings, and instead to write lively, sparkling, objective music, without 'statement' or 'idea' (other than that of virtuosic performance)—that was Stravinsky's real concern.

<sup>17</sup> Manfred Bukofzer. "The Neo-Baroque". In *Stravinsky in Modern Music (1924-1946)*. Carol J. Oja, ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982) 80.

<sup>18</sup> Bukofzer 81.

<sup>19</sup> Bukofzer 81.

<sup>20</sup> Bukofzer 81.

particularly in Aria II. Nevertheless, . . . despite the admirable formal perfection of each movement, the masterly orchestration, and the sheer invention which transmutes banal thematic material, the opening Toccata, Aria I and final Capriccio are not as meaningful as they should be. The repeated hearing of the work in New York added nothing to its stature. One was left with the impression that the Concerto is essentially a mere tour de force, brilliance for its own sake . . .<sup>21</sup>

This is also partly my own impression, but it remains difficult to justify in terms of any compositional strengths or weaknesses. Mikhael Druskin also has his reservations. Noting that “the whole lay-out of the work points to Baroque models”, he remarks that “the decorative character of the music creates serious stylistic discrepancies”<sup>22</sup>, although he is careful to point out Stravinsky’s primary intention: “My chief interest was concentrated on the different combinations of violin and orchestra”.<sup>23</sup> His summative evaluation of the work reveals an even more interesting suggestion:

The solo part in Aria 1, for instance, could come from any traditional ballet score, though Aria 2 with its Bachian features is altogether more solid. Various episodes in the finale have the same winged, ethereal character that is to be found in *Capriccio* and sound to my ears too ‘balletic’—or too Tchaikovskian.<sup>24</sup>

It was ironic and somewhat amusing to discover that Robert Simpson had already dealt with Stravinsky’s negation of fundamental symphonic principles as follows:

Within their own circumscribed terms they [Stravinsky’s symphonies] are highly organised, but the motion of symphony is absent. They are exclusively concerned with rhythm and texture rooted in primitive monolithic tonality; when one (or a combination) of these has transiently performed its function, it is replaced, and the total effect, however internally agitated, is as static as a stage upon which dancers are gyrating.<sup>25</sup>

Musicology is, however, prone to descriptive analysis, and such commentary need not detain us any longer. As a result of this discussion it seems reasonable to suggest that, had I been more experienced in the art of orchestration in the earlier stages, and/or had I chosen to consider the *concerto grosso* as a possible model, the *Concertino* might have had a more convincing formal structure. As it stands, however, it is included here as a valid representation of the official starting point of my degree candidature.

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<sup>21</sup> Aaron Copland. “Stravinsky and Hindemith Premieres”. In *Stravinsky in Modern Music* (1924-1946). Carol J. Oja, ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982) 38.

<sup>22</sup> Mikhael Druskin. *Igor Stravinsky: His life, work and views*. Trans. Martin Cooper. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 95.

<sup>23</sup> Cited in Druskin, 95.

<sup>24</sup> Druskin 96.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Simpson. “Introduction” in *The Symphony*, p.11. Cited by Jonathon Cross in *The Stravinsky Legacy*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 209.



# 3

## METAMORPHOSIS

*SENSAMBULATIONS, AN ORCHESTRAL BALLET*

## Genesis

Of the five songs presented in Chapter 1, “A Nocturnall” was the one destined to be orchestrated. Perhaps because the piano accompaniment was reasonably sparse, the work grew to sizeable proportions in my imagination. In performance many sections were already imagined in orchestral colours, and while the music was intended to amplify the meaning of the poetry, in time it grew to have a more profound effect on my *psyche*. Early in my candidature I therefore sought academic approval to submit two different versions of the same work, my intention being to recast “A Nocturnall” as an orchestral tone-poem.

Inexperience, however, suggested that it might be wise to start with “The Flea”, a much shorter song and therefore, in terms of orchestration, a less daunting task. Very soon I became absorbed in expanding the material to make use of various sections of the orchestra and, far from feeling overwhelmed by the larger resources now available, I experienced a real sense of liberation. It was like having, at long last, a full set of paints and a good-sized canvas: although the idea of form naturally took precedence, the colours themselves could be mixed in order to influence the form. When, eventually, the musical result of this first attempt was unanimously described as ‘dance music’, I decided to use the complete song cycle as the basis for an orchestral ballet.

With no real storyline to follow, it seemed sensible to adopt working titles which essentially reflected the primary emotion contained in each of the poems, hence the scene headings: “Awakenings”, “Awareness”, “Anguish”, “Anger” and “Alienation”. As titles they might seem unusual, but it was felt that brief emotional descriptors would allow for a suitable narrative—based loosely on a range of specific moods—to be devised at some later stage. Consequently the musical representation of various emotional states (heavily influenced by my own reaction to Donne’s poetry) suggested a title for the ballet itself: *Sensambulations*, by which I mean ‘walking (or moving) from one sensation to another’. The reader will have realised, however, that although there were only *Five Love Songs*, the ballet contains six scenes. In anticipation of a real (but as yet hypothetical) storyline, it was assumed that its outcome might be more positive than anything described by the scene entitled “Alienation”. One other factor, however, was of vital significance: I was keen to

try ‘writing for orchestra’ as distinct from ‘orchestration’. A final scene was therefore added—“Abandon”—for which there was no original template.

## Method

As discussed in Chapter 2, the reworking of the *Trio for Recorder, Harpsichord and Viol* to form the *Concertino for Chamber Ensemble* had already shown that introductory ideas could prove valuable in expanding a work’s formal dimensions. “The Flea” opens with a delicate piano solo that is (conveniently) both simple and direct: the main theme is announced in the left hand (see Fig. 1) against an *ostinato* accompaniment in the high treble register. Its primitive characteristics notwithstanding, this was more than enough material to generate the first 28 bars of Scene 1, “Awakenings”.

Fig. 1. “The Flea”: = bars 1–6



While the high minor 2nds were quickly realised by combining celeste, harp and *pizzicato* strings against a softly sustained flute and piccolo line, the quaver movement in bars 5–6 provided musical incentive for a new idea that is announced—at first tentatively—by the Glockenspiel (see Ex. 1), and then taken up by the harp (bar 14), the celeste (bar 16) and finally the flutes and piccolo (bar 22).

Ex. 1. “Awakenings”: = bars 5–7



This meant that the music was already taking on a new shape and it was soon possible to envisage a work several sizes larger than the original song. Thus the main theme (see lower stave, Fig. 1) was able to be held back until bar 29, where it makes a dramatic entrance after the pause.

In the song, the piano introduction includes a 3-bar phrase extension (see Fig. 2) before the singer delivers the first phrase.

Fig. 2. “The Flea”: = bars 7–9<sup>1</sup>

This translates into a 4-bar interlude which contains another (simple) variation on the melodic material (see Fig. 3), heard here as a dialogue between the double bass (*pizzicato*) and the contrabassoon.

Fig. 3. “Awakenings”: = bars 34–37

Set in the key of C rather than D, Scene 1 preserves not only the ambiguous dominant-tonic relationships inherent in the song but also the dialogue between the voice and piano which is now transferred to various instrumental combinations as they exchange solo and supporting roles. For example, the piano presents a 2-bar interlude (see Fig. 4) between the singer’s first and second phrases.

Fig. 4. “The Flea”: = bars 15–16

In the Ballet these bars are varied and extended to introduce a different texture characterised by undulating arpeggiation from the harp (see Fig. 5), allowing the third entry of the melodic material (corresponding to the singer’s second phrase) to be presented in a more *legato* style:

<sup>1</sup> For the examples in this Chapter, both the songs and the orchestral score have been selectively reduced to their essential information in order to limit the number of staves.

Fig. 5. “Awakenings”: = bars 43–47

The musical score for "Awakenings" (bars 43–47) features five staves: Fl. 1, 2; Ob. 1, 2; Hp.; Vln. 1; and Vc. The Flute and Oboe parts have dynamic markings of *mp*, *p*, and *mf*. The Harp part includes a tremolo section marked *mp* and a section with a *cresc.* marking. The Violin and Viola parts have dynamic markings of *fp*, *p*, and *pizz.*. The Violoncello part has dynamic markings of *p*, *fp*, *p*, and *cresc.*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Throughout the Scene—and indeed throughout *Sensambulations* as a whole—there are many examples of melodic improvisation, variation, extension and thematic development which serve to lengthen the duration of the work while at the same time retaining its original mood and character. Since it is impossible (and unnecessary) to document every incidence of this technique, it is hoped that these examples provide sufficient evidence of just one of the ways in which the original material was expanded to form a work of significantly larger proportions.

While this process was most useful in providing transitional passages and/or accompanying textures, there are further deviations in the form of new material, most of which grew logically from a combination of the original song content and the musical elaborations described above. In “The Flea”, for example, there is a change of key at bar 37 where the piano introduces a new theme containing much more conjunct movement (see Fig. 6). This sets the tone for a middle section heavy with sexual innuendo: the flea, having sucked blood from both the lovers, becomes a metaphor for the “marriage bed” and “marriage temple”.

Fig. 6. “The Flea”: bars 37–40

The musical score for "The Flea" (bars 37–40) features two staves: a piano part and a cello part. The piano part has a dynamic marking of *p*. The cello part has a dynamic marking of *p* and a *espress.* marking. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs and dynamic markings.

For the corresponding passage in Scene 1, i.e. at bar 75, instead of presenting the tune immediately it was tempting to devise new material. After all, it is at this point in the poem that we begin to fully experience the narrator’s mercurial powers, his quick thinking, his ability to sustain and develop the argument with all its suggestive overtones. Such observation easily translates into an emotional reaction which is held in the memory long after its conscious recognition. With regard to the compositional process, while there is no scope here for a psychologically-based discussion of subliminal as distinct from rational motivation, my own experience suggests that the former is often the more powerful tool. The following bars (see Fig. 7) were an attempt to express Donne’s narrative confidence—but without disturbing the basic mood and in such a way as to provide an appropriate introduction to the next main theme.

Fig. 7. “Awakenings”: = bars 75–80

In considering how this passage materialised, the theory presented here suggests that it was the remembering of a critical emotional reaction which dictated the content, together with the strong, conscious recollection of a certain tone of voice—matched, incidentally, by a multitude of commas—at this point in the poem. In this respect, the compositional technique involved almost no intellectual planning. When it came to the next piano interlude, however, the relatively straightforward task of orchestration was delayed by a substantial dilemma, one that required an altogether different solution.

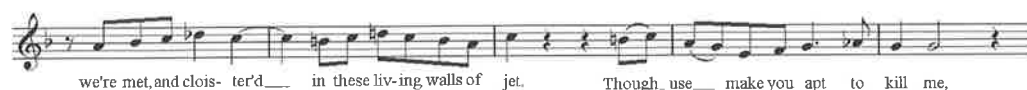
The reader will recall that, for the purposes of emotional amplification, the song included a quotation from Ravel’s *Bolero*. In a purely orchestral setting—and therefore

without words to justify its existence—this now seemed inappropriate. The material had been used not only in the piano part (see Fig. 8) but also in the vocal line (see Fig. 9), and it therefore needed to be expunged without disturbing the character of the musical dialogue.

Fig. 8. “The Flea”: = bars 51–53



Fig. 9. “The Flea”: = bars 56–60



At the time, reference to such a well-known work had seemed an ideal way to reflect the sentiments contained in the poem, especially the phrase “though use make you apt to kill me”. Was it possible to maintain the parodic gesture while eliminating such a recognisable tune? After much deliberation I decided to retain the rhythm but to replace the melodic content with something more closely related to what had gone before (see Ex. 2), incorporating into the longer example a diminution of the main theme (see Ex. 3), shown here under the bracket.

Ex. 2. “Awakenings”: = bars 96–99



Ex. 3. “Awakenings”: = bars 101–104



This proved to be an effective solution since it removed the quotation while leaving a faint suggestion of the famous model.

By now the work had gained new life and presented opportunities for further thematic development. The material cited in Fig. 7 was used as the basis for a slightly more sinister (or suspenseful) interlude (bars 110–121) leading to a return of the main material,

where textural variation occurs in the form of arpeggiation from the strings (from bar 122), rising triplet figures from the woodwind (bar 127) and playful *acciaccaturas* (from bar 128). The ‘dance-like’ qualities of the music were clearly evolving and appeared to warrant a ‘balletic’ climax reminiscent of Tchaikowsky, although in this case it is short-lived. The last two bars were re-written many times before attaining their present form, one that is intended to achieve tonal and rhythmic finality with a hint of playful surprise.

The second poem, “Breake of Day”—the only one narrated by a woman—is also typically rhetorical in character. In terms of the ballet, however, it was important to capture the sense of growing frustration (mounting at times to anger) with an all-too-familiar situation: a heightened awareness of the ‘possessive’ state of being. To this end, Scene 2, “Awareness” is introduced by wind and brass instruments fading in and out over a rising *tremolo* from the strings. In contrast to Scene 1, where the music is actually discontinued on several occasions only to begin again, the emphasis here is on a more mature ‘awakening’: this time the various overlapping sonorities are intended to suggest a gradual regaining of consciousness together with increased powers of perception. An absence of tonal certainty points immediately to a new reality, and the introduction of a small rhythmic motif (see Ex. 4) sows seeds of anxiety while at the same time providing a modicum of musical continuity with Scene 1.

**Ex. 4. “Awareness”: = bars 8–9**



The employment of an idiosyncratic ‘rhythmic comment’ such as this, while it generates no substantial thematic development, was helpful in providing auditory ‘signposts’ in the outer sections of the work. These can be seen in various permutations in bar 13 (B. Cl), bar 18 (Vc and Db), bar 105 (Fl) and bar 110 (B. Cl); in the closing section the motif was intended to reinstate a sense of unresolved tension following the deliberately artificial musical platitudes of bars 96–100 (see Ex. 5).

**Ex. 5. “Awareness”: = bars 96–98**





With a new introduction in place (bars 1–19), the opening bars of the piano accompaniment are now presented as thematic material (bars 20–26) and the singer’s opening phrases begin as a bassoon solo (bar 27) only to develop into a more aggressive statement from the brass at bar 32. In the song there is a 2-bar piano interlude (see Fig. 10) between the dramatic provocation of the opening lines (a series of four questions) and the following explanation (“Love which in spite of darkness brought us together” etc.).

Fig. 10. “Breake of Day”: = bars 16–17



While such momentary musical stasis was easily tolerated in anticipation of answers to the questions posed by the singer (e.g. “Did we lie down because ’twas night?”), in orchestral terms it was rather dull, so a new motif (see Fig. 11) was introduced as a rhythmic counterpoint in order to focus the listener’s attention.

Fig. 11. “Awareness”: = bars 35–36

Meanwhile the lower strings continue the accompanying motif (originally intended to portray an unsettled mood) and the trumpet anticipates what is soon to follow. The ongoing vocal line is now realised through the rather cold combination of piccolo, *cor anglais*, bassoon and trombone (bars 37–43) and the more hesitant piano solo (“Breake of Day”, bars 24–28) is delivered by the first violins (“Awareness”, bars 45–47).

The middle section afforded an opportunity to use the full orchestra for a more dramatic effect and it was soon clear that the ‘new’ motif described above (see Fig. 11) was in fact descended from material which had been used in the song to underline the words “I

faine would stay” (see Fig. 12), something which, at the time of writing, I had failed to recognise.

Fig. 12. “Breake of Day”: bars 36–38

The musical score for Figure 12 consists of two staves. The top staff is a vocal line in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains three measures of music with the lyrics: "it could say, That be- ing well, I faine would stay." The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in a bass clef, also in one flat, featuring a steady eighth-note accompaniment in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand.

This meant that before repeating the next phrase sequentially, as had occurred in the song, it was possible to insert a new sequence based on what could now be aurally understood as a complementary, rather than a new idea. Thus the original passage in the song (“Breake of Day” bars 29–44) was extended in the ballet, allowing the music to take on a more complex character (“Awareness” bars 48–68).

For the next piano interlude triplets had been introduced in an attempt to quicken the pace, and then deliberately fragmented (see Fig. 13) to heighten the level of anxiety leading to the poem’s most cynical statement: “The poor, the foul, the false, love can admit,/ But not the busied man”.

Fig. 13. “Breake of Day”: = bars 45–51

The musical score for Figure 13 is divided into two systems. The top system shows a piano interlude with two staves. The right hand features a triplet of eighth notes, and the left hand has a triplet of chords. The marking *p legato* is present. The bottom system shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and contains the lyrics: "Must bus- ness thee from hence re- move? Oh, that's the worst dis- ease of love, The". The piano accompaniment is in a bass clef, one flat, and features a complex rhythmic pattern with triplets and semiquavers.

In Scene 2 of the ballet these triplets are delivered (and outlined) by the first violins (flutes); the main theme (vocal line) is presented by the brass, and the harp moves from triplets to semiquavers in order to create textural interest and provide, in orchestral terms, a subtle but more striking example of rhythmic counterpoint (bars 69–75).

A dramatic effect is created in the song by allowing the voice to declaim the words “But not the busied man” almost entirely unaccompanied. It therefore seemed appropriate to have this phrase delivered in unison by all sections of the orchestra (except the percussion), and thus Scene 2 reaches its real climax in bars 79–80. At this point in the song, however, there are only 12 bars remaining, and clearly more material was needed in order to bring the scene to a convincing close. A bar of agitated semiquavers (piccolo, trumpets and strings, bar 82) provides a short bridge to the return of the falling semiquaver motif (bars 83–85) before the woodwind presents the remainder of the vocal line. Finally, in order for the emotional drama to subside gradually, the material is developed to form a Coda comprising an additional 27 bars. In bars 91–100 the mood is momentarily altered by the use of overtly conventional musical gestures (bars 96–100—see also discussion relating to Ex. 5 above), an attempt to touch base with common reality through the use of blatant tonal *clichés*. While such a decision required a certain amount of courage, it was felt that given the context, the meaning of this passage would be lost neither on the (as yet imaginary) dancers nor on an audience familiar with the history of ballet music. Real closure, however, called for a reconciliation between the ‘new reality’ suggested by the introduction and the ‘received wisdom’ implied by the passage just described. To this end, the last six bars contain three rhythmic versions of the thematic material derived from the piano accompaniment (see Fig. 14).

Fig. 14. “Awareness”: = bars 112–116

If, as has been suggested, the title of Scene 2 refers to a heightened awareness of the potentially destructive mood of personal possessiveness (or obsession), these final bars (see Fig. 14) were motivated by a desire to demonstrate the rational co-existence of interdependent musical lines. During the final revision of this Scene several melodic fragments were inserted over the reappearing chord structures (bars 106–109) and a

flirtatious exchange between Horns 1 and 3 (see Fig. 15) was added in order to express the allusion to sexual temptation contained in the closing lines of the poem.

Fig. 15. “Awareness”: = bars 112–117



In manipulating material from the song cycle to create an orchestral ballet, my two main concerns were: first, to choose instrumentation which faithfully reflected the spirit of the original, and secondly, to expand the material in such a way that it might be perceived as a new organic whole. It was also necessary, however, to enlarge the dramatic content and strengthen the emotional impact of the music. As we have seen, this sometimes involved mentally revisiting my reaction to the text—and its psychological ramifications—in order to maintain consistency in the compositional style.<sup>2</sup> Looking back on the exercise now, it is clear that in setting out to orchestrate these songs one of the greatest dangers lay in the fact that they are all ‘melody-oriented’. The piano accompaniments are often extremely sparse: in the case of “A Nocturnall” there was little attempt to do anything other than provide a harmonic structure to support the vocal line, with occasional forays into contrasting textures for programmatic effect. Even after the first two Scenes of the ballet had been completed it was evident that Scene 3—now regarded as the central feature—would need much more careful planning in order to avoid an over-reliance on the principles of recitative. If the melodic and harmonic contours of the song were to be adhered to, a variety of subsidiary themes and textures would be needed to counterbalance the main material and to provide greater depth by fully utilising the orchestral forces.

**Scene 3, “Anguish”** begins with an extended version of the piano’s introductory chords, a passage intended simply to create a new atmosphere—as in the song. Here it was

<sup>2</sup> In a recent television documentary entitled *The Agatha Christie Code*, a team of specialists (professors of literature, linguistics, psychoanalysis, and neuro-linguistic programming)—with the help of sophisticated software designed to analyse creative language—explored the reasons for Christie’s success. It was found that her language, although limited in vocabulary, made consistent use of the repetition of certain words in order to focus the reader’s attention and engage his or her interest to the point of addiction. It appears that, when compared to the work of other writers, Christie’s language is intuitively programmed to elicit an emotional response, and during the course of the program it was made abundantly clear that “emotions are eminently more memorable than thought”. The program was made for Britain’s ITV 1, aired in the UK on 27 December, 2005 and broadcast by ABC Channel 2 on 15 October, 2006.

felt that the use of overlapping string harmonics, suspensions and the throbbing of a bass drum would give a sense of apprehension, setting the stage for a protracted enactment of abject human grief. Donne's poem is not based on the retelling of a catastrophe. Rather, it is an attempt, after the event, to explain the inexplicable, to express—through a series of analogies—the depth of emotion associated with a devastating loss. The narrator thereby proves himself not only a survivor, but a man possessed of enormous courage in the face of total despair; in fact, one could almost say that despite his manic protestations he actually represents the 'life force' itself. In attempting to depict such a paradox in music there was no need to resort to superficial conventions of the kind used in film scores to describe or accentuate a disaster. Instead, the vocal line was envisaged as a continuum of irrepressible human energy, while the accompanying textures and secondary themes continue to replay the emotional trauma—initially at a safe distance, and gradually closer to home. Put simply, the music is not intended to describe a tragedy, but to reflect human anguish in all its profound psychological complexity.

Much of the orchestration relies on sounds or colours imagined during rehearsal and performance of the piano part. It is also worth noting that in order to maintain a strict (slow) tempo, musicians will often mentally subdivide the rhythm—a practice which in this case acted as a catalyst for the introduction of semiquavers in bar 12 (see Fig. 16).

Fig. 16. "Anguish": = bars 12-15

The image shows a musical score for five instruments: Flute 1 & 2 (Fl. 1, 2), Clarinet 2, 3 (Cl. 2, 3), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The score is in a key with three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a common time signature. The music begins at bar 12. The Flute and Clarinet parts feature melodic lines with slurs and accents. The Violin 1 part starts with a *pp* dynamic and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Violin 2 part also starts with *pp* and has a similar rhythmic pattern. The Viola part starts with *pp* and has a similar rhythmic pattern. The Violoncello part starts with *pp* and has a similar rhythmic pattern. The score ends at bar 15. Dynamics range from *pp* to *fp*.

Once this idea took hold it was easily justified: if the bass drum were likely to suggest an unpredictable heart-beat, it could be echoed by intermittent pulsations from various sections of the orchestra at appropriate moments, thereby creating textural interest while promoting a sense of restriction, restlessness, or unease. Although such literary

deliberations over my compositional intentions did not continue unabated as the work progressed, this particular idea was certainly thought through at a conscious level in the early stages. Eventually the process became more focussed on technical and structural issues and “A Nocturnall” was increasingly perceived as a skeletal framework on which to build a more complex work. Although the accompaniment was somewhat fragile, there was enough interaction between the voice and piano to generate further dialogue between various instrumental groupings, thus facilitating the extension of transitional passages. For example, bars 8–11 of “A Nocturnall” (see Fig. 17) are not particularly eventful, and are immediately followed by a 2-bar piano interlude which radically alters the texture by introducing the augmented chord.

Fig. 17. “A Nocturnall”: bars 8–12

forth light squibs, no con-stant rays; The world's whole sap is sunk;

Ped \*

Now that repeated notes were being used in a different context, the vocal line in bar 10 was reshaped to read E-F-E-E $\flat$ -E $\sharp$ -C, and the section was rounded off by the wind section overlapping fragments of thematic material (see Fig. 18) which eventually dissolve into ‘mini-pulsations’ before the augmented chords are introduced at bar 33.

Fig. 18. “Anguish”: = bars 23–321

23 Fl

Picc./Fl 3

Fl 1, 2

Ob 1, 2

Cl 1

B. Cl.

Bsn. 1, 2

Cbsn.

*mf* *mp* *dim* *f* *mf dim.*

At the same time the arpeggiated chords (originally “light squibs”) are given to the harp (see Fig. 19), the bass drum returns, and the pulsing sets off ascending *glissandi* from the lower strings to announce the entrance of the brass.

Fig. 19. “Anguish”: = bars 23–32

The musical score for "Anguish" (bars 23–32) features six staves: Percussion 2 (Perc. 2), Harp (Hp.), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Violin 2 (Vln. 2), Viola (Vla.), and Double Bass (Db.). The Perc. 2 staff shows a bass drum (B.D.) pattern starting in bar 23. The Harp staff has arpeggiated chords marked *mp*. The Violin 1 and 2 staves have dynamics *p*, *fp*, and *p*, with a *gliss.* instruction in bar 32. The Viola staff has dynamics *p*, *fp*, and *p*, with a *gliss.* instruction in bar 32. The Double Bass staff has dynamics *p*, *fp*, and *p*, with a *gliss.* instruction in bar 32. The Viola and Double Bass staves have *begin immediately* markings. The Viola staff has dynamics *mp* and *mf* with a *cresc.* marking. The Double Bass staff has dynamics *mp* and *mf*.

Thus the music began to grow, and expectations increased to the point where opportunities for expansion literally presented themselves at every turn. By bar 33 it was possible to begin incorporating fanfare-like motifs for the brass which are developed as a bridge between the whole tone phrases (“A Nocturnall” bars 14–16, “Anguish” bars 35–40) and the more conventional passage which follows. In the ballet, bars 44–48 are simply a more decorative—and therefore less finite—version of bars 18–21 (see Fig. 20), where a relapse into conventional chord progression (followed by a perfect cadence) is intended to depict the enormous frustration inherent in the text: “Yet all these seem to laugh compared with me, who am their epitaph”.

Fig. 20. “A Nocturnall”: bars 18–21

The musical score for "A Nocturnall" (bars 18–21) features two staves: a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a *din.* marking and the lyrics: "all these seem to laugh compared with me, who am their e-pi-taph". The piano accompaniment has dynamics *p* and *mf*.

In Scene 3, the jaunty, skipping triplet figures which appear as a musical appendage in bars 47–48 are best explained as an expression of subversive humour, or a kind of release, since here the narrator seems well aware of the fact that even our darkest moments can have their lighter side.

In developing the material from “A Nocturnall” to form the central scene of the ballet, much thought was given to creating a variety of textures which, in themselves, often compete with—or threaten to overwhelm—the melodic line. In order to obtain an accurate impression of the metamorphosis which occurred here, the reader need only listen to Scene 3 while following the score of “A Nocturnall”, an exercise which immediately demonstrates that much of the extension occurred between the original phrases of the song. In addition, it shows clearly the ways in which the vocal line was rhythmically adjusted for dramatic effect, illustrates the on-going utilisation of new ideas (such as rhythmic statements from the brass, or the ‘pulsing’ motif), and highlights the points at which Scene 3 makes a radical departure from the model. In terms of the overall structure, the greatest challenge was to provide a convincing orchestral climax, and for this it was necessary to temporarily suspend the notion of ‘orchestration’ and concentrate on restructuring the material with reference only to a memory of the text and its emotional implications.

“A Nocturnall” appears to reach its metaphysical zenith in the passage beginning with the words “Were I a man, that I were one, I needs must know”, a complex argument which demands close scrutiny and creates emotional tension through the accumulation of a series of dense metaphors. In Scene 3 the musical climax (bars 99–107) is engineered through thematic development based on a descending scale (the life-force) pitted against the more sinister rising triplet motif (re-enactment of the trauma). Tonality plays a vital role here, since the C major chord is ultimately reached by a somewhat circuitous route; the rapidly changing time-signatures, however, are also instrumental in heightening the drama. The outcome sees an immediate return to measured 4/4 rhythm, and suggests that it is the indomitable human spirit which triumphs over painful memories. Nevertheless, even after tonal resolution is achieved (bar 104), the brass section rears up to present a more stable but somewhat dissonant fanfare motif (see Fig. 21, bars 104–105) before the horns settle and succumb to regular pulsation within the safety of the final consonance (bars 106–107).



Quite apart from their main purpose in helping to achieve satisfactory rhythmic proportions, these last two bars express the subversive notion that negative experience is irrevocably absorbed by human consciousness, and cannot be easily erased.

Fig. 21. “Anguish”: = bars 104–107

At this point the music subsides, and the last section is much gentler and more predictable in character. Though the main energy is spent, what follows is a measured attempt to transform events into something more palatable, to create a musical landscape where resignation prevails, together with a faint glimmer of hope. Some new harmonisation is employed—in conjunction with the inverted ‘sighing’ motif—to suggest that the struggle is over and it is time to move on.

Scene 4, “Anger” is a reconstitution of the “The Apparition”, the shortest song in the cycle. The music is intended to conjure up the angry emotional state in which threats are devised and actions imagined, even though they are to bear no real consequence. As stated in Chapter One, the simple 2-bar introduction (see Fig. 22) was added during the rehearsal period and therefore never considered to be of any structural significance.

Fig. 22. “The Apparition”: bars 1–4

Now, however, it was to provide the incentive for a substantial opening section designed to portray a seething inner disquiet, here represented by the hissing cymbal, alternating strikes and rim shots from the snare drum, and rhythmically unpredictable outbursts from the tambourine (see Fig. 23).

Fig. 23. “Anger”: = bars 1–10

The image shows a musical score for three percussion parts: Percussion 1 (Susp. Cymb.), Percussion 2 (S.D.), and Percussion 3 (Tamb.). The score covers bars 1 to 10. Percussion 1 has a dynamic marking of *ppp* and a *cresc. poco à poco* marking, with a *r. sh.* (rim shot) indicated. Percussion 2 has a dynamic marking of *mp* and a *cresc. poco à poco* marking, with a *r. sh.* indicated. Percussion 3 has a dynamic marking of *mp* and a *cresc. poco à poco* marking, with a *mp* marking at the end of the section.

Against this background, the strings set up a dominant pedal point using both *pizzicato* and *col legno* effects while the viola section presents a drawn-out version of the rising chromatic scale fragment, accelerating towards the *Più mosso* at bar 20. This section, although strictly introductory in character, is intended to suggest the latent potential of malice aforethought, so conventional harmony (an elongated perfect cadence) is combined with rhythmic instability, a gradual *crescendo* and tempo acceleration in order to create the excitement of premeditated action before delivering the listener’s expectations. The key of G minor is, however, short-lived, and the next 64 bars represent a fairly straightforward orchestration of the song (bars 3–64). The main melodic line (which is sometimes also found in the accompaniment) is carried by different instruments in a variety of combinations and, as usual, phrase extensions (or musical elaborations) help to expand the proportion of the work as a whole.

Bars 88–131 represent new material which was developed from ideas presented in the opening section. At bar 90 the marking *Meno mosso* promotes a more serious mood, and the dogged repetition of 2-note quaver groups (strings) underpins a meandering melodic line (see Fig. 24) which is announced by the bassoons, bass trombone and double basses.

Fig. 24. “Anger”: = bars 90–97

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Bassoon 1 & 2 (Bsn. 1, 2), Clarinet (Clsn.), and Double Bass (Db.). The score covers bars 90 to 97. The tempo marking is *Meno mosso* with a quarter note equal to 66 (♩ = 66). The dynamic marking is *mf*. The Double Bass part has an *arco* marking. The score shows a melodic line with 2-note quaver groups.

Meanwhile the brass introduces a truncated version in which the triplet figure (trumpets, bars 90–93) is used as a sort of anti-heroic gesture indicative of false confidence. This idea is further emphasized by a lack of tonal certainty and a series of awkward, inconclusive leaps (trumpets and trombones, bars 95–99) towards the end of the phrase. Although this material is presented in sequence, beginning again a tone lower at bar 101, the texture is somehow dark enough and the tonality twisted enough to suggest a repetition rather than a transposition. The whole section was designed to describe, in musical terms, the sheer persistence of a protagonist who, after all, is only a ghost, and the exasperation associated with imaginary actions.

The poem's climax is reached when the narrator refers to his friend's new lover as "a verier ghost than I". In the song this was realised in a vocal solo punctuated by a  $C^b$  minor 6/9 chord (see Fig. 25) that initiated a return of the opening piano solo.

Fig. 25. "The Apparition": bars 64–68

In the ballet, this material is transformed into an orchestral climax (bars 117–121), but here the static 2-note quaver groups provide another dimension: it is this insistent commentary which eventually distracts the attention and renders the passage musically impotent (see Fig. 26).

Fig. 26. "Anger": = bars 120

In Scene 4 there is no immediate return to the energetic, descending cluster chords indicative of resolute action. Instead, the relentless rhythmic quavers gradually subside, leading back surreptitiously to the threatening atmosphere of the opening, where 'intended action' is musically defined by the dominant pedal point (bars 132–144). In this case the

music suggests even more strongly that we are literally back where we started, and that nothing of significance has really been accomplished.

From this point on, Scene 4 basically follows the shape of the song but is annotated by echoes of the new material, such as triplet figures in the brass (bars 150–151, 157, 159). Although it was clear that this would also be the shortest scene of the ballet, there was a need to maintain the proportions of the work as a whole. The ending was therefore slightly delayed by developing an idea used in the construction of the song. In order to balance the harsh octave leap and direct descent of the opening vocal statement (see Fig. 27), this had been followed by a more mellifluous phrase (see Fig. 28) calculated to marginalise the seriousness of the narrator and suggest a somewhat more intimate tone.

Fig. 27. “The Apparition”: = bars 9–14



Fig. 28. “The Apparition”: = bars 15–20



The motif circled in Figure 28 now provided the incentive for the passage beginning in bar 161 and leading to yet another anti-climax (bars 165–168). In the end, the Tschairowsky quotation—with all its latent climactic potential—is nothing more than the high point in a faltering final statement (bars 176–187) where imaginary action is reduced to a gentle, if slightly cynical chuckle (bars 183–184).

It was at this point in the compositional process that questions arose regarding the length of the ballet as a whole and the general tenor of its conclusion. Lasting just under three minutes, “The Expiration” seemed unlikely to offer enough material (or the right kind of atmosphere) for a final scene, so a new plan emerged: since it had provided an appropriate musical antidote to the restless energy of “The Apparition”, this song would be substantially expanded to form the penultimate scene of the ballet, and the conclusion would be entirely new. The last scene could be (at least in part) fast and furious, so there would be no need to compromise by altering the expressive substance of the final song.

Quite the opposite, in fact—the sober, circuitous nature of the material could be stressed and the emotional content enlarged by taking advantage of the slow tempo. Thus “The Expiration” was gradually transformed into **Scene 5, “Alienation”**, where the emphasis is on estrangement and disorientation, and there are occasionally fleeting hints of what has gone before.

In this instance, the opening was devised by using a selection of notes from the first bar of the piano introduction (see Ex. 6) and arranging them in canon, with the lower parts rhythmically altered to create mildly dissonant suspensions (see Fig. 29).

**Ex. 6. “The Expiration”:** = bars 1-2



**Fig. 29. “Alienation”:** = bars 1-8

This slow-moving string texture would be more clearly reminiscent of Scene 3 were it not for the added accentuation by the double basses (*pizzicato*) and the contrabassoon (*staccato*) at the beginning of each bar, a feature designed to suggest a much more tentative mood. Bars 9–17, incorporating both 3/4 and 6/8 time, introduce the tonic chord (F major) before leading hesitantly to a complete reversal of the opening phrase (see Fig. 30).

**Fig. 30. “Alienation”:** = bars 18–25

This passage also makes its way to an F major chord which this time suggests a plagal cadence in C minor, although the harmonic progression F–Cm–Db/F (bars 27–35) does not actually establish any real tonal centre. A miniature, ‘off-the-beat’ flute solo is then echoed by the harp (bars 29–34), bringing to an end the opening section which, although extremely simple in design, lends valuable weight to the structure as a whole. Much of this material returns towards the end of the scene, thus adding a total of almost four minutes to the duration of the original song.

Once the required length was assured, and allowing for the construction of a dramatic climax at some point during the scene, the next challenge was to orchestrate the song in such a way as to exploit its predominantly contrapuntal texture while at the same time creating a stronger sense of emotional dislocation. Although the tone of this poem is extremely logical, the syntax is convoluted: an inevitable separation is here justified by complex arguments which in themselves promote a degree of confusion. This strange psychological state is represented musically in a variety of ways, one of which is an elementary form of syncopation. The orchestration of the original piano introduction begins at bar 36, where the melody is simply divided between the flute, oboe and clarinet. By bar 50, however, the material is staggered (see Fig. 31), the violins presenting the melodic line just one semiquaver behind the flute, an effect which might at first require careful rehearsal.

**Fig. 31. “Alienation”:** = bars 50–54

This technique is used several times—e.g. between the first and second violins (bar 63 ff.), in broken octaves from the harp (bar 72 ff.), and with the first violins playing ahead of the flutes (bar 74 ff.)—the idea being to sow the seeds of separation while simultaneously underlining the painful togetherness suggested by “this last lamenting kiss”.

At bar 78 the wind interjects with *staccato* semiquavers (see Fig. 32) containing awkward leaps intended to remind the listener of similar interpolations by the brass and woodwind in previous scenes. There was no planned motivic connection with any

particular passage, but it was felt that these rhythmic ideas and intervallic patterns helped to generate a nervousness which effectively undermined the level of assurance contained in the rising scale carried by the strings.

**Fig. 32. “Alienation”:** = bars 78–81

The image shows a musical score for an orchestral passage titled "Alienation" (bars 78-81). The score is written for Piccolo/Flute 3, Flute 1 and 2, Oboe 1 and 2, Clarinet 1, Violin 1, Viola, and Violoncello. The music is in a minor key and features a complex, disjointed rhythmic pattern. The dynamics are marked *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *cresc.* (crescendo). The strings play a rising scale that is interrupted by staccato notes and rests, creating a sense of tension and unease.

These bars now introduce a strange passage in which the music appears to stutter as the rhythm is deliberately disjointed. There are two blatantly unsuccessful attempts to begin the phrase which, in the original setting, accompanied the words “Ease me with death” (see Fig. 33).

**Fig. 33. “The Expiration”:** bars 24–25

The image shows a musical score for a vocal passage titled "The Expiration" (bars 24-25). The score is written for a voice and piano. The voice part is in a minor key and features a complex, disjointed rhythmic pattern. The lyrics are: "and if that word have not quite kill'd thee, Ease me with death, by". The dynamics are marked *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The piano accompaniment is in a minor key and features a complex, disjointed rhythmic pattern.

When working on the orchestration I was blithely unaware of the exact text at this point, but this is another example of a stored emotional reaction being expressed instinctively in sound, rather than the sound being manipulated by way of any formal, pre-meditated design. At this point in the poem I had become acutely aware of the complexity of the argument, and of the narrator’s exaggerated expression of guilt. It was certainly not an intellectual decision which informed this passage (bars 83–92): indeed, the likely imitation of a cracked record at first provoked considerable resistance. The more I fought against it, however, the more I was compelled to proceed with the idea. It was as if I were experiencing the same difficulty as the narrator, who appears to be trying all too hard to

accept his share of the blame. Needless to say, it is now hoped that the listener will also react uneasily when confronted with the passage in question. Initially there were problems with the orchestration, but these were finally solved by reserving the trumpets for the very last statement (bars 87–91) in which the phrase finally reaches its logical conclusion.

When the opening material returns at bar 109, it is transposed down a major 3rd but appears otherwise unchanged. An important development occurs, however, in bars 120–123, where a variation on the main thematic material is incorporated into the orchestral texture, thus helping to cement the connection between the outer sections and the main body of the work (see Fig. 34).

Fig. 34. “Alienation”: = bars 120–123

This prepares the way for a similar compositional procedure to be undertaken at bar 135, where the original song ending (see Fig. 35) undergoes a form of musical elaboration, including the aforementioned syncopation (see Fig. 36).

Fig. 35. “The Expiration”: = bars 36–37

Fig. 36. “Alienation”: = bars 120–123



Compared to the rest of the work, the ending for Scene 5 of the ballet seemed to require a disproportionate amount of time and effort. Several versions were drafted before it occurred to me that personal separation (or any generic form of alienation) might be musically experienced through the simple combination of subtle syncopation and a ‘hanging’ chord consisting only of the 5th and 6th scale degrees.

Finally we come to **Scene 6, “Abandon”**, where the very title suggests not only the flagrant expression of unguarded emotions but also the risks associated with orchestral writing as distinct from orchestration. In attempting to create a new and vibrant ‘classical’ ballet, Tchaikowsky was never far from my imagination, and in this case the initial inspiration came from my memory of the last movement of his violin concerto. The last scene was to present a whirlwind of activity, and in terms of the overall design I envisaged a situation in which this work might actually proceed towards a central point of lightness and fragility before gradually regaining its strength to build an ostentatious close. Unlike Ravel’s *Bolero*, which was originally intended as an exercise in creating an orchestral *crescendo*, this was an attempt to produce a *diminuendo* followed by a *crescendo*, with a special place being reserved for the magical mid-way point. (That said, it was an idea which originally related more to the actual form of the piece than the orchestral texture, although clearly both are involved.) I have now discovered that Scene 6 contains 219 bars and the mid-way point is reached in bars 104–105, although it was actually written in linear fashion with no attempt to keep track of bar numbers, and the ending was (as usual) rewritten several times before it was considered acceptable!

In discussing these works after the event, I have tried to avoid describing the music at the expense of explaining the compositional process, but when it comes to my musical intentions, the two are sometimes difficult to separate. Considering the ballet as a whole, for example, it would be possible to analyse numerous motifs and passages contained in Scene 6 in order to demonstrate their relationship to material used in the other five scenes; but since this has happened purely as a matter of course—and without any conscious effort or deliberate planning on my part—the exercise would appear to be pointless, if not counterproductive. Scene 6, “Abandon” was written in three main sections, each one containing a number of smaller segments. Suffice it to say that, with no imperative to follow any pre-existing model, the idea of motivic connection to previous scenes was the

furthest thing from my mind. Stylistic similarities notwithstanding, the following discussion is based on the idea of a self-contained *finale* intended to celebrate freedom, exuberance and the sheer joy of the dance.

The first section begins with an energetic motif in 5/8 time, enigmatic in so far as it represents a series of rising semitones deceptively arranged as a sharp downward thrust (see Ex. 7).

**Ex. 7. “Abandon”:** = bars 1–3



Variations on this statement are presented sequentially in unison (strings and wind, bars 1–17) while the brass intercepts with augmentations of the material in 5/4 time, using perfect 4ths to thicken the texture and promote the idea of uninhibited display. After the rhythmic combination of quavers and semiquavers (5/8) interrupted by minims and crotchets (5/4), bar 17 initiates a flurry of quavers which continues unbroken in the wind section until bar 37, when four bars of running semiquavers (see Fig. 37) brings this second segment to a breathless end.

**Fig. 37. “Alienation”:** = bars 38–41

A short transitional passage in 4/4 with two surprising accents (bars 42–44) leads to the next segment (bars 45–52), where the use of 6/8 literally turns running into skipping. One bar of 4/4 time at the end of the 8-bar phrase (bar 52) provides a somewhat unexpected turnaround before the same material is repeated by the strings. This time, however, the melody is foreshortened, creating a 7-bar phrase (bars 53–59) which leads directly to a rearrangement of the material as a conventional waltz (bars 60–66). Here a 2-bar phrase extension in 4/4 (bars 67–68) heralds a return to the opening material which rushes headlong into a climax at bar 76 before subsiding gently into a passage which marks the beginning of the planned *diminuendo*.

In terms of its raw material, the middle section is based largely on intervallic patterns which have already been heard, but augmentation and rhythmic spacing account for a more lyrical presentation of the same ideas. There is as much emphasis on (written-in) *rallentando* as on a lowering of the dynamic level, so that from bar 80 the music literally winds down through a series of rhythmic variations on the original motif (see Ex. 8).

### Ex. 8. Motivic variation

The “magical mid-way point” referred to above is highlighted by the use of the Glockenspiel in bars 104–105, a Mendelssohnian touch which seemed appropriate in the given context. The concept of ‘twistonality’ is relevant here in that the whole passage, being more traditional in character, provides an audible contrast to the outer sections, the second of which is more dissonant than the first. The high F sounded by the violins in bar 105 is immediately transferred to the lower strings where it acts briefly as a dominant pedal point, but as the music regains its momentum these tonal expectations remain unfulfilled. Instead, we reach a stalemate at bar 121, where a transitional passage introduces a seemingly inconsequential motif (see Fig. 38) superimposed on a static rhythmic pattern designed to portray a kind of jumping on the spot.

Fig. 38. “Abandon”: = bars 123–126

The C which underpins this exercise functions here as the true dominant of F major and there is another episode of dance music consisting of three segments: a 9-bar phrase in 5/8 (bars 134–142), a 7-bar phrase in 6/8 (bars 143–149) and finally a return to the waltz, 11 bars of 3/4 (bars 150–160). The *Più mosso* at bar 161 now ushers in the closing section.

The excitement which follows (bars 161–168) was generated entirely from ideas which have already been discussed, together with standard compositional procedures such as rapid, rising-scale upbeats, ascending sequences and triple tonguing from the wind and brass. One last feature is of interest, however. In the first draft of Scene 6, bar 168 was marked with a pause and followed immediately by the section which now begins at bar 193. In addition, the current bar 208 led straight to an abrupt ending consisting mainly of fast, repeated B♭ major chords. It soon became clear that, having been anxious to complete the scene, I had misjudged its overall proportions: the closing section definitely needed considerably more thought! Several months passed before I was able to tackle this problem, and even then my intention was simply to extend the final bars by drawing out the cadence and perhaps adding some element of surprise. Fortunately, however, it occurred to me that the “inconsequential” material mentioned above (see Fig. 38) had been heard only once, and that it was worthy of further development. This presented an opportunity to insert yet another piece into what could now be regarded as a ‘musical mosaic’.

The diminished chords shown in Fig. 38 provide the usual element of suspense, heightened to some extent by their placement on the off-beats. At bar 171 their tonal quality is slightly altered (see Fig. 39) and rhythmic interest is entrusted to the snare drum.

**Fig. 39. “Abandon”:** = bars 171–175

The musical score for Figure 39 consists of five staves. The top staff is Percussion 1 (Perc. 1), marked with a snare drum (S.D.) and playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with accents, starting at bar 171. The dynamics are marked *pp*. The four string staves (Violin 1, Violin 2, Viola, and Violoncello) play a melodic phrase. The dynamics for the strings are marked *mp* for the first two bars and *fp* for the last two bars. The score includes various musical notations such as accents, slurs, and dynamic markings.

The subsequent reiteration of this phrase led naturally to a ‘farewell’ appearance of the waltz theme, which was reshaped (see Fig. 40) to produce an appropriate point of departure for what would now be the last burst of activity.

**Fig. 40. “Abandon”:** = bars 181–19

The musical score for Figure 40 shows a single staff for Violin 1 (Vln. 1) starting at bar 181. The violin part features a melodic phrase with dynamics ranging from *f cresc.* to *mp*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Finally the closing bars were amended to include bold statements from the brass, and the last chord was rewritten many times in order to minimise the *cliché* while delivering the anticipated ‘happy ending’. Thus the ballet comes to an optimistic close, having explored a wide range of psychological and/or emotional states along the way. Given that *Sensambulations* began as an exercise in the orchestration of a song cycle written several years earlier, there was little room to manoeuvre in the area of harmonic structure. Clearly the tonal language needed to be consistent throughout the entire ballet, so priority was given to the technique of orchestration *per se* and the creation of meaningful music which might appeal to a professional dance company.

### Performance and Revision

Although the ballet has not yet been performed, **Scene 1 “Awakenings”** was publicly workshopped by the Elder Conservatorium Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Keith Crellin on August 1, 2005. There were only three rehearsals, all of which I was able to attend, and the whole experience was extremely valuable. The performance was recorded, and although it was perhaps less successful than the final rehearsal, it has been included in Volume Three because, for all its flaws, it gives a good indication of how the orchestration works. It also provides a useful comparison with the computer generated version which is used for the complete ballet.

The live performance contains several glaring mistakes which occurred only on this particular occasion. Of the problems which arose in rehearsal, some might have been caused by a lack of cautionary accidentals, whereas others suggested that I had been careless with performance instructions. For example, in bar 141 three cymbal crashes were intended to help the music build towards a climax. The first one had been marked *ff*, so this is exactly what was executed. They have now been marked *mf*, *f*, and *ff* respectively! Sometimes two flutes were not strong enough to cut through the accompanying woodwind texture, or the brass needed to be held in check by a more moderate dynamic marking. In the second rehearsal the conductor instinctively slowed the tempo during a passage which might normally have invited a *rallentando* and, although I had not given any indication in the score, I realised that the marking “*senza ritenuto*” would have made my intentions much clearer.

On the whole the balancing of sounds between the various sections did not cause any serious problems, although with very few cellos and only one double bass, the performance was marred by a lack of substance in the lower registers. In general I was extremely pleased with the result, especially given the limited preparation time. Mis-timed or missing entries, problems with intonation, mis-readings, lack of rhythmic precision and untidy ensemble are normally to be expected from an inexperienced orchestra, but I gained enormous confidence from the fact that, all this aside, the actual sounds were almost exactly as I had imagined. More to the point, it was important for me to recognise that, given the samples available to me on the computer, I was now working with realistic expectations in relation to both individual instruments (the woodwind in particular) and the various sections of the orchestra.

One last observation is, however, pertinent to this discussion. When the complete ballet score was presented to a violinist with many years of orchestral experience, the “mix-up between sharps and flats” was found to be quite disturbing—unless, as she put it, I was “in no way concerned about true intonation”! The final editing process therefore entailed the addition and subtraction of key-signatures in order to rationalise the accidentals and ensure that all tonal passages were completely legible.

## **Conclusion**

It is hoped that these first three chapters have begun to provide a clearer justification for the concept of ‘twistonality’, a term coined in relation to my own work but one which clearly includes a range of compositional styles. Essentially, it describes the way in which a composer may manipulate sounds within the framework of a tonal system in order to express musical ideas based on emotional experiences—irrespective of how they have been gained. In Part B the discussion will focus on more technical issues pertaining to the creation of an expressive tonal language informed by both traditional and contemporary idioms. It will also look at various other aspects of the compositional process, all of which have contributed towards the gradual definition of a distinctive, personal style.

# PART B

# DEVELOPMENT

# 4

## CLASSICAL CONTOURS

*SONATA FOR VIOLONCELLO AND PIANO*



## Genesis

By April 2005 I realised that the only examples of my piano writing were the *Five Love Songs*, and although I considered writing a Piano Sonata, the task seemed daunting. Inspiration finally came from a documentary film on Rodion Shchedrin<sup>1</sup> which included an excerpt from his Cello Sonata (1996) performed by Franz Helmerson with the composer at the piano. It was the opening of the third movement, a slow introductory passage in which the piano delivered block chords and the cello presented a simple motif which, as it developed, gradually climbed into the higher registers: theatrical material which immediately demanded audience attention. Suddenly the music stopped and the film changed direction, but as a result of that experience I found myself wanting to compose something for the same combination. The next day I began work on the *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano*.

With plenty of models available<sup>2</sup>, it was clear that the piano could play an important role and, after struggling elsewhere with the more formal aspects of sonata form, I was keen to create an extended work with less dependence on conventional structures and cadential idioms. In particular, I wanted to investigate a more colourful harmonic scheme and the use of chromatic scales (regarded as dangerous in jazz improvisation) as a textural feature. My intention was to dispense with modal restrictions and to write a substantial work in which the cellist and pianist would form an equal partnership in a more adventurous sound world. More importantly, it was to be of significant proportions and dependent, for its effective realisation, on a thorough understanding of the musical gestures inherent in classical models.

Initially, this Sonata was in three movements. The first was experimental and largely improvised, whereas the second required a more formal pre-compositional design. The last was also fairly substantial, but since the outer movements were rather similar in their moderate metrical characteristics, it was suggested that I should add another—one which was perhaps much lighter in character—and thus the third movement was actually the last to be composed. The first version of the *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano*<sup>3</sup> was completed within a period of seven weeks in 2005, and revised approximately one year later.

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<sup>1</sup> *Rodion Shchedrin: Concerto Cantabile*. Dir. Georges Gachot. A DRS/Metropolitan Co-production. n.d.

<sup>2</sup> Works performed include the five Beethoven cello sonatas, Brahms Op.38, Debussy, Kabalevsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovitch Sonatas for Cello and Piano.

<sup>3</sup> The full title has been abbreviated to *Cello Sonata* for the labels in this chapter.

## Method

There was no structural plan for the first movement. Inspired by the Shchedrin (but without preconceived ideas), I began experimenting at the piano and eventually jotted down a few four-note cells (see Ex. 1) which have been labelled retrospectively as Theme Group A.

### Ex. 1. *Cello Sonata I: Theme Group A*



These ideas are so simple that they might just as well have been noted in letter names (B–E–Eb–Db etc.), but they provided the basic raw material, and the first section (bars 1–19) evolved naturally from the desire to present a growing interaction between two instruments which are by nature distinctly different in character and timbre. By bar 18, however, it was clear that the chord Db–Ab–(A)–C–Eb—even without the major 3rd or the minor 7th—might act as a ‘tritone substitute’ for G7, and when followed by the C M7 chord, the cadential implications were so strong that this opening material was automatically rendered ‘introductory’. The second working session produced ideas which stemmed naturally from the introduction (see Ex. 2), and which might now be summarised as Theme Group B.

### Ex. 2. *Cello Sonata I: Theme Group B*



These three phrases—the last of which threatens to tonicise the subdominant—were able to be delivered alternately by the two instruments while material from Theme Group A provided organic links with the preceding section. The key of C major allowed the use of open strings for the double-stopping at bar 20, and I now began to colour the texture with chromatic writing, a process which was labour-intensive for several reasons. First, it was clear that fast chromatic runs would be difficult to execute on the cello, and would need—at least in the upper registers—to be marked ‘*quasi glissando*’. Secondly, it meant finding note-groupings that were comfortable for the pianist to play at the required (fast) tempo, and therefore sensible

fingering patterns had to be worked out as I went along.<sup>4</sup> At bar 41 the melodic material became more lyrical, and could almost be designated as Theme Group C (see Ex. 3).

**Ex. 3. Cello Sonata I: Theme Group C**



By bar 49 I had reached what seemed to be a logical turning point in the musical argument, and subsequently there was an even longer break before I was able to resume work.

Considerable doubts now arose concerning both the compositional process and the musical language which had been devised, thus far, ‘by ear’. Any attempts at harmonic analysis proved unhelpful and eventually, after several weeks, the next section was written simply as an extension of material which, by now, had become a musical reality. After a brief transition which literally reflects the difficulty of beginning again (bars 49–53), I was finally able to develop the ideas with more freedom. Although I had intended to abandon conventional forms, I was also conscious of the need for structural substance and aware that the first movement in particular needed to be well organised. The result was vaguely suggestive of sonata form, and a comparison with the more traditional structure is shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Cello Sonata I—Comparative Structures**

Bars	Traditional	Sonata Form	Cello Sonata Equivalent
1–19	<b>Exposition</b>	Introduction	Theme Group A
20–39		First subject	Theme Group B
40		Bridge passage	Bridge passage
41–49		Second subject	Theme Group C
50–93	<b>Development</b>	Development	Development
94–122	<b>Recapitulation</b>	First & second subjects	Theme Groups A, B, C
123–132	<b>Coda</b>	Coda	Coda

<sup>4</sup> Although this work is extremely difficult, my own fingering has not been included in the score for the reasons advanced by Debussy in his famous Introduction to the *Twelve Études* for piano: “imposer un doigté ne peut logiquement s’adapter aux différentes conformations de la main. . . . Pour conclure: l’absence de doigté est un excellent exercice, supprime l’esprit de contradiction qui nous pousse à préférer ne pas mettre le doigté de l’auteur, et, vérifier ces paroles éternelles: ‘On n’est jamais mieux servi que par soi-même’.” Debussy, Claude. *Douze Etudes complete pour piano seul*. Edition originale. Amderstam: Broekmans & van Poppel, 1968.

In terms of this analysis, much of the so-called development section might appear rather transitory in character, but it is perhaps justified as a further working out of the dialogue which was set up at the beginning of the movement. I have no way of explaining the echoes of Eric Carmen which crept in at bar 82, except to suggest that there might be a vague ‘Russian connection’ through his flagrant use of Rachmaninoff’s themes. Nor can I indicate with any certainty how I arrived at bar 94, where a bold return of the main thematic material seemed appropriate. Having begun the work in an exploratory manner, the rest followed with a surprising degree of inevitability, my main cause for concern being that a live performance would almost certainly call for serious professional musicians keen to accept the challenge of extremely virtuosic writing.

In the light of all this, the motivating forces behind the **second movement** are best summed as follows: it was now necessary to write something which was primarily lyrical and, above all, absolutely simple. At the same time I wanted to avoid any repetition of either the whimsically tentative, or slightly agitated dialogue that had become integral features of the first movement. The doubts and delays which had characterised the compositional process so far were to be avoided at all costs, and therefore I needed a pre-compositional plan which would enable me to complete the piece with more fluency and confidence. As I was searching for a non-conventional structure strong enough to compliment that of the first movement but flexible enough to sustain more lyrical ideas, it occurred to me that the form of this movement should actually emerge from the music itself. Why not begin with a series of chords, each of which, in due course, could become a tonal centre? This idea was certainly appealing in terms of its simplicity, and a quick calculation suggested that from a row of seven or eight chords, lasting roughly two seconds each, I might generate seven separate sections of 16–24 bars in length which—at the same slow tempo—might all last for around 42 seconds, giving a total of 294 seconds, or approximately five minutes. Allowing for some variation, it seemed as if this plan might work.

At the time I did not attempt to connect this material with anything which had gone before, although I now realise that, even in slow motion, the opening melodic shape is surprisingly similar to some of the thematic material from the first movement. The chosen row consists of seven chords (see Fig. 1), beginning and ending with E $\flat$  major.

Fig. 1. *Cello Sonata II*: bars 1–8

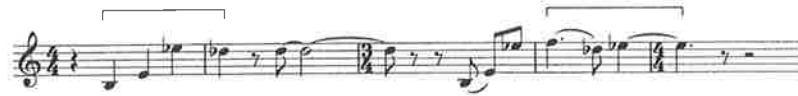
The penultimate chord, a Bbm7 in last inversion, represents not the minor form of the dominant, but a chord-type which is usually assigned a tonic role in functional harmony. Its relevance here is therefore non-cadential, even though its resolution to I $\sharp$  is perfectly satisfying. Furthermore, whereas in a functional (cyclic) diatonic chord progression (e.g. I–IV–vii–iii–vii–ii–V–I) chords IV, vii and iii occur in sequence, here they are neighbours in a different order (VII–bIII–IV–III), a subtle twist which effectively weakens harmonic expectations and tends to curtail any sense of real progression.

Once the key centres were established, my next task was to create a lyrical melody for the cello which might be supported by a simple accompaniment. In this movement, genuine dialogue between the two instruments was at first replaced by ‘role reversal’, the cellist and pianist taking it in turns to present the main material, and a slow waltz allowed this idea to be realised. The main focus was to be on the shifting tonality, so the melodic line needed to be transparent enough for the modulations themselves to create the required tension, along with a sense of forward progression. Whereas most of the chords in the row are major, the melody uses the Lydian mode, and although this was not a conscious choice at the time, it seemed justified as something which—to my ears, at least—gave the music slightly more predictability, thus compensating for the slow-moving harmonic scheme. Since most of the sections involve melodic improvisation over a temporary tonic chord, the raised 4th promotes a suggestion of moving gently to and from the dominant of that key, giving the illusion of basic harmonic progression where there actually is none. The main melody is in two parts (see Ex. 4), each of which falls naturally into two equal sections, shown here in C major.

#### Ex. 4. *Cello Sonata II*: Melodic contours

In retrospect, it has been interesting to discover that the melodic contour of Part 1a provides strong echoes of the introductory material from the first movement. Although I was not aware of this at the time of writing, an illustration (see Ex. 5) seems pertinent to this discussion.

**Ex. 5. Cello Sonata I: Melodic cells**



As we shall see, such connections play an important role in the structure of the work as a whole, but the aim here was simply to create long phrases which were both balanced and flexible enough to change direction. Part 2 begins with more emphasis on melodic descent, and then ascends through a series of hemiolas intended to create forward momentum ahead of the impending modulations in each section.

When all six tonalities had been explored, the music returned to E $\flat$  major and seemed to demand a musical *hiatus*—or ‘time out’—before bringing the work to a close. There is now a descending chord sequence using the E $\flat$  Lydian mode, set against a tonic pedal point which is sustained by the cello, as it were, indefinitely, allowing the piano one last referral to the main theme. This section aims to prepare the listener for what, by now, should be an almost inevitable conclusion: a complete reversal of the opening row (see Fig. 2), with the cello as an active participant.

**Fig. 2. Cello Sonata II: = bars 127–136**



By revisiting each of the ‘key-chords’ retrospectively, my twofold aim was to assure the listener of a ‘safe return’, and to provide an affirmation of the opening sentiment. The overall structure is shown in Table 4.2, which explains the distribution of melodic material in the various sections, although the real ‘waltz’ accompaniment is clearly continued by the keyboard throughout the movement.

Table 4.2: *Cello Sonata II*—Structural Summary

Bars	Key	Musical Activity
1–12	E $\flat$ Major	Cello - Tacet Piano - chord row: E $\flat$ , D, G $\flat$ , A $\flat$ , B $\flat$ mM7, E $\flat$ followed by 4 bars of introductory ‘accompaniment’.
12–24	E $\flat$ Major	Cello - melody Part 1 Piano - accompaniment
25–40	D Major	Cello - accompaniment Piano - melody Part 1
41–58	G $\flat$ Major	Cello - melody Part 2 Piano - accompaniment
59–76	A $\flat$ Major	Cello - melody Part 2 and Piano - melody Part 2 – canonic treatment
77–94	G Major	Cello - accompaniment followed by melody Part 1 Piano - melody Part 1 (slightly extended)
95–112	B $\flat$ minor	Cello - Tacet, followed by melodic variation Piano - melodic variation
113–126	E $\flat$ Major	Cello - tonic pedal point Piano - chord sequence, and melody Part 1a (LH)
127–136	E $\flat$ Major	Cello and Piano - chord row in reverse: E $\flat$ , B $\flat$ mM7 (minus root), A $\flat$ , G $\flat$ , D, E $\flat$ .

The **third movement** is virtually a stand-alone Scherzo in ternary form. Although it was added almost as a post-script, it includes chromatic detours and a lyrical section which, as we shall see, bears some resemblance to the melodic material of the second movement. Since it was to be light and ‘fluffy’, the original idea presented itself as a simple *pizzicato* scale for the cello set on the off-beats against a fluttering single-line *staccato* accompaniment. Figure 3 shows how this was first notated, although the final version, apart from being easier to read, is a much more accurate description of what was actually intended:

Fig. 3. *Cello Sonata III*: = bars 1–12

Once this idea took hold, the first section developed very quickly, my only conscious decision being to maintain this texture until the music called for a contrasting section, where I might introduce a complete change of colour. At the time of writing I became vaguely aware that

there were echoes of the Litolff *Scherzo*—a childhood favourite—but apart from that, it was simply an intuitive exercise in rhythmic spontaneity: it was as if the very speed with which I wrote helped to dictate the fleeting chord changes. I had no concerns about fingering patterns for the pianist, since a single line could easily be organized between the two hands, and in the first version most of the piano part was in fact written on one staff (see Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. *Cello Sonata III*, v.1: = bars 73–84



Section A is set mostly in A major, but the tonal centre shifts sideways on a regular basis, facilitated by the use of chromatic passing and auxiliary notes which frequently suggest a temporary dominant, rather than a tonic. At the end of this section the repeated F announces the key of B $\flat$  major (see Fig. 5), and in the first version this is exactly what transpired.

Fig. 5. *Cello Sonata III*, v.1: = bars 112–118



In revising the work as a whole, however, it was clear that a more dramatic key change might enhance the playful character of the movement without altering the musical substance, so Section B now appears in B major (see Fig. 6).

Fig. 6. *Cello Sonata III*: bars 112–118





In the outer, semi-contrapuntal sections, chromatic deviation occurs in horizontal fashion: the melodic line is directed in and out of the home key through a series of temporary tonicisations, thus maintaining the musical momentum. In the more homophonic middle section, however, the effect is one of sudden vertical displacement within a more stable harmonic framework, an aural effect that is already evident in bars 117–118 (see Fig. 6). A further example occurs with the next change of key signature, which in the original version seemed to occur quite naturally, preparing the listener for a repeat of the more lyrical material in the new key of D major, or III in relation to B $\flat$  major (see Fig. 7).

Fig. 7. *Cello Sonata III*: bars 122–124



When Section B was transposed up a semitone, I decided not to use the key of E $\flat$  (or D $\sharp$ ) major for the second statement of the theme, but to retain the key of D major, which now represented  $\flat$ III, a much more distant relative of B major. This meant that there was no longer a smooth bass progression from bar 123 into bar 124, but in fact the repeated A $\flat$  seems to stimulate awareness of another (vertical) shift in the tonal centre (see Fig. 8), analogous to the one already mentioned above.

Fig. 8. *Cello Sonata III*: bars 122–124

I then had to decide how to bring Section B to a close without the material sounding trite, because in the first version (see Fig. 9), the transition to the return of Section A was rather weak.

Fig. 9. *Cello Sonata III*, v.1: bars 136–153

The image shows the original manuscript for bars 136-153 of the first version of the Cello Sonata III. It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows the cello part (top staff) and piano accompaniment (bottom staff). The cello part has a chromatic shift in the key signature. The piano part has a section marked 'pizz.' (pizzicato) starting in bar 143. The second system continues the music, with the cello part and piano accompaniment. The piano part has another section marked 'pizz.' starting in bar 146. The time signature is 3/8.

In order to overcome this problem minor amendments were made to the cello part in bars 143–146, giving it a stronger character (see Fig. 10), and another chromatic shift was added at the change of time signature, making the passage somewhat more unsettled.

Fig. 10. *Cello Sonata III*: bars 136–153

The image shows the revised manuscript for bars 136-153 of the Cello Sonata III. It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows the cello part (top staff) and piano accompaniment (bottom staff). The cello part has a chromatic shift in the key signature. The piano part has a section marked 'pizz.' (pizzicato) starting in bar 143. The second system continues the music, with the cello part and piano accompaniment. The piano part has another section marked 'pizz.' starting in bar 146. The time signature is 3/8.

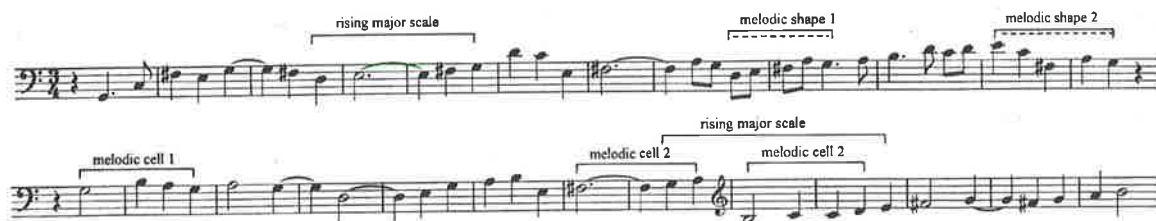
While these might seem very small adjustments, it was important at this point to prevent the listener from becoming too comfortable with what was a relatively conventional middle section.

In Section B the time signature of 7/8 seemed to contrast well enough with the preceding section, and allowed the cello to present a more lyrical statement within the confines of a *Meno mosso* marking. Although there was no conscious decision to relate this new theme to the other movements (all of which had now been completed), there is a sense in which it belongs to the Sonata as a whole, possibly because some of the other material was still on the surface of my



subconscious memory. A brief comparison revealed that the opening four notes and the rising scale segment heard in the following bar were both found in Part 2 of the melody from the second movement, but on closer investigation I discovered other similarities. Example 6 presents the thematic material from the second movement (shown above in Ex. 4), this time indicating various audible melodic cells, shapes and scale fragments.

### Ex. 6. *Cello Sonata II*: Thematic material



Once these have been highlighted, the theme used for Section B of the third movement certainly appears as a not-so-distant cousin. Example 7 shows the material transposed into C major for ease of reference.

### Ex. 7. *Cello Sonata III*: Thematic material



These parallels cannot be explained by any intellectual process, and were certainly not consciously ‘engineered’, which suggests that musical memory is a very powerful factor in the compositional process. While it is probably dangerous to use the word ‘subconscious’, I refer here to a type of musical memory that has emotional, rather than verbal or intellectual associations, but which is nevertheless able—under certain circumstances—to provide inspiration and to direct the composer in such a way as to ensure a meaningful, rather than a calculated musical outcome.

In the first draft most of Section A was written in 6/8 or 9/8 time, and in some ways this helped to give a clearer view of the harmonic structure. However the time signatures were later revised to make the score more legible and—more importantly—to allow the cellist to distinguish clearly between ‘off-beats’ and ‘down-beats’, these being frequently connected by a ‘skipping’ motif, as in bars 40–41, 72–73, 91–98 etc. This entailed the use of 3/16 and 6/16, where each bar in a sense represents one beat (or two), giving an impression of inevitable

continuity. The phrasing is somewhat irregular, but unproblematic, being closely connected to the harmonic structure. It is the rhythmic structure of this movement which is most demanding, because although much of the writing appears straight forward, there are many passages where fluency in performance could easily be jeopardised by a minor mishap or misjudgement on the part of either player. If the right tempo is chosen, and if the articulation is closely adhered to, the rhythmic effect—at least in the outer sections—should be the aural equivalent of an optical illusion.

The return of Section A in the key of A $\flat$  major allows some variation in the material now being heard for the second time. The sudden shift back to A major at bar 248 is underlined by the cello's use of *pizzicato* in the lowest register, and the chromatic inflection continues for some time before settling temporarily in C major (bar 267), a key which is now tonally ambiguous in the sense that it relates to both A $\flat$  major and A major as III and  $\flat$ III respectively. Under these circumstances, the ending now required careful consideration. While the tempo could be artificially retarded by slowing the melodic activity through the judicious use of rests, and the texture thinned by separating the two instruments, these tactics were found to be most effective when used in conjunction with a thinly disguised ii-V-I progression, shown in Figure 11 in its original version.

Fig. 11. *Cello Sonata III*, v.1: = bars 266–284

The musical score for Figure 11 consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes a cello line (top) and a piano accompaniment (bottom). The cello line features a chromatic descent from G4 to C3, with a 'bIII' label below the first measure. The piano accompaniment has a 'ii' label below the first measure. The second system also includes a cello line and a piano accompaniment. The cello line has an 'arco' label above the first measure. The piano accompaniment has 'V' and 'I' labels below the first and last measures, respectively. The score concludes with a double bar line and a fermata over the final note.

Very little was altered substantially during the revision process, but there was an attempt to strengthen closure by placing more emphasis on the low C ( $\flat$ III) before heading into the cadential progression. The reader will notice that the passage now looks quite different (see Fig. 12) and considerably more energetic.

Fig. 12. *Cello Sonata III*: bars 266–284

The musical score for Figure 12 consists of two systems. The first system shows the cello line (bass clef) and the piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs). The piano accompaniment has markings for 'III' and 'ii'. The second system continues the piano accompaniment with markings for 'arco', 'mp', 'ff', and 'mf'. The cello line has markings for 'V' and 'I'.

The key of C minor seemed an obvious choice for the **fourth movement**, which was to be of generous proportions, and serious—if somewhat more reflective—in character. Beginning with a strong statement from the cello in dotted rhythm (see Ex. 8), the first 14 bars present as one long melodic arch, referred to in this discussion as the first subject.

#### Ex. 8. *Cello Sonata IV*: First subject

The musical score for Example 8 shows the first subject of the Cello Sonata IV. It consists of two staves: the cello line (bass clef) and the piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs). The cello line is marked with 'A' and the piano accompaniment is marked with 'B'.

Here again the method was quite spontaneous. Example 8 shows how a small idea can replicate itself with considerable variation, especially when set against a tonic pedal point which allows the harmony complete freedom of movement. (In some ways the compositional process resembled that of the second movement, where the two instruments exchanged roles before engaging in a true musical dialogue.) Analysis after the event reveals that this opening material relates to the two movements that had already been composed. The fragment marked “A” (see Ex. 8 above) closely resembles melodic cells A2 and A3 from the first movement, as shown above (see Ex. 1) and reproduced again here—

The musical score shows three melodic cells labeled A1, A2, and A3. Each cell is a quarter note followed by a dotted quarter note. A1 is in the key of C minor (one flat). A2 is in the key of C minor (one flat). A3 is in the key of C minor (one flat).

while “B” is directly descended from melodic activity in the second movement (see also Ex. 4).



After this opening section, the music now enters the sunny key of D major in order to explore a different colour, and bars 15–30 present the equivalent of a second subject that is happier and more reflective in character. This playful exchange moves briefly into E major (bars 23–26) before settling back into its comfort zone, so that by bar 30 I was at first unsure of how to proceed. Eventually, after a sudden shift into E $\flat$  minor (bar 31), I devised a rhythmic variation of the first subject: beginning in imitative fashion with small segments, the beats subdivided into three, four and five semiquavers, I was able to engage both instruments as equal partners in building a serious climax (bars 31–42) which takes just as long to subside (bars 43–52), thus forming a second melodic arch. There was then a considerable delay before I could continue, as once again doubts had arisen concerning the formal structure of this movement and the Sonata as a whole.

The answer to this problem finally lay in acceptance of the fact that sectional treatment—not unlike that which had been used for the second movement—was possibly appropriate here as well. A move back down to D $\flat$  major presented the opportunity to insert a more lyrical third subject which, this time, was consciously modelled on the theme of the second movement and certainly intended to give the Sonata greater cohesion. The use of the piano's upper registers, along with 'open' 6ths and unaccented *appoggiaturas*, enabled me to incorporate a different texture in contrast to the inevitable return of the first and second subjects. Besides, the succession of key centres was by now beginning to take on characteristics that reflected the contours of various melodic cells, *viz.* C $\flat$ –D–E–D–E $\flat$ m–D $\flat$ , a 'row' which might be happily completed by C–D–C.

Within minutes of beginning work on the last section, and through the sheer association of musical ideas, I suddenly discovered that the (in some ways, unassuming) first subject might return within the context of a more unusual development: in fact, it could be replayed in its entirety, this time in the major mode (see Fig. 13) while the piano indulged in a triumphant return to the main theme of the first movement.

Fig. 13. *Cello Sonata IV*: bars 90–92

This effectively meant that I could approach the ending by delivering a third and final melodic arch (bars 90–101), roughly equivalent in length, but of greater musical density than those which had been heard previously. Following on from this, the piano begins with a variation on the second subject, again in the key of D major, but there was now a great temptation to prepare for closure by referring once more to the second movement. In order for it not to appear too obvious, when this material is presented by the cello (see Fig. 14) the piano quickly turns its attention to the rhythmic fragmentation that had occurred earlier at bar 31.

Fig. 14. *Cello Sonata IV*: bars 105–106

Having drawn various threads together in this way, there was no need for a protracted ending. Instead, I chose a simple statement which, at the time, was consciously connected to the second movement, but which now reveals itself as a musical mutation of the very opening of the Sonata. Looking back, the character presented in the introductory bars (see Fig. 15) appears restless, and creates some feeling of anxiety.

Fig. 15. *Cello Sonata IV*: bars 1–5

There was a great deal of satisfaction in realising that, throughout the course of the work, it has undergone a considerable amount of behavioural modification, resulting finally in something which is by nature much more peaceful—one might almost say, ‘spiritually transformed’ (see Fig. 16)—and that the tension which was still present in the first subject has now been resolved.

Fig. 16. *Cello Sonata IV*: bars 108–118



### Comparative Exploration

It is impossible to embark on any discussion of cello repertoire without first acknowledging the enormous influence of Mstislav Rostropovich, who has premiered and commissioned a vast number of works during the course of his career.<sup>5</sup> In a documentary made in 1984, he speaks passionately about the (repertoire) problem caused by the “deep sleep of our colleagues in the time of Mozart and Beethoven”. In slightly broken English, he explains that “at least I must not sleep now . . . I must take care of the situation for the next generation of cellists”<sup>6</sup>, and he gives as examples works by Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Dutilleux and Penderecki, none of which would have been written without his own encouragement. Shchedrin’s *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano*<sup>7</sup>, written in 1996, is also dedicated to Rostropovich, and it seems fitting to include here a brief investigation of this work, a small section of which served as the inspiration for my own. Apart from helping to put my own writing into perspective, it gives new meaning to the idea of ‘twistonality’ and reveals how—

<sup>5</sup> One Internet site provides a comprehensive—though perhaps incomplete—list of pieces for cello and piano, cello solo, chamber ensembles, and compositions for cello and orchestra premiered and/or commissioned by Rostropovich. This includes 79 works, 59 of which are also dedicated to the maestro. There is a separate section for the 10 works commissioned for the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of Paul Sacher and performed by Rostropovich in Zurich on May 2, 1976. The composers represented on this occasion were Conrad Beck, Luciano Berio, Benjamin Britten, Henri Dutilleux, Wolfgang Fortner, Alberto Ginastera, Cristobal Halffter, Heinz Holliger, Klaus Huber, and Witold Lutoslawski. <http://www.cello.org/Libraries/references/rostopovich.html> (22 June 2006)

<sup>6</sup> Spoken by Rostropovich in the documentary film *Rostropovich, The South Bank Show*, edited and presented by Melvyn Bragg, LTW, 1984.

<sup>7</sup> Rodion Shchedrin, *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano*. Mainz: Schott, 1997.



even without a hint of functional chord progression—the compositional process still relies heavily on musical gestures commonly associated with the works of great composers from the past.

The first movement is based on material at first reminiscent of serial technique: there are two ‘tone rows’—perhaps better described as chromatic phrases—that are shown here (see Ex. 9) as they first appear, with the compound intervals which give the melody its distinctive character. The rhythm is represented in a kind of shorthand, with note values reduced from dotted minims to crotchets.

**Ex. 9. Shchedrin *Cello Sonata I*: Thematic material**



After a few introductory chords, these two phrases are presented by the cello; the last note of Phrase 2 effectively doubles as the beginning of Phrase 1, which is then repeated, albeit with some changes in the octave registers. A time signature of 3/4, marked  $\text{♩} = 52-50$ , means that crotchets are quite short, and the placement of accompanying chords on the third beat of the bar provides interesting rhythmic momentum while at the same time allowing the cello (marked *pp dolcissimo*) to be clearly heard. The following excerpt (see Fig. 17) begins from the second bar of Phrase 1.

**Fig. 17. Shchedrin *Cello Sonata I*: bars 9–18**



After a short transitional flourish involving both instruments in an exchange of descending and ascending quavers, the piano presents Phrase 1 accompanied by *pizzicato* chords on the cello (see Fig. 18), but the effect of straight repetition is again avoided by some octave displacement.

Fig.18. Shchedrin *Cello Sonata I*: bars 79–88

After a reappearance of the transitional motif as one bar of fleeting *staccato* semiquavers, the piano proceeds to Phrase 2 with further alterations in the register of certain melody notes (see Fig. 19), and the accompanying chords now broken into quaver groups.

Fig. 19. Shchedrin *Cello Sonata I*: bars 97–104

The movement is clearly sectional, and one could make a good case for its structure being a direct descendent of sonata form. Various other themes and/or countermelodies emerge, the most substantial of which are shown in Example 10. All three are closely related to—one could even say derived from—the main material, but here the intervallic patterns are defined by distinctive rhythmic cells which help to facilitate aural recognition, and lend themselves to canonic and contrapuntal treatment.

Ex. 10. Shchedrin *Cello Sonata I*: Secondary themes

The first of these themes introduces a bridge passage in which the cello is heard on its own in a kind of recitative leading to a return of the main material. Here the piano accompaniment undergoes further rhythmic transformation, from three quavers in the second half of the bar to

four semiquavers on the last beat, while the melodic material is gently expanded by the discreet insertion of extra (passing?) notes into the line. This eventually brings us to the equivalent of a development section in which even the transitional motif plays its part, and at bar 265 there is an interesting rhythmic counterpoint: the piano imitates the cello part (see Ex.10, line 2) but with the dotted crotchets placed on the second beat of the bar, rather than the first. Bar 283 is marked '*Poco meno mosso*' and the new melodic material introduced in this section (see Fig. 20) is subtly integrated by using the familiar 'off-beat' accompaniment from the opening.

Fig. 20. Shchedrin *Cello Sonata I*: bars 290–305

This theme is then developed for a considerable length of time in the piano part, where it would appear almost as a self-contained improvisation were it not for the fact that the cello re-enters with the main theme—this time transposed down a perfect 4th—in bar 344.

Fig. 21. Shchedrin *Cello Sonata I*: bars 343–347

The movement is further extended by the mixing and matching of thematic and accompanying material in various rhythmic formations until the main theme makes its final appearances. First there is a simple restatement by the piano (see Fig. 22), this time surrounded by the accompanying chords.

Fig. 22. Shchedrin *Cello Sonata I*: bars 426–434

18  
426

Tempo I (Allegretto)

The musical score for Figure 22 shows two staves. The top staff is for the piano, starting at bar 426. It features a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings of *pp legato* and *sim*. The bottom staff is for the cello, which is mostly silent in this section, with some chords indicated by *sim* markings.

Then it is immediately taken up by the cello (see Fig. 23), with the chords arpeggiated on the last beat of the bar.

Fig. 23. Shchedrin *Cello Sonata I*: bars 502–507

502

Tempo I (Allegretto)

The musical score for Figure 23 shows two staves. The top staff is for the piano, starting at bar 502. It features a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings of *pp dolciss*. The bottom staff is for the cello, which is marked *pp* and features arpeggiated chords on the last beat of each bar.

The texture now becomes thinner and the rests more abundant as the movement works its way to a close, Phrase 1 giving way to a variation of Phrase 2, which wends its way into the higher registers; as the accompanying chords eventually disappear altogether, the cello is left sustaining a high (harmonic) B. While closure is primarily rhythmic (see Fig. 24), it is also realised by use of the extreme high register, the diminishing accompaniment, and the exaggerated dynamic marking.

Fig. 24. Shchedrin *Cello Sonata I*: bars 541–550

The musical score for Figure 24 shows two staves. The top staff is for the piano, starting at bar 541. It features a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings of *ppp*. The bottom staff is for the cello, which is marked *ppp* and features a sustained high note (B) in the final bars.

There is no need to explore the other two movements in any detail. Although different in form, they employ similar compositional techniques and confirm the fact that such processes need not be underpinned by functional harmony, or couched in recognisable key centres, in order to be musically convincing. Shchedrin's mastery of musical form is evident here in his ability to constantly vary the rhythm without detracting from the melodic contours; in his willingness to repeat difficult (or relatively long) melodies often enough for the ear to become

accustomed to their shape; in his intuitive association of subsidiary themes with smaller rhythmic patterns suitable for imaginative improvisational treatment. Last, but not least, he is able to vary—and direct—musical momentum by the judicious combination of thematic material in a variety of rhythmic guises, so that the listener is constantly confronted by something new within the safety of what has already become familiar. When such control is exerted over the raw material, there is little need for the added security of key centres, or conventional cadences. That being said, one might wonder how long it would take the average listener—or someone unfamiliar with the score—to appreciate this work in detail. Shchedrin's concession to tonality, however, lies in his regular repetition of melodic material at the same pitch, so that any deviations can be more easily perceived. Sketchy, improvisational passages, while not bound by any formal chord progression or harmonic *clichés*, often contain humorous elements, or an unexpected surprise. Contrapuntal textures are comfortably transparent, not cluttered by unnecessary dissonance. Above all, rhythmic ingenuity (which in this case also involves a good deal of repetitive patterning) assists in moulding the emotional content by lending the music a degree of predictability guaranteed to capture the hearts and minds of performers and audiences alike.

In the documentary on Shchedrin mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the young violinist Maxim Vengerov speaks in glowing terms about the *Concerto Cantabile* written especially for him by Shchedrin: “there is not one note that doesn't touch my heart . . . this is amazing, the structure of the whole piece is so organic, and such beautiful music”<sup>8</sup>. Shchedrin, meanwhile, is full of admiration for Vengerov, as he explains: “I asked Maxim a few times, how do you keep all these parts—he never made one mistake, it's unbelievable!—in your mind, in your memory, your head? He said: ‘it's not difficult for me because it's logical’.”<sup>9</sup> The composer also explains the importance of a sense of drama (*Dramaturgie*) in his work, something which he feels is absolutely necessary “in order to keep the audience's attention”. For most performers, logic and emotional drama are two of the most essential ingredients in what they regard as good music. While my own work might be understood as a contemporary exploration of classical contours, Shchedrin's *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano* must surely be described, in terms of its musical contours, as a contemporary classic.

<sup>8</sup> Spoken by Maxim Vengerov in the documentary film *Rodion Shchedrin: Concerto Cantabile*. (cited in fn.1).

<sup>9</sup> Spoken by Shchedrin in the documentary *Rodion Shchedrin: Concerto Cantabile*.

# 5

## THE ART OF ARTIFICE

*STRING QUARTET*

## Genesis

In 2003 it was suggested that all students should write a string quartet, as there was a strong possibility of our compositions being ‘workshopped’ by the quartet in residence at the University. At that time I was unfortunately suffering from severe back pain (a herniated disc) and needed distraction, so the work originated under what I soon realised were compromising circumstances. While this observation might seem irrelevant at first, it has been interesting to discover that over the course of the next few months the state of my health was to have a direct bearing on the musical outcomes. For this work I had decided to investigate the use of various modes, although at first it was difficult to cope with the idea of imposing any severe restrictions. I also wanted to explore sonata form in a more disciplined way in order to provide a structure suitable for the first movement of an extended work. A combination of the physical, emotional and intellectual factors involved in the composition of the String Quartet might be summarised as follows:

- The first movement was written during a period of physical discomfort and was inevitably sombre in character (Aeolian/Ionian modes, sonata form);
- Partial recovery helped to reinstate a sense of humour, and undoubtedly promoted the light-hearted tenor of the second movement (Lydian/Mixolydian modes, Scherzo and Trio);
- This situation raised serious questions which evoked a feeling of nostalgia in the third movement (Diminished mode, free form);
- Resolution and closure were achieved through a more calculated approach in the fourth movement (Phrygian mode, recitative and fugue).

Intended as an exercise in modal writing, this work is more accurately described as a tonal composition with modal overtones: strictly speaking, it was artificially constructed in order to test and extend my knowledge and understanding of compositional craft. For this reason, detailed analyses of the thematic material and harmonic structure have been included here, although they were prepared after the work had been written. The following discussion attempts to explain the implications inherent in the statements listed

above and to unravel the unusual combination of intuitive and intellectual processes which applied to the composition of the *String Quartet*, as well as to editorial procedure.

## Method

The first movement originally began with a simple 4-bar introduction<sup>1</sup> in which the three lower instruments announced their individual presence (see Fig. 1) and directed the listener straight to the key of D minor, where the first violin took complete charge of a sombre, sighing melody.

Fig. 1. *String Quartet I*, v. 1: = bars 1–10

This regressive compositional activity continued for some time with uninterrupted monotony as I quite consciously endeavoured to build a conventional harmonic structure simply in order to dismantle it at a later stage. I soon discovered, however, that strong functional harmony of the ii–V–I(i) variety is neither readily dislodged nor easily disguised! The second draft had an 8-bar introduction which looked much more appealing, but the changes were cosmetic rather than of any musical substance.

Fig. 2. *String Quartet I*, v. 2: = bars 1–10

As for what follows, despite hundreds of changes in the placement of rests and in the quality and chromatic colouring of accompanying chords, this movement still retains its

<sup>1</sup> The opening, with its use of semitones, is clearly reminiscent of the introductory motif from the *Concertino*.



stubborn—one might almost say self-pitying—character, its solemn rhythmic inflexibility, its conventional melodic and harmonic outlines.

On another level, this was the first time I had taken a more analytical approach to the task and, having challenged myself to working within a traditional ‘first movement’ structure, I now needed to provide appropriate labels for the thematic material. It was important to be working more methodically, but this only highlighted the difficulties associated with sonata form, especially the sizing (and re-sizing) of individual sections in proportion to each other and to the movement as a whole. Example 1 shows how the various components of the first movement (in its original version) were interpreted.

**Ex. 1. *String Quartet I: Thematic Material***

**1st theme - short falling motifs**

**1st theme extended modulating to g min. - longer, rising motifs**

stabilizing phrase extension

d: I = g: V

**2nd theme in g min., outlining rising 3rd**

g: I

rising 3rds (m & M)

**transition to variation form**

**Development - 3-note motifs, falling and rising**

Roving harmony

**Recapitulation - 1st theme as bass line, G Major**

Alteration ↓

G: I

etc.

Having decided to begin with the traditional major and minor modes—and resigned to the idea of ‘modified’ sonata form—I used the short development section to explore the ambiguities of Gminor/B $\flat$  major, although it is sometimes hard to tell which is more artificial: the conventional approach to tonality, or the added dissonance? As for the structure, it proved time-consuming but extremely helpful to undertake a thorough analysis of the movement, the results of which are shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: *String Quartet I*, v. 1—Harmonic Analysis

Bars	Section	Key	Chord Progression						
1–8	<b>Introduction</b>	d:	i <sup>6</sup>	i <sup>6</sup>	V <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup>	V <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup>	II	ii <sup>o</sup>	VI <sup>6</sup> ↘
9–24	<b>Exposition:</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> theme	d:	i	i	V <sup>o9</sup>	i	i <sup>6</sup>	V <sub>3</sub> <sup>4</sup>	V <sup>o9</sup> i <sup>6</sup>
			i	V <sub>3</sub> <sup>4</sup>	V <sup>6</sup>	I	i <sup>6</sup>	ii <sup>o6</sup>	II <sup>6</sup> ↘ V
25–32	1 <sup>st</sup> theme extension	d:	V <sup>o9</sup>	V <sup>o9</sup>	V <sub>2</sub> <sup>4</sup>	i <sup>6</sup>	I <sup>6</sup>	iv ↘	V <sup>6</sup> ↘ I
33–40	2 <sup>nd</sup> theme	g:	i	V <sup>6</sup>	V <sup>6</sup>	I <sub>2</sub> <sup>4</sup>	IV <sup>6</sup>	Gr <sup>+6</sup> /II ↘ i <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup> ↘	V ↘
41–56	1 <sup>st</sup> theme in variation	g:	i	i	V <sup>6</sup>	i	i <sup>6</sup>	V <sub>3</sub> <sup>4</sup>	V <sup>o9</sup> i <sup>6</sup> - V
			i	V <sub>3</sub> <sup>4</sup>	V <sup>6</sup>	i	i <sup>6</sup>	iv ↘	V <sup>6</sup> ↘ I
57–66	Extension in variation & bridge passage	g:	V <sup>o9</sup>	V <sup>o9</sup>	iii <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup>	IV <sup>6</sup>	bIII <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup>	bIII <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup>	IV <sup>o9</sup> vii -
			V <sub>3</sub> <sup>6</sup>	iv <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup> ↘	iv <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup> (=I) ↘				
67–75	<b>Development:</b>	d:	V <sup>o9</sup>	i	ii <sup>o7</sup> -iii <sup>o7</sup>	I <sup>o9</sup>	IV - II <sup>o9</sup>	#III <sup>7</sup>	
			VI <sup>o9</sup> - II <sup>o9</sup> ↘		V <sup>9</sup> ↘ I				
76–81		g:	i	III	III(i)		III	VI	VI <sub>4</sub> <sup>4</sup> ↘
82–92		d:	V	i	V	V	V	bII ,	bII <sup>M</sup> <sub>9</sub> II <sup>7</sup>
			iv <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup>	I	bV <sup>6</sup> ↘				
93–119	<b>Recapitulation:</b>	G:	I	I	V	ii	ii <sup>7</sup>	I	I I
			V	V	IV	I	V <sup>6</sup>	V <sup>6</sup>	IV <sup>6</sup> I
			V	V	V ↘				
119–122		C:	I	ii <sub>3</sub> <sup>4</sup>	ii <sup>7</sup>	I	I	I <sup>6</sup>	IV <sub>3</sub> <sup>4</sup> bIII
			V <sup>o9</sup>	V <sup>7</sup>	V <sup>7</sup> ↘				
123–133	<b>Coda:</b>	D:	vi <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup> - VI <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup> ↘		ii ↘	I <sup>6</sup> - IV ↘	V	V <sup>7</sup>	
			III <sup>o9</sup>	vi	V	V ↘ I	I		

This table (based on the first version) shows clearly how utterly dependent the work is on key-centres and cadential idioms. I was somewhat surprised to find this degree of symmetry, let alone such extravagant use of tonic-dominant relationships throughout the course of the movement; but as the musicologist Frits Noske once remarked: “those who write about music may lie, and the composers themselves may lie, but the music never lies!”<sup>2</sup>

Having established the emotional character of the work, it was difficult to change, and renovations were therefore confined to its extremities: the opening and closing bars. The introduction underwent several further transformations before settling in its current form. To begin with a harsh dissonance seemed artificial and unnecessary, but I was keen—in the very opening bars—to suggest a level of anxiety and to promote the idea that tonal harmony might be chromatically enriched, inflected or assaulted without any loss of stability. The simple progression from an  $F\frac{6}{9}$  chord at the beginning through sharp but diminishing dissonance into the home key of D minor (see Fig. 3) seemed to send a more direct and appropriate message. Also, the emphatic upbeat shown in Figure 2 (that is, all except the first) were discarded on the grounds that they had been artificially imposed—this idea, after all, had not been developed elsewhere.

Fig. 3. *String Quartet I*: bars 1–9

Whereas the earlier version of this movement consisted of 129 bars, the final version contains 137. The ending, like the introduction, was also subjected to various makeovers, each of which added an extra few bars. In the first draft, the triplet figures tended to dominate (see Fig. 4), and at the time they were rhythmically responsible for triggering the opening of the second movement.

<sup>2</sup> From a musicology Seminar held at The University of Adelaide in 1979.

Fig. 4. *String Quartet I*, v. 1: = bars 123–137

However, several of those who were prepared to listen to early drafts of my work suggested that this ending was rather meek, and somewhat abrupt. The next version (see Fig. 5) was perhaps a little more successful.

Fig. 5. *String Quartet I*, v. 2: = bars 123–137

In considering the quartet as a whole, innumerable variations occurred before the scope of the passage was extended still further by adding a bar of 6/4 time, drawing out the cadence and finishing inconclusively on the dominant (see Fig. 6). More in keeping with the stern simplicity of the introduction, the revised version supports the feelings of anxiety and ambivalence which characterise so much of the material, and leads more decisively to the following Scherzo.

Fig. 6. *String Quartet I*: bars 128–137

Other editorial changes were largely technical. They included: more equitable distribution of melodic material, particularly between the first and second violins; changes of register to increase the range of sonorities; the addition of ties over barlines to avoid (or at least weaken) the metrical monotony; and minor rhythmic amendments to add variety to the

texture. However, there is a tragic restraint about this movement which was almost certainly caused by a level of physical discomfort to which I was unaccustomed, and I have therefore chosen to preserve the piece largely in its original form as an accurate record of my emotional state at the time of writing.

The **second movement** was conceived under much happier circumstances (induced by the appropriate medication) and was intended primarily as an antidote to the first. The Lydian mode lent itself to lightness and a fast 5/8 tempo helped to dispel the stolid uniformity of what had gone before. The first draft was sketched very quickly, the melodies and harmonic outlines taking priority over any refinement of the accompanying textures. Many hours were subsequently spent adding or subtracting rests and manipulating the dynamics so that the relevant themes would be given due prominence without detracting from the exuberance of subsidiary lines. The *bona fide* Scherzo is followed by a Trio based on the Mixolydian mode—although by now it was evident that the use of any mode with a tonal centre seemed automatically to cast a diatonic shadow in the background. Having succumbed to the invasive nature of major and minor in the first movement, I realised that all these modes were simply being overlaid on an Ionian canvass. They were being interpreted as different dialects of the same musical language, one in which motif, phrase and (diatonic) cadence shaped the argument irrespective of the underlying scales. In this sense, my musical instinct proved unhappily at odds with the challenge of pure artifice, and I was unable to make the compromises required for strictly modal writing. Nevertheless, without the modes as artificial guidelines, the *String Quartet* would not exist in its present form at all.

Clearly in ternary form, the Scherzo is intended to be light-hearted and fun to play. In the outer sections various ideas are cobbled together, and the essential material is best illustrated as follows (see Ex. 2).

### Ex. 2. *String Quartet II: Thematic Material*

A Section (E Lydian mode) accompanied by repeated semiquavers. Rhythmic elasticity

The musical notation shows a single staff for Violin 1 (Vln 1) in 9/16 time. The key signature is E Lydian (one sharp, F#). The piece is divided into two phrases, each 2 bars long. The first phrase is marked 'E: I' and the second 'II:'. A 'Pedal point E in bass' is indicated below the first phrase. An arrow points to a note in the second phrase labeled 'Off the beat'.

contd.

Phrase 3 (3 bars)

A1 (C Lydian) - accompanying rhythm changes

On the beat

Vln 1

Cello

Rhythmic ambiguity - Hemiola (5 ♩s instead of 10 ♩s)

A2 (C/G Major) with cello doubling Vln 2, and Vla in canon at the 5th - full counterpoint (simple polytonality)

Vln 1

Vln 2

Trio - Mixolydian mode

While this example demonstrates the main ideas, the structure of the work is more clearly seen from the following harmonic analysis (see Table 5.2), where once again one sees a good smattering of cadential idioms and a symmetrical use of key centres. For example, the material marked A2 returns in the last section (in an abridged form) in A $\flat$  and is aurally perceived as being a major third above the central key rather than a major third below.

**Table 5.2: *String Quartet II*, v. 1—Harmonic Analysis**

Bars	Section	Key	Chord Progression							
1-4	Introduction	E:	I	I <sup>6</sup>	V	V <sup>6</sup> _____				
5-18	A	E:	I	I	II $\frac{3}{2}$	II $\frac{3}{2}$	vi <sup>6</sup>	vi <sup>6</sup>	I	I
			II $\frac{3}{2}$	V <sup>6</sup>	V <sup>6</sup>	bVII	bVII	II $\frac{3}{2}$		
19-36	A1	E:	bVI	bVI	bVI	bIV	I $\frac{4}{2}$	I $\frac{4}{2}$	II <sup>6</sup>	bVI $\frac{4}{2}$
			bVII <sup>7</sup>	bIII <sup>6</sup>	bIII	bV	bV	bVII $\frac{3}{2}$	iii	I bI <sup>7</sup> bI <sup>7</sup>
37-43	Bridge	E:	I	I	I	I	vi <sup>6</sup>	vi <sup>6</sup>	I	
			bvii <sup>7</sup> - bVI $\frac{4}{2}$	bIII <sup>7</sup>	_____					

contd.

46–55	A2	C:	I	V	I	V	iii	iii	I	V <sup>6</sup>
			♯ii <sup>7</sup> - ♯IV <sup>7</sup> ♯IV <sup>(65)</sup> _____							
56–72	Trio	F:	I	i-v <sup>7</sup>	I <sup>6</sup> -IV	I	I <sup>2</sup>	IV <sup>6</sup>	VII-IV	I v-IV v <sup>4</sup> -
			IV <sup>M</sup> <sub>2</sub> iii <sup>♯7</sup> I <sup>7</sup> % % i <sup>M</sup> % I <sup>7</sup>							
73–78		F:	IV	v	I <sup>2</sup>	IV	Gr <sup>6</sup> /L			
79–82	Bridge	E:	I <sup>7</sup> <sup>5</sup>	I <sup>6</sup>	V	V <sup>6</sup> _____				
83–96	A Section:	E:	I	I	II <sup>2</sup>	II <sup>2</sup>	vi <sup>6</sup>	vi <sup>6</sup>	I	I
			II <sup>2</sup>	V	V	♭VII	♭VII	II <sup>2</sup>		
97–112	A1	E:	♭VI	♭VI	♭VI	♭VI	I	I	II <sup>6</sup>	♭VI <sup>2</sup>
			♭VI	♭III	♭III	♭V	♭V	♭VII <sup>2</sup>	II	I
			♭I <sup>7</sup>							
113–120	A2	A♭:	I	V	I	I	iii	iii-V	♯I _____	
121–129	Coda:	E:	I	I	I	I	I	I	I	I

In this movement, articulation (in the outer sections) is of vital importance, most of the accompanying figures being marked '*spiccato*' while melodic lines are to be played 'on the string'. The Trio is essentially parodic and intentionally provocative in its simplicity. The triplet figures (bars 66–67, bar 72 etc.) were added at a later stage in order to provide more interest, although I hesitated at first because it seemed musically unnecessary, and somewhat calculated. This was also true of the duplets in the outer sections, a later addition (rather than development) which, not having been fully integrated during the compositional process, might easily have sounded forced, or artificial. However, taking all things into consideration, it seemed reasonable for the accompanying texture to be enlivened by a little extra rhythmic counterpoint, as shown in Figure 7.

Fig. 7. *String Quartet II*: bars 53–55

This problem of superficial—and potentially detrimental—manipulation was partly overcome by taking the executive decision to add most of the changes in the bass line so that it is the cellist who appears responsible for urging the shifts from compound to simple time and *vice versa*, as in bars 54 (see Fig. 7) and 78. In the end, however, I found myself reluctant to indulge in any more radical changes, as once again the innocence and levity of the music reflected a temporary state of mind which was directly influenced by my physical condition at the time of writing.

Serious questions then arose concerning the time required for a complete recovery from what was possibly a degenerative disease. Fearing the long-term consequences of drug dependence and ever mindful of the past, I launched into work on the **third movement** with the aim of exploring the diminished, or octatonic mode. The musical result was—as I later realised—full of nostalgia, and clearly descriptive of the unusual circumstances surrounding my work at the time. Writing commenced immediately after the first draft of the second movement was finished and it is therefore highly likely that the repeated notes at the end of the Scherzo (which took some time to materialise) also suggested the idea of a repeated note motif in what was to follow. Bars 1–28 were sketched in a matter of minutes, and although originally written in 6/4 time, the actual notes have since remained unaltered. The harmonic structure was also assembled relatively quickly, over a period of several days. In terms of the compositional process, most of the time was spent in manipulating the material so that the climax was reached at precisely the right moment in proportion to the movement as a whole.

The diminished 7th chord has always been of special interest to me. In this movement I found an opportunity to demonstrate fully its curious, chameleon-like characteristics and multiple meanings. Seen as an incomplete dominant minor 9th and therefore able to be spelled in four different keys, its prolonged presence within a tonal context is usually associated with a sense of uncertainty or insecurity, emotional dilemma or questioning. Under these circumstances, pedal points became invaluable in promoting the idea of musical progression; the use of functional harmony was consequently restricted to crucial points where some resolution was needed. All the essential ingredients are found in the opening of the work (see Ex. 3).



Ex. 3. *String Quartet III*: Thematic Material

The image shows a musical score for four string instruments: Vln. 1, Vln. 2, Vla., and Vc. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes annotations: 'Chromatic lead tones (quasi glissando)' for Vln. 1, 'Main motif - used rising and falling' for Vln. 2, 'Chromatic lead tones (bowed)' for Vla., and 'Lead tones (portamento)' for Vc. The second system includes annotations: 'whole-tone/half tone' and 'Falling semitone motif' for Vln. 1, 'quasi gliss' for Vln. 2, and 'Tritone' for Vc. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

The various types of chromatic lead tones shown in the box—bowed, *quasi glissando* and *portamento*—are an intended feature, as is the repeated note motif which occurs right at the beginning. This is used to provide momentum in different ways throughout the work, where it is sometimes staggered between the players, played *pizzicato* and *arco* simultaneously, shaped into a rising (or falling) third, split into octave leaps, and eventually changed into repeated demisemiquavers. As mentioned above, the first version was written in 6/4 time, but given a metronome marking of ♩ = 66, the material (see Fig. 8) gives little indication of being in compound duple time.

Fig. 8. *String Quartet III*, v. 1: = bars 69–72

The image shows a musical score for four string instruments: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The score covers bars 69-72. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The dynamic markings are: Vln. I: *mp cresc. poco à poco*; Vln. II: *p cresc. poco à poco*; Vla.: *p cresc. poco à poco*; Vc.: *mp cresc. poco à poco*.



Having reached bar 114, I was in a quandary regarding closure. The temptation to continue indefinitely in diminished mode was difficult to resist, but clearly the work needed to come to an end. Suddenly the idea shown in Fig. 10 appeared as an organic extension of previous material, but the music had an unmistakable (and slightly uncomfortable) familiarity, especially in bar 118.

Fig. 10. *String Quartet III*: bars 115–121

The image shows a musical score for four parts: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello. The score is for bars 115-121. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes various dynamics such as *pizz*, *p dim*, and *mezzo*. The music is characterized by intricate rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.

Long after the movement was completed, I realised that it was an echo of Tchaikowsky's *Nutcracker Suite* (see Fig. 11): to be precise, bar 39 of the “*Danse de la Fée Dragée*”.

Fig. 11. Tchaikowsky: “*Danse de la Fée Dragée*”: bars 39–43<sup>4</sup>

The image shows a musical score for a full orchestra, including Clarinet (Cl.), Cello (Cel.), Violin I (Vl.), Violin II (Vle.), Celli (Celli), and C.B. The score is for bars 39-43. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score includes various dynamics such as *p*, *mf*, *pp*, and *cresc.*. The music is characterized by a complex orchestral texture with various dynamics and articulations.

Under the circumstances, I was prepared to accept this as an involuntary reflex action, a subliminal reference to past pleasures: in short, an unequivocal verification of the nostalgia which was typical of the movement as a whole.

It would be many months before my back problem was to disappear completely. Although there were no interruptions to my normal working life, frequent medical

<sup>4</sup> Tchaikowsky, P.I. *The Nutcracker: Suite from the Ballet Op. 71a*. (London: Eulenburg, n.d.) Miniature Score.

consultations and regular visits to the physiotherapist became a part of my weekly routine. It was during this time that I completed the *String Quartet* and it is therefore not surprising to find that of all the works in the portfolio, the **fourth movement** is perhaps the most markedly manufactured. Here the Phrygian mode was employed—although with no attempt to conjure up any Spanish implications by using it in combination with the parallel major—and a quick glance at the raw material (see Ex. 4) gives the immediate impression of a much more manipulative approach to the compositional process:

**Ex. 4. *String Quartet IV*—Thematic Material**

**4 Main Phrases**

Phrase 1 - 13 notes - D Phrygian

Phrase 2 - 13 notes

Phrase 3 - 16 notes - with F#

Phrase 4 - 12 notes

Vln. 1

**From Bar 12: contrapuntal treatment**

Phrase 1 etc. Phrase 2 etc. Phrase 3 etc. Phrase 4, then new material etc.

Phrase 1, down 4th etc. Phrase 2, down 4th etc. Phrase 3 etc.

Counterpoint continues until cello has announced all four phrases. New material enters in each part as the 4 phrases are completed.

Phrase 1 etc. Phrase 2 etc.

Phrase 1, down 4th etc.

**From Bar 52: Phrase 1 transposed up M 2nd**      **Phrase 2 at original pitch, slightly altered**

Phrase 1: Augmentation

Phrase 3 transposed up m 2nd, slightly altered

etc.

Thus the four main phrases—originally conceived as pure melodic recitative—were used to develop the rest of the movement, although with limited rhythmic innuendo. As with the first movement (the introductory 7/4 time signature notwithstanding) there is a strong, measured feel to the movement which is only partially leavened by the use of semiquavers (from bar 52), minim triplets (from bar 60) and smaller, staggered note groupings (from bar 68), all of which occur at regular intervals along the way. It was undoubtedly this strong sense of rhythmic restriction which caused me, at bar 80, to return to the introductory material and to revisit the indeterminate mood of the previous movement in order to seek a way out. Only then did it seem logical to return to the opening material from the first movement which, if muted, might sound more resigned than sombre, and more appropriate to end the work as a whole. The harmonic analysis of this final movement (see Table 5.4) indicates clearly that the Phrygian mode was not adopted as a single frame of reference, but rather used to colour the work and help create a certain *gravitas*.

Table 5.4: *String Quartet IV*, v. 1—Harmonic Analysis

Bars	Section	Key	Chord Progression
1–10	A	D:	$\underline{i \quad i \quad iv \quad iv \quad V \quad V \quad i \quad i \quad i \quad i \quad i}$ I
11–38	A <sup>1</sup>	g:	i V i % in contrapuntal texture ending on I
39–50	B	g:	$\flat II \quad I \quad \flat iii^{\flat} \quad VI \quad vi - P^{\flat} \quad VI^7 \quad II \quad VI^+$ $VI^7 \quad III^{\flat} \quad i \quad III^7 \underline{\quad}$
51–58	A <sup>2</sup>	E $\flat$ :	I iv <sup>♯</sup> I I iv <sup>♯</sup> I V <sup>♯</sup> I - Gr <sup>+6</sup> /V $\underline{\quad}$
59–66	A <sup>3</sup>	B $\flat$ :	I <sup>♯</sup> iv <sup>6</sup> vi I <sup>♯</sup> $\flat III^{\flat}$ $\flat III^{\flat}$ i $\flat III^{\flat}$ $\underline{\quad}$
67–78	A <sup>4</sup>	D:	I <sup>♯</sup> I <sup>♯</sup> V V IV <sup>6</sup> iv <sup>6</sup> I <sup>♯</sup> iv <sup>6</sup> I <sup>♯</sup> I <sup>♯</sup> V <sup>9</sup> V <sup>7</sup> $\underline{\quad}$
79–90	A <sup>5</sup>	d:	$\underline{i \quad i \quad i \quad ii^{\circ} \quad iv \quad iv \quad iv \quad \flat ii^{\circ} \quad i \quad i \quad i}$ I
91–94	Bridge	d:	$\sharp vi^{\circ} - vi^{\circ} v^{\circ} - \sharp iv \quad iv^{\circ} - \sharp iii^{\circ} \quad (V)$
95–117	Coda	d:	$i \quad VI^6 \quad i \quad i \quad i^6 \quad V^{\sharp} \quad V^{\flat} \quad i^6 \quad i$ $V^{\sharp} \quad V^{\flat} \quad i \quad i^6 \quad iv \quad V \quad VI \quad iv \quad i^{\flat}$ V i i I

During the revision of this movement in particular, it proved more difficult than usual to make substantial changes to the musical content. There was some redistribution of the material (for instance, the first violin had originally delivered all four phrases at the beginning), but it seemed that the more intellectual the method, the more reluctant I was to make any alterations. Elsewhere—in the second movement, for example—the more spontaneous writing seemed to invite more detailed editorial comment and to yield more easily to imaginative amendment. By contrast, the last movement, bound by a more regulatory compositional process, now appeared change-resistant. Nevertheless, my attention was inevitably drawn to the closing bars (see Fig. 12) which to begin with had been totally predictable.

Fig. 12. *String Quartet IV*, v. 1: = bars 111–116

The musical score for Figure 12 shows the final six bars of the first movement of String Quartet IV. It is written for four parts: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score features several slurs and accents, particularly in the first violin part. The first violin part begins with a slur over the first four notes of the first bar, followed by a slur over the next four notes. The second violin part has a slur over the first four notes of the first bar. The viola part has a slur over the first four notes of the first bar. The cello part has a slur over the first four notes of the first bar. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

As with the ending of the first movement, the changes wrought here came about by degrees and were intended to underline the lingering quality of the last section. Although I was aware that this material should not outstay its welcome, once the final cadence approached there was an opportunity to draw things to a slightly more unusual close. Given that the chord progressions were highly conventional and that the first movement had been brought to an incomplete conclusion, I chose here to strengthen these final bars by exploiting the emotional implications of the *tierce de Picardie* (see Fig. 13).

Fig. 13. *String Quartet IV*: bars 111–117

The musical score for Figure 13 shows the final seven bars of the first movement of String Quartet IV. It is written for four parts: Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *p dim.*, and *dim.*. There are also articulation marks like accents and slurs. The first violin part has a slur over the first four notes of the first bar, followed by a slur over the next four notes. The second violin part has a slur over the first four notes of the first bar. The viola part has a slur over the first four notes of the first bar. The cello part has a slur over the first four notes of the first bar. The score ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

Regarded by some as the highest and most satisfying form of musical expression, the string quartet is a profoundly complex medium for a relatively inexperienced composer, but my observations both during and after the composition of this work have been extremely valuable. As it stands, the *String Quartet* is perhaps best seen as an exercise in discipline which—under somewhat unusual circumstances—was deeply influenced by emotional factors beyond my control. In terms of the compositional process it brought at least two things sharply into focus: the need for perfect proportions in an extended work, and the precarious nature of the relationship between art and artifice. To achieve a perfect balance between the two would have to be regarded as the ultimate goal.

### Performance and Revision

On July 7 2006 I was privileged to hear this work performed and workshopped by the members of the *Tankstream Quartet*<sup>5</sup>, who are now resident in Adelaide. Having presented them with the first draft nine months earlier, I had already been informed that they had read through the work but had a number of queries, so eventually a meeting was arranged, for which I sent (a week in advance) a copy of the revised version. The rehearsal took place in a small room with excellent acoustics (and an open fire!) and was, for me, an intensely personal and richly rewarding experience. Their performance gave every indication that they had considered the work seriously. As the session lasted almost 2 hours, I was able to hear each movement in turn; various sections were repeated to demonstrate the effects of different articulation or bowings and, in some cases, even the use of different registers. The results, however, were not entirely predictable. Although the sound of the four instruments blended together was even more beautiful than I had imagined, there were times when I wished for some relief, a change of colour which might have been brought about by reducing the number of participants to three, two, or even one. At other times I felt that the part writing was too close, or remained within a similar range for too long at a stretch. Overall, I had the impression that I could have done more to exploit the potential of both the individual instruments and their possible combinations in such a way as to provide a greater variety of dynamic contrasts within each movement and the work as a whole.

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<sup>5</sup> Founded in 2000, the *Tankstream Quartet* consisted of Sophie Rowell and Anne Horton (violins), Sally Boud (viola) and Rachel Johnston (cello). In September, 2006 they became the new *Australian String Quartet* in residence at The University of Adelaide.

In the **first movement**, the use of open strings during the opening melody (in bars 9, 13, and 19) was less effective than I had imagined: a simple ‘*non vibrato*’ at the start of each note proved to be an ideal—and at this tempo, naturally occurring—solution. The *Agitato* (from bar 67) was cluttered with too much information, so the players suggested that once the first bar had been clearly marked with ‘*staccato*’ and appropriate accents, the indication ‘*simile*’ would suffice for the rest of the section. At bar 79 the cellist found it difficult to change from tenor to bass clef in the middle of the semiquaver passage, so this has been duly rectified; also, some bowings have now been omitted as they were found to be impractical in relation to the notes which followed. From bar 113 the high *tremolo* in the first violin part sounded better *sul pont* and needed to be marked *pp* to allow the main material (in the second violin) to be heard. Inconsistencies were noted in some of the articulation and bowings, especially towards the end, and an error in the double stopping for viola (D and F# on the C string!) was corrected by moving the D into the cello part.

Although the **second movement** was marked ‘on the string’ above the opening bar, it transpired that this had been visually overridden in the players’ minds by the term ‘*Scherzando*’. Under the circumstances, it was felt that the performance instruction should be placed below the staves, next to the dynamic marking, and that some further indications such as ‘*punta d’arco*’ and/or ‘*delicato*’ would help to clarify my intentions. Also, after reading so many semiquavers, and on reaching a *staccato* quaver at the beginning of bar 5 (and by analogy bars 7, 12, 14, 16. *etc.*) the first violinist naturally gave these notes extra length; this was, however, not what I had envisaged, although I have resisted the temptation to turn them into semiquavers. Moving on, bars 34–35 presented a special problem relating to intonation. Originally the primary material had been given to the second violin (bar 34), and then repeated a semitone lower by the first violin (bar 35); however, pointing to the difficulties associated with pitching a chromatic transposition at high speed, the players recommended that safer intonation could be guaranteed by notating both segments of the sequence for the one instrument. There were occasional problems with rhythm, so for the sake of clarity some of the dotted crotchets have been replaced with two dotted quavers, tied. However, there was little I could do to prevent a situation where, especially in the early stages of learning (and perhaps by some subconscious



association with Mendelssohn), performers might occasionally be tempted to abandon the Lydian mode altogether in favour of E major!

It was clear that the players found the **third movement** extremely enigmatic, and had only the vaguest idea of my musical intentions. The two most compelling reasons for their uncertainty were: first, that there was nothing in the score to suggest that the grace notes (whether bowed, slurred, or *portamento*) should be played at matching *tempi* and executed immediately before the main beat (as they occur by default during computer ‘playback’); and secondly, that many courtesy accidentals had been omitted, presumably because I had not checked the notation carefully enough after changing the time signature from 6/4 to 3/4. Once these issues were raised and clarified, and after some suggestions from me with regard to the general tenor of the movement, it was the viola player who proposed that it was really ‘night music’. As a consequence, the performance immediately began to reflect my intentions with far greater accuracy. Aside from some rather ugly double stopping in the first violin part (mainly 4ths) which has now been rewritten (as 6ths), and some difficulties with intonation in bars 61–64 which were quickly resolved, this movement presented few problems for the performers in terms of its technical demands.

Despite my misgivings about the nature of the **fourth movement**, I was surprised to find that in performance it proved to be the most successful. The opening 7/4 was at first difficult to read and has therefore been re-beamed and re-barred; the viola *tremolo* at bar 67 was more effective when played *sul pont*; and the cellist agreed that it would be better to use the mute from bar 79 rather than from bar 95 as was originally planned. The performers made it clear that they prefer harmonics to be fully notated, and the first violinist expressed the idea that at the end of a work such as this, it is often more interesting to allow the second violin to take the upper voice—which in this case was not difficult to arrange. In all, the experience of hearing the work in rehearsal was immensely valuable in helping me to prepare a revised score. The *String Quartet* was then performed and recorded by the same group (renamed the *Australian String Quartet*) in October, 2006. I am greatly indebted to all the members of the Quartet for the time which they devoted to the work and for their most enlightening comments.

## Comparative Exploration

When it comes to the string quartet, string players seem to have very definite ideas about what does and doesn't work, and about which composers they prefer. Those who perform the standard repertoire—as distinct from groups like *Kronos*, who have specialised in contemporary and experimental works<sup>6</sup>—will usually put Haydn, Beethoven, Bartok and Shostakovich at the top of their list on the grounds that these composers actually managed to create 'a fifth instrument'. They will name many others whom they regard as 'interesting' or 'very good', but there is a special reverence for these four who, between them, wrote 107 string quartets, with Haydn contributing the lion's share. Clearly each of these composers understood thoroughly the strengths (and weaknesses) of each instrument, and had a strong enough preference for the medium to gain plenty of experience in string quartet writing. But if Haydn may be regarded as having demonstrated its full potential within the stylistic boundaries of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Beethoven—especially in the late quartets—was to prove that it was the perfect medium for serious musical expression, and in this respect he set an unusually high standard for all those who followed. In evaluating the string quartet *per se*, performers are therefore likely to demand more than a writer's competence in fully utilising the instruments' capabilities and/or combined sonorities: they also expect substantial musical content. On an emotional level, the composer must have something really important to say.

Within this context, the Eighth Quartet of Shostakovich presents itself as an eminently suitable work for discussion. Written in Germany in 1960 and allegedly inspired by the horrific images of Arnshtam's film *Five Days and Five Nights* (for which Shostakovich was to provide the music), the work is publicly dedicated to "the victims of Fascism and the war". However, Norman Kay writes that "it could almost be described as an autobiography in music, since there are many references to previous works, and many statements of the composer's own motto. . .".<sup>7</sup> In one of his own chapters in *A Shostakovich*

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<sup>6</sup> Now in existence for over 30 years, the *Kronos Quartet* was formed in 1973 and has released over 40 recordings. "Kronos' recorded work reveals only a fraction of the group's commitment to new music, however. As a non-profit organization based in San Francisco, the Kronos Quartet/Kronos Performing Arts Association has commissioned more than 450 new works and arrangements for string quartet." <http://kronosquartet.org/info/bio.html>, 8 July 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Norman Kay. *Shostakovich*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1971) 53.

*Casebook*<sup>8</sup>, editor Malcolm Hamrick Brown includes two excerpts from a letter which Shostakovich wrote to his friend Isaak Glikman on July 19, 1960. The first explains the use of his own initials, and details the references and allusions to his own, and other works:

It occurred to me that should I die, it would be unlikely that anyone would write a piece dedicated to my memory. So I decided to write one myself . . . My initials are the quartet's main theme, that is, the notes D, Es, C, H. I also use other themes from my works in the quartet, as well as the revolutionary song "Tormented by Grievous Bondage". My own themes come from the First Symphony, the Eighth Symphony, the [Second] Piano Trio, the [First] Cello Concerto, and *Lady Macbeth*. I also hint at Wagner's Funeral March from *Götterdämmerung* and the second theme from the first movement of Tchaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. I forgot—there is also a theme from my Tenth Symphony. Not too bad, this little potpourri. The pseudo-tragedy of the quartet is such that while composing it my tears flowed as abundantly as urine after downing half a dozen beers.<sup>9</sup>

The letter indicates a private—as well as a public—dedication, one which was intensely personal and of great emotional significance to the composer. However, Brown goes on to warn that "the Eighth Quartet is a work rife with invitations to read it as the composer's reflections on more than thirty years of personal, compositional, and political history"<sup>10</sup>, and states that "to study and appreciate the quartet only from this standpoint limits its relevance as a work of art and yields a narrow interpretive perspective."<sup>11</sup> Noting the inconsistencies and contradictions contained in the valuable memoirs collected by Elizabeth Wilson<sup>12</sup>, Brown asks how Shostakovich's music came to mean so much to his Soviet listeners, and writes compellingly of the need to look more carefully at the music itself, albeit it from within a contemporary context:

These questions cannot be answered without addressing the fundamental critical issue of how meaning in music is socially, culturally and subjectively constructed. It is well to remember that these meanings are not inherent in the music itself but change continuously, evolving along with changes in culture and society, all the while assuming idiosyncratic shapes peculiar to every individual in time. This is the perspective often neglected by interpreters of Shostakovich who read his music as 'notes in a bottle'. [contd.]

<sup>8</sup> Malcolm Hamrick Brown, ed. *A Shostakovich Casebook*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004)

<sup>9</sup> Shostakovich to Glikman, 19 July 1960. Cited in Brown "Shostakovich: A Brief Encounter and a Present Perspective (1996, 2002)", in *A Shostakovich Casebook*, 337–338.

<sup>10</sup> Brown 339.

<sup>11</sup> Brown 339.

<sup>12</sup> Brown is clearly appreciative of Elizabeth Wilson's book, *Shostakovich: A Life Remembered*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1994). However, he points out that these memoirs, collected from the composer's friends and associates, present a "full-blooded personality" while at the same time revealing "the fickleness of the best-intentioned human memory".

It is also well to remember that questions of meaning have enduring force and validity only in association with artworks that reveal themselves as masterfully wrought in a technical sense. Shostakovich's music as it manifests itself *qua* music ought never to be disengaged from hermeneutic discourse about what it means.<sup>13</sup>

In order to underline this point, he then returns to Shostakovich's letter to Glikman, beginning with the last sentence from the previous excerpt and quoting what follows:

The pseudo-tragedy of the quartet is such that while composing it my tears flowed as abundantly as urine after downing half a dozen beers. Since arriving back home, I've tried playing it through a couple of times, and again the tears flowed. But this time not only on account of the pseudo-tragedy but also from surprise at the work's remarkable formal integrity.<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting that the very next sentence—which for a student of composition is perhaps even more important—is relegated to an end-note: “Immediately following on this uncharacteristically immodest statement, the composer writes, ‘Still and all, regarding the latter, some degree of self-satisfaction may be involved, which will probably pass quickly and I'll suffer a hangover of self-criticism.’”<sup>15</sup> From all of this one might conclude that any programmatic content, if relevant at all, is best explained by the composer, whereas technical mastery—or “formal integrity”, “unity of form”—is not always apparent, or perhaps not always given conscious priority over emotional factors at the time of writing; and that the self-satisfaction experienced on completion of a work is often replaced by self-criticism, presumably (one hopes) of a kind that will stimulate or inform subsequent creative activity.

According to Brown, if the Shostakovich Eighth Quartet were subjected to my own interpretation it would simply assume an “idiosyncratic shape peculiar to [an] individual in time”. This is quite appropriate here since the comparison is in part prompted by the limited programmatic content of my own *String Quartet*, and by other vague similarities such as the straightforward metrical patterns, a certain rhythmic inflexibility, the melodic repetition, and the return of the opening material at the end of the work. While the *String Quartet* explores different modes to help create a range of moods, I mentioned earlier that certain rhythmic elements in the first and second movements triggered ideas for the next.

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<sup>13</sup> Brown, 340–341.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, 341. This letter is also quoted by Elizabeth Wilson but in a different translation. Here, the last sentence reads: “This time not because of the pseudo-tragedy, but because of my own wonder at the marvellous unity of form”. Wilson, 340.

<sup>15</sup> Brown, Note 27, 344–345.

However in the Eighth Quartet, which is only 19 minutes in duration, there is total continuity—not just because the final bar of each movement is marked *attacca*, but because the musical language is not subject to any radical change. The new character of each section is based largely on differences in tempo and rhythmic patterning, and—quite apart from the numerous musical quotations, which provide complementary melodic interest—the main thematic material (D, Eb, C, B) continues throughout the entire work, providing an audible touchstone for the listener, and helping to build an incredibly compact structure.

From a performer's point of view, musical analysis is helpful to, but not synonymous with musical interpretation. In order to demonstrate this it is worth looking carefully at the opening bars of the Shostakovich quartet, which have also been closely examined by Norman Kay. In his discussion, Kay includes the first 27 bars of the score, and although some of his comments are clearly subjective<sup>16</sup>, he writes convincingly of the “tonal ambiguity” and the “major-minor syndrome”, summing up the musical language as follows:

The whole pattern—chromatic opening, subsequent stabilization by triadic harmonies, and closing restatement (this time more chordal) shows every aspect of Shostakovich's mature style. The underlying tonality is never lost sight of, though the composer allows himself much freedom in the way of incidental dissonances or extended false relations.<sup>17</sup>

In some ways, this is almost a perfect explanation of what I have called ‘twistonality’. On closer inspection, however, the language suggests a theoretical approach—“the underlying tonality is never lost sight of”—rather than an aural interpretation. Kay states that the quartet “begins with a series of canonic entries on [the DSCH] motif”, and that “a deliberate feeling of tonal ambiguity is built up, since the cello, viola, and first violin entries encompass all twelve semitones of the octave—the second violin entry merely doubling the cello”.<sup>18</sup> He refers at this point to the score, so the relevant passage is included here (see Fig. 14).

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<sup>16</sup> The following sentence is a good example: “But beyond this programme it carries, in a different way from any of the other quartets, a feeling of anguish, the haunting pain of personal mortality.” Kay 53.

<sup>17</sup> Kay 55–56.

<sup>18</sup> Kay 54–55.

Fig. 14. Shostakovich Eighth Quartet: bars 1-19 <sup>19</sup>

At first glance, it appears to be a good description of the opening bars, but it is unfortunately flawed. In his enthusiasm to stress the chromatic, rather than the tonal aspects of the music, Kay states that the three entries beginning on D (anacrusis), A (bar 2) and G (bar 5) “encompass all twelve semitones of the octave”. However, we only have to spell them out—

D—E $\flat$ —C—B      A—B $\flat$ —G—F $\sharp$       G—A $\flat$ —F—E

—to realise that D $\flat$  (the tritone substitute) is missing, whereas G (the dominant) occurs twice. While this can hardly be called a grievous error of judgement, it does suggest that Kay’s analysis is open to question. Failing to note that the four entries are presented in significant keys and in a precise order (C—G—C—F) he also appears to miss the aural relevance of the G major chord in bar 5, followed by the bass move to D $\flat$ . Instead, he points out that “there is something of a harmonic impasse around bars 9 and 10, as Shostakovich attempts to provide a triadic resolution to his polyphonic texture, but the ambiguity remains, with a unison assertion of DSCH again.”<sup>20</sup> If, on the other hand, we were to interpret the first note as the second half of an imaginary bar 1 (see Ex. 5), we would discover a bass line which delivered a much more conventional statement, certainly in terms of its rhythmic emphasis on the two forms of dominant (in what would become bars 6 and 7) and the tonic (seen here in bars 4 and 8).

<sup>19</sup> Dmitri Shostakovich. *String Quartets 5–8*, Op.92/101/108/110. (Hamburg: Musikverlag Hans Sikorski, 1957) 116.

<sup>20</sup> Kay 55.

## Ex. 5. Shostakovich Eighth Quartet: Bass line reconstruction



Thus, in approaching the work from a listener's point of view, we can hear that—rather than reaching a “harmonic impasse around bars 9 and 10”—Shostakovich has already set up the tonality, albeit with major-minor ambiguity, and is now providing a deliberate distraction by using C major as the dominant of F, thereby postponing our arrival at any key-confirming cadence.

We now have a short progression which works like an interrupted cadence (bars 10–11) but ends unexpectedly on an  $A^{♭7}$  (tantalisingly suggestive of a move to the dominant), followed by yet another revelation. Against the dominant G (viola) we hear a unison statement of the DSCH motif which suddenly lands us in the key of E (bar 13): the low C is led to an E in the bass, the leading note B is converted to the 5th of the triad in the upper voice, and the viola presents both the minor and major 3rds in succession. When the bass moves down a semitone to  $E♭$  we are quickly returned to C minor, and the next 9 bars introduce new material in the form of a quotation from the First Symphony—but finally, with perfect timing, Shostakovich delivers the anticipated cadence as a complete harmonisation of DSCH, with no tonal ambiguity at all (bars 23–28, see Fig. 15).

Fig. 15. Shostakovich Eighth Quartet: bars 20–29

This first movement is 126 bars long, and with the exception of bars 45–49 and bar 67, bars 28–79 are played out over a tonic pedal point (viola and cello) while the other 2 instruments shift comfortably between the major and minor modes. The section begins (at bar 28) with a recitative-like statement from the first violin which—aside from its impressive quality as long, well balanced melody—contains a wealth of short musical shapes or cells, all of which are used during the course of the next 5 movements to build

thematic statements, to create transitional passages and to provide a wide variety of accompanying or subsidiary textures. Apart from the main motifs, which are also short and repeated many times, it is possible to relate almost every bar of the work to the material contained in these 20 bars, even though some of the shapes are used in reverse, or modified slightly to mould new motifs.

**Ex. 6. Shostakovich Eighth Quartet: bars 28–47**

A 5-note motif with a strikingly simple rhythm (♩ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♩) is introduced at bar 50 with the notes C—G—G—|A<sub>b</sub>—G—. This is now given a high profile, but since its first appearance is associated with finality, it eventually begins to promote a strong sense of tonal restriction. From bar 79 a return of the DSCH cadence (illustrated in Fig.20 above) is followed by brief excursions to various key centres, beginning with A minor, and there is a sprinkling of lush consonance—most of which appears as a direct result of the contrapuntal texture. When the 5-note motif returns at the end of the movement, the A<sub>b</sub>—enharmonically altered to G<sub>#</sub>—is suspended just long enough to forecast a sudden key change (to G<sub>#</sub> minor), and subsequently there is an incredible sense of release as the same motif takes off at break-neck speed to generate the *Allegro molto* and bring into focus an entirely different musical terrain.

In musical analysis of a purely theoretical kind, it is sometimes easy to forget or overlook the importance of the listener's expectations, and how these are formed, prolonged and satisfied during a performance of the work as a whole. We have seen how, during the opening bars of the work, Shostakovich captures our attention by setting up C major-minor and using 'delay' tactics before delivering harmonic (or cadential) confirmation. Even when it does arrive, the key-centre is inferred from the minor subdominant, rather than from the tonic chord, which has no defining 3rd. For the opening of the second movement he employs a slightly different strategy by first pronouncing a deliberately symmetrical rhythm—one which sounds comfortably



predictable—and then immediately upsetting our expectations. This is notated in 2/2 with an unusually fast metronome marking (one bar = 120), but the aural effect is best described by presenting a reduction of the rhythm (see Ex. 7) and noting the *sfff* markings as x-shaped noteheads.

**Ex. 7. Shostakovich Eighth Quartet II: rhythmic reconstruction**



Of course in the original there is no change in time signature but this example represents, in effect, what is heard. In this movement, most of the thematic material is straightforward—and reassuringly repetitive—while the rhythm is responsible for providing most of the excitement.

There is no need to prolong this discussion in order to prove that in this work Shostakovich achieves a perfect coalescence between art (i.e. the whole, finished product) and artifice (i.e. the manipulation of motivic ingredients). For performers—and subsequently, audiences—to deem that a composer has something important to say, they need to be convinced that the work has an emotional content which is logically expressed within a consistent musical language, one that speaks directly to the listener. That the Eighth Quartet is an extremely popular work undoubtedly has less to do with its controversial programmatic content than with its musical substance, which is dense and compelling; and it is memorable not least because we are confronted with innumerable surprises while remaining on sure ground. The legacy of Beethoven is here clearly apparent in the composer's ability not only to present material in a language which is already familiar—clear tonal centres and straightforward metrical patterns being a form of seduction—but also to shape it continually in such a way as to startle the listener with unexpected outcomes. It is sobering to think that, while Schumann is reported to have said of Ferdinand Hiller's music that it "simply lacked that triumphant power that we are unable to resist"<sup>21</sup>, Hiller himself wrote an essay to commemorate Beethoven's centenary in which he proclaimed that the great composer's music:

<sup>21</sup> Russell Martin. *Beethoven's Hair*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2000) 47.

achieved softness without weakness, enthusiasm without hollowness, longing without sentimentality, passion without madness. He is deep but never turgid, pleasant but never insipid, lofty but never bombastic. In the expression of love, fervent, tender, overflowing, but never with ignoble sensuality. He can be cordial, cheerful, joyful to extravagance, to excess—never to vulgarity. In the deepest suffering he does not lose himself—he triumphs over it . . . .<sup>22</sup>

These are the hallmarks of great music, music which everybody understands, music which will last because it has something important to say. After one and a half centuries, one could suggest that Hiller's words might just as easily apply here to the music of Dmitri Shostakovich. As a work of art, the Eighth Quartet seems—at least temporarily—to have surprised even the composer himself. Whether he achieved this success because of, or in spite of his personal circumstances or the prevailing political climate is, in the end, irrelevant. In the case of my own work, as we have seen, emotional factors certainly appear to have influenced the nature of the raw material; but however varied (or entertaining) these ideas might be, the finished product—if it is to stand as a serious work of art—ultimately depends on the successful manipulation of its basic ingredients. Seen from this perspective, the *String Quartet* may be regarded as a valuable exercise in the art of artifice.

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<sup>22</sup> Martin 48.

6

BY ARRANGEMENT

*RHAPSODY ON RUSSIAN THEMES*

## Genesis

The idea of writing a Rhapsody on Russian Themes for two pianos was suggested to me by Paul Rickard-Ford, a former student and colleague (now living in Sydney) with whom, in the past, I had given several duo piano recitals. On a trip to Adelaide in early August 2005, he told me that he and his current duo partner, Natalia Sheludiakova, had been invited to give an ABC broadcast in March 2006 and that they were planning to play the Brahms F minor Sonata followed by the Rachmaninoff *Russian Rhapsody*. It soon transpired, however, that they were not happy with the Rachmaninoff work, and it occurred to Paul that if I were to write a work especially for them, they might include it in the program. In fact (the conversation moved very quickly), why didn't I consider writing a "Rhapsody on Russian Themes"? Having recently completed the first draft of the *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano*, I was easily tempted to accept the invitation on condition that he and Natalia (who is Russian) provided the themes. He went straight to the piano and played the melody from the Rachmaninoff work (with which I was unfamiliar) so I jotted it down on a scrap of manuscript paper (see Ex. 1).

### Ex. 1. Rachmaninoff Theme



This was a start. Paul promised to speak with Natalia on his return to Sydney, and ten days later I received the additional melodies (see Ex. 2) as an email attachment.

### Ex. 2. Russian melodies

Meanwhile, I had also toyed with the idea of using the *Volga Boat Song*<sup>1</sup> and the popular folk-song *Kalinka*; five themes, I thought, would give me plenty of material. The piece was to last “about ten or eleven minutes”, and was to be “quite showy” without being too difficult. (On the other hand, Paul added, I should not try to make it “too easy”!) Hence the work was written ‘by arrangement’ with the performers, and was to be completed in time for them to rehearse during the long summer break. My next task was to arrange the material for two pianos.

## Method

For days before I began work on the Rhapsody, I could not get the *Volga Boat Song* out of my head. Of all the themes under consideration, I had initially regarded this one as the most ‘peripheral’—after all, I had plenty of other material—but it seemed destined to play a leading role. In fact, it took such a strong hold in my imagination that the opening pages of this work were composed long before they were actually written down.<sup>2</sup> Example 3 illustrates the five themes in order of their appearance.

### Ex. 3. Russian Themes, 1–5

The image displays five musical staves, each labeled with a theme number. Theme 1 is a simple five-note melody in G major. Theme 2 is a more complex melody with eighth and sixteenth notes. Theme 3 is a rhythmic melody with eighth notes and rests. Theme 4 is a rhythmic melody with eighth notes and rests. Theme 5 is a simple five-note melody in G major, identical to Theme 1.

Consisting of only 5 notes, **Theme 1** is the simplest and most straightforward. It allowed me to create a situation where the pianists, as it were, introduce themselves: first, Piano 1

<sup>1</sup> A well-known Russian theme, this was used by Glazunoff as the first theme in his Symphonic Poem *Stenka Razin*, *Op. 13*.

<sup>2</sup> It was interesting later to discover that “Rachmaninoff’s usual method [of composing] was to carry the music round in his head until it was fully formed, and only then commit it to paper. A letter he wrote to Natalya Skalon on 26 March 1891. . . is a clue to his working practices, and his distinction between ‘writing’ and ‘composing’.” Geoffrey Norris. *Rachmaninoff*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 1993) 9.

takes the lead by announcing and gradually harmonising the tune (bars 1–11); then an informal dialogue with Piano 2 emerges (bars 12–18), and finally both partners deliver the theme in alternating chords of equal weight, the overlapping pedals intended to consolidate interaction and create a new colour (bars 19–23).

The *Rhapsody* was planned as a kind of pianistic pastiche and actually written in consecutive sections. There were frequent delays between work sessions but my aim was to complete each section in turn, taking one theme at a time and simply experimenting with various compositional procedures. It occurred to me, in the early stages, that it might be possible to arrange a part of each theme as an accompaniment for the next. Although this idea was not actually maintained throughout the work, it did provide the impetus for the semiquaver movement at bar 24 (see Fig. 1) where, in order to create a credible transition, material from Theme 1 is used retrospectively while the lower voice foreshadows Theme 2.

Fig. 1. *Rhapsody on Russian Themes*: bars 24–25

The next section presents **Theme 2** in various ways. The first descending scale fragment returns regularly to add rhythmic interest to the bass line of Piano 2, while the upper stave carries the accompanying figure derived from Theme 1. Meanwhile, Piano 1 announces Theme 2 in both hands: the whole theme is stated by the RH<sup>3</sup> in F major/D minor while the LH—applying the principle of augmentation—reveals only the first half (bars 25–32). Then a two bar transition (bars 33–34) facilitates both a role reversal and a change of key: Piano 1 takes over the accompanying role, while Piano 2 presents the melody in D $\flat$  major/B $\flat$  minor (bars 35–42), the LH now delivering the second half (also in the new key) before a phrase extension (bar 43) signals the introduction of new material.

<sup>3</sup> The conventional abbreviations RH and LH are used throughout this chapter to indicate ‘right hand’ and ‘left hand’.

**Theme 3** required a change of pace, but once again it seemed appropriate for the pianists to share the presentation of thematic and accompanying material. Single lines played two octaves apart on the piano create a pleasing sonority so there was no attempt to harmonise this simple tune. Instead, a *non legato* pattern involving fast repeated notes was added to underline its lively character, and although this rhythmic idea was also born in the key of A major, it was soon shifted to create more dissonance and off-beat accents were added to lend an extra element of surprise (bars 44–51). Theme 3 is presented twice in succession by Piano 1, both times in A major, the second time three octaves apart; but when Piano 2 takes over at bar 52 there is a more radical development. First the RH announces the tune in D major while the LH plays it in G (bars 52–54). Then, instead of repeating the material a fourth time, Theme 2 makes a reappearance, its note values now halved to suit the new tempo. The bitonality continues (see Fig. 2) with the RH playing the tune in E major/C# minor while the LH begins in A major and immediately shifts to F major/D minor.

Fig. 2. *Rhapsody on Russian Themes*: = Pno 2, bars 54–58

Theme 2 disguised as Theme 3  
R.H.: E major/C# minor

Pno 2

L.H.: A major F major/D minor

For this section the melodic material was written first, followed by the more decorative accompaniment, accents being strategically placed after notes of longer duration. This gave rise to a brief interlude in which the two pianos now vie for attention, with fast leaps creating a playful virtuosic display (bars 59–62) until the emphasis shifts to the *Meno Mosso*, where Themes 2 and 3 are eventually combined. Theme 2 is given priority (LH '*marcato il thema*') while Theme 3 (RH '*legato*') acts as a countermelody, occurring three times (bars 63–65, 66–68, and 70–72) in an interrupted diatonic sequence. In this section Theme 2 was not completed, but rounded off by a short reference to Theme 1 (Piano 1, LH bars 70–71); the ensuing pause is intended to indicate that the listener may now expect something quite different in character, if not entirely new.

The material for the *Semplice espressivo* was all derived from the opening of Theme 2, and is simply ‘rhapsodic’ in character, my intention here being to insert the equivalent of a ‘slow movement’ and to explore a range of keyboard sonorities by making generous—one might almost say ‘impressionistic’—use of the pedals. Also, as most of the themes move in a downward direction (or contain predominantly falling intervals), the use of inversion (Piano 2, LH bars 74–86) and rising arpeggiation were intended to redress the balance and prevent an unnecessary accumulation of ‘melancholia’.<sup>4</sup> There is a written-in *rallentando* from bar 89, but the tempo picks up at bar 97 with an *accelerando* towards the next section, beginning at bar 102.

The arrival of Theme 4 presented an opportunity to develop more contrasting textures. Once again the tune wears different colours: it appears first in G minor (bars 102–105), then in D minor (bars 106–109); it then begins to ascend chromatically through E $\flat$  (bars 110–113) and E minor (bars 114 ff.) until it loses its melodic significance and translates itself into transitional material suitable for pressing (upwards) towards another climax. The rhythmic banality of Theme 4 posed some problems at first, but they were eventually solved by the use of syncopated chords (Piano 2 bars 105–109) and by an artificially induced 5/8 rhythm in the accompaniment (Piano 2, from bar 110). These accents were carefully aligned to accommodate the swift chromatic shifts in tonality (see Fig. 3), so that by bar 116 we have a new pattern emerging.

Fig. 3. *Rhapsody on Russian Themes*: = Pno 2, bars 116–122

The musical score for Piano 2, bars 116–122, is presented in G minor. It features a complex rhythmic structure with alternating 5/8 and 3/8 time signatures. The right hand part consists of a melodic line with syncopated chords, while the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment. The piece concludes with a glissando.

The final *glissando* announces another change of direction and ushers in an exploration of the first four themes in a deliberately contrapuntal texture.

This *quasi-fugal* treatment might easily have been planned ahead and carried out in a disciplined fashion, according to instructions: the keys in which the themes would appear,

<sup>4</sup> On first hearing, this section might appear too long or perhaps unnecessarily static, but after due consideration I found that its length was justified in relation to the work as a whole.



note values, the use of *stretto*, and perhaps even the various registers of the keyboard might have been calculated by means of some pre-compositional design. The method used here, however, was intuitive rather than intellectual, with the result that any serious architectural structure was waived in favour of a more spontaneous approach where the pianists appear gradually to discover that all four themes may be heard concurrently, in linear succession. From bar 127 they enter in such a way as to give the impression of a tonal centre where none really exists, so it was possible to construct a ‘mock’ cadence in E minor (bar 135) before halving the note values for a more lively repetition of this ‘improvisatory’ material (see Fig. 4).

Fig. 4. *Rhapsody on Russian Themes*: bars 136–140

The musical score for Figure 4 shows two piano parts, Pno 1 and Pno 2, over five bars (136-140). Pno 1 plays Theme 1 in the right hand and Theme 4 in the left hand. Pno 2 plays Theme 2 in the right hand and Theme 3 in the left hand. The themes are: Theme 1 (quarter notes), Theme 2 (eighth notes), Theme 3 (quarter notes), and Theme 4 (quarter notes).

Having arrived safely at this point, it became clear that Theme 2 could be ‘morphed’ (in this case, reduced to even semiquavers—see Ex. 4) to provide momentum.

Ex. 4. *Rhapsody on Russian Themes*: = Pno 1, bars 140–142

The musical score for Example 4 shows two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Theme 2' and contains a sequence of eighth notes. The bottom staff is labeled 'Theme 2 'morphed'' and contains a sequence of sixteenth notes, representing the same melodic material as Theme 2 but with halved note values.

In addition, the second half of Theme 3 was shifted into reverse (see Ex. 5) to add variety while maintaining its function as an independent voice.

Ex. 5. *Rhapsody on Russian Themes*: = Pno 2, bars 140–146

The musical score for Example 5 shows a single piano part with two staves. The top staff is labeled 'Theme 3' and contains a sequence of eighth notes. The bottom staff is labeled 'Theme 3 in reverse' and contains the same sequence of eighth notes as Theme 3, but in reverse order.

Meanwhile Theme 4 was fragmented to create a sense of freedom (Piano 1, from bar 144), and to provide a flexible foundation (bass line) for subsequent musical construction. Finally, in order to bring a greater sense of cohesion to this section, a snippet from Theme 2 (indicated by the square bracket in Fig. 4) was repeated at regular intervals and passed from one instrument to the other until the ideas wore themselves out. There was now a desperate need to vary the basic pulse.

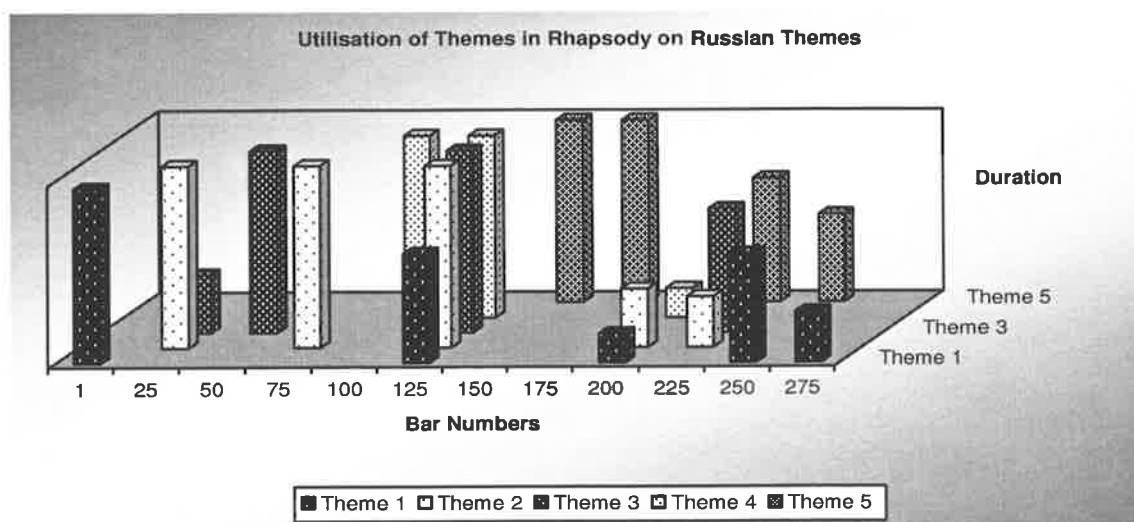
With only one theme remaining, an executive decision was called for: **Theme 5** would be introduced as a waltz. Like Theme 2, the ‘Rachmaninoff’ theme also gives the impression of beginning in major and moving to the relative minor, and this was used as an opportunity to indulge in some fast key-changes to avoid predictability. With so many separate sections now strung together, it was very important that the work not only maintained momentum but generated enough energy to prepare for closure. Theme 5 is introduced in G major/E minor at bar 155, moves to E major at bar 162, and to B $\flat$  major at bar 173. There is some further development (with echoes of Theme 2) in which the accompanying triplet figuration is intended to create a sense of spontaneity and freedom. It was important by now to prevent any feeling of being locked into a ‘sectional’ format, so transitional bars needed careful handling; the switch to 5/4 at bar 205 seemed to provide an answer. Using the opening fragments of Themes 1 and 4, this section is actually the longest ‘transition’ in the work (bars 205–216), and leads eventually to a reworking of Theme 2 in which major, minor and dominant seventh chords lend a characteristic brightness to the sound (Piano 2, bars 217–224). When the pianists’ roles are reversed at bar 225, the chords are simply arpeggiated in semiquavers to increase the excitement and raise the level of virtuosic display (bars 225–232).

By now the compositional imperative was to build a real climax, to create tension with expectations of final resolution, and for this I turned to more minimalist gestures. Theme 5 was to be restated by Piano 1—very gradually, against an *ostinato* bass—while Piano 2 presented chromatically altered fragments of Theme 3 (bass) and delivered a static chordal *ostinato* (treble) in the extreme registers. By slowing the rate of chord changes it was possible to build and prolong the tension for a considerable period of time (bars 233–261) before resolving it in a highly romanticised version of Theme 1, which—being not only the most simple, but the most spacious in character—offered all the elements required

for an extravagant ending, complete with Lisztian embellishments and pianistic *bravura*. In the first draft of the *Rhapsody*, this last section (bars 262–295) was much shorter, for fear of ‘derivative’ exaggeration. Nevertheless, the general consensus was that the work warranted a more substantial ending, one which would be both lavish and extremely virtuosic. This involved a considerable amount of time and effort, because the harmonies were hardly daring and the dangers of writing a standard ‘Romantic’ coda loomed large. It would not be an exaggeration to say that there were at least eight versions of bars 282–289, in which I was simply searching for a way to ‘twist’ the tonality once more—to create one more interesting dissonance—before the final cadence. A suitably rhapsodic solution was eventually found, although at the time it was frustrating to think that bars 233–261 were written in a matter of minutes, whereas bars 282–289 involved many hours of trial and error, and a sleepless night.

Given the rhapsodic nature of the work, commentary in the form of descriptive analysis has seemed appropriate—but it does not give the whole picture. Table 6.1 gives a graphic representation and an approximate overview of the structure in the form of a three-dimensional bar chart, where the appearance of the five themes is shown in relation to the bar numbers (‘x’ axis), and the duration of each theme is marked by the height of the columns (‘y’ axis).

**Table 6.1. *Rhapsody on Russian Themes*—Structural Overview**



When the work was eventually sent to the performers, “Performance Notes”<sup>5</sup> were attached in order to clarify my own intentions and give adequate license for interpretive exploration. In summing up the composition as a whole, it is perhaps appropriate to include the program note which was prepared for the concert:

The Rhapsody on Russian Themes is a deliberate pastiche based on 5 Russian folk tunes. Clearly a sectional work, it has been written purely as a form of entertainment, one which seeks to portray various aspects of the Russian temperament while at the same time glancing nostalgically at the country’s 19th and early 20th century musical traditions. Equal emphasis has been placed on harmonic and contrapuntal writing; fugal adventures are followed by a meandering waltz, and minimalist gestures are overridden by blatant 19th century showmanship. Essentially, the Rhapsody is designed to celebrate pianism, past and present.

### Performance and Revision

The work was performed twice: first, as planned, for the ABC’s *Sunday Live* on March 12, 2006, and subsequently on March 13 at a Cocktail Series Concert at the Sydney Conservatorium. Rehearsals began in January and there were several emails from Paul querying notes, rests, and ties which led to minor corrections, some enharmonic changes and clearer notation. From the performers’ point of view, the slow section (*Semplice espressivo*) and the fugal section (from bar 122) posed problems at first, but solutions were eventually found during the course of rehearsals and on the whole I agreed with their suggestions regarding possible ‘interpretations’. For example, they were somewhat puzzled by the written indications ‘*senza espressione*’ (bar 122) and ‘*mf con espressione e sempre crescendo*’ (bar 136), but their decision to play the first part a little slower and to increase the tempo at bar 136 was perfectly acceptable. They also queried some of the long pedal markings which, they felt, prevented real clarity of sound, so these have since been substituted by the general indication ‘*con Pedal*’, leaving the actual number of changes—and of course the required depth—to the performers’ discretion.

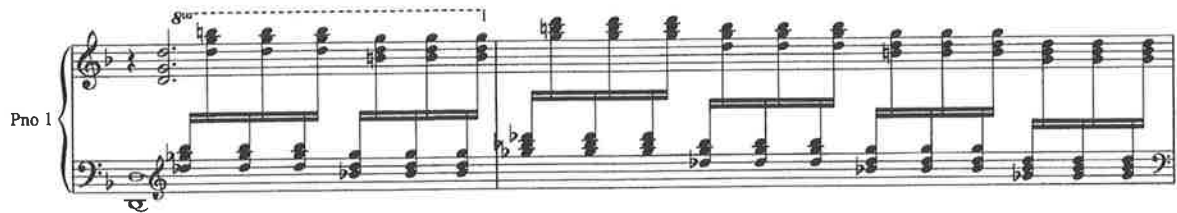
From a purely notational standpoint, I had taken some time to arrange the more virtuosic passages at the end as comfortably as possible, with much of the material being shared between the hands. However, it is sometimes not possible to find the ideal solution

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<sup>5</sup> The Performance Notes are printed on the back of the title page in Volume One.

for every pianist. The descending, alternating chords for Piano 1 from bar 282 (see Fig. 5) proved too awkward for Paul's large hands.

Fig. 5. *Rhapsody on Russian Themes*: bars 282–283



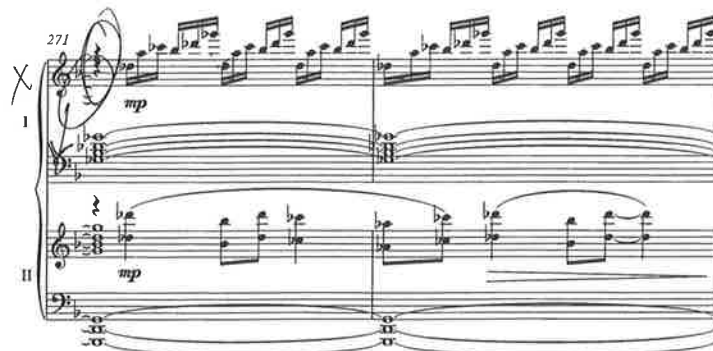
He therefore employed a facilitation (see Ex. 6) which—although it produced excellent results—would have looked less attractive (and rather untidy) in print.

Ex. 6. *Rhapsody on Russian Themes*: = bars 282–283

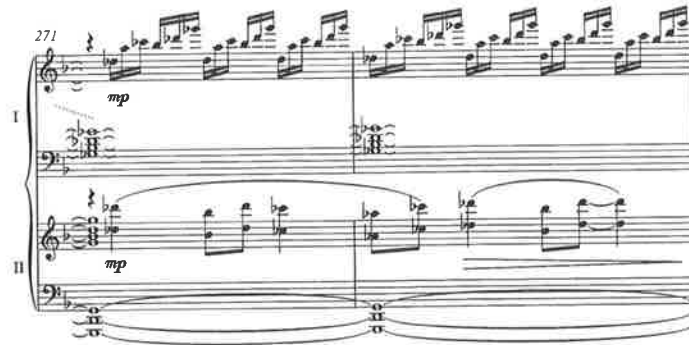


Such arrangements are common practice among pianists, who will often reorganise the score in order to solve technical problems or to suit their individual needs. It seemed preferable to avoid the use of three staves for one instrument (although this is often found in Messiaen's works), and also to adopt the practice of hiding the figures for similar rhythmic groupings once a pattern had been established. Ties spread over several bars also tended to give the score a 'cluttered' appearance, and in this early version, marked here for editing purposes (see Fig. 6), they looked particularly cumbersome in the second staff.

Fig. 6. *Rhapsody on Russian Themes*, v. 1: = bars 271–27



By replacing them with conventional abbreviations the melodic material given to Piano 1 appeared to be more clearly prioritised:

Fig. 7. *Rhapsody on Russian Themes*: bars 271–272

While these may seem minor concerns—relating more to publication than to composition—it was very important on this occasion to produce a professional-looking score, as initial feedback from the performers indicated that the work was not as easy as I had imagined. The only rehearsal which I attended was on the day before the broadcast, by which time it would have been inappropriate to comment in detail on what was already a considered performance. One or two small misreadings were corrected and in some sections the balance between the instruments was adjusted, but in general I was very pleased with the outcome. It came as a surprise that the strongly rhythmic, ‘minimalist’ section gave rise to some ensemble problems, possibly because it was difficult for Piano 2 to hear the thematic material clearly at this point. The arpeggiation from bar 280 was difficult to play cleanly at speed, and bars 286–289 presented a real challenge for both pianists. Now that the harmonic scheme has been settled, I have considered the possibility of rewriting bars 287–288 in order to thin the texture and share the semiquavers more equally between the two instruments. Just as Liszt’s reworkings of his *Transcendental Etudes* invariably produced more spectacular results with considerably less effort from the performer, it would be possible here to simplify the writing to achieve greater virtuosity. For the purposes of this submission, however, the score has not been altered: the live recording included in Volume Three is a performance of the *Rhapsody on Russian Themes* as it appears in Volume One.

### Comparative Exploration

In undertaking to write this work for two professional musicians I was conscious of the fact that, given the material, it would probably be an intrinsically conservative piece, and that—if it were to be ‘showy’ without being too ‘lightweight’—it would be largely informed by my own experience of the duo-piano repertoire. It is therefore relevant to

indicate the works that I had already performed, all of which provided valuable insight into this particular genre (see Table 6.2).

**Table 6.2: Duo Piano Repertoire**

Composers	Works
Brahms:	Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann Op. 23
Debussy:	<i>En blanc et noir</i>
Grainger:	Hill-Song II; English Waltz; Molly on the Shore The Warriors—Music to an Imaginary Ballet
Jolivet:	Hopi Snake Dance
Liszt:	Reminiscences of Don Juan
Lutoslawski:	Variations on a Theme of Paganini
Milhaud:	Scaramouche
Messiaen:	<i>Visions de l'Amen</i>
Mozart:	Sonata in D major KV 44 Fugue in C minor, KV 426
Rachmaninoff:	Suite No.2, Op. 17 Symphonic Dances Op. 45
Ravel:	<i>La Valse</i>
Saint-Saëns:	Variations on a Theme of Beethoven, Op. 35
Schumann:	Andante and Variations Op. 46

There were also several works for 2 pianos and orchestra—Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals*, and concertos by C.P.E. Bach, Mendelssohn and Poulenc—and many works for four hands, although the duets may be regarded as an entirely separate genre. Of those listed above the Messiaen has had the most vivid musical impact, though all have made an indelible impression in terms of sonority and structure. In particular, Liszt's own transcription for two pianos of the *Don Juan Fantasie*, Ravel's arrangement of *La Valse* and Lutoslawski's *Paganini Variations* reveal a thorough understanding of the compositional and pianistic techniques required for the two instruments to realise their full potential, sounding as one.

At the beginning of the chapter it was noted that this composition was actually written to replace Rachmaninoff's *Russian Rhapsody* in a program scheduled to be broadcast by the ABC. The latter work had been chosen mainly because it was relatively unknown and of suitable duration, but the performers soon discovered that "in general Rachmaninoff concentrates throughout the work on dazzling decoration and pianistic effect, and as the theme chosen is short-breathed and repetitive the piece begins to outstay

its welcome by the last.”<sup>6</sup> Written in 1891 when he was just eighteen, the piece was performed only once during the composer’s lifetime and remained unpublished until 1948. Barrie Martyn points out that the work is really a set of eight variations on an “aggressively nationalistic” theme<sup>7</sup>, and that the *Paganini Rhapsody*—written forty-three years later—was similarly misnamed. However, a brief investigation of the *Russian Rhapsody* and the second Suite demonstrates how the composer’s writing for two pianos was to develop during a period of just ten years.

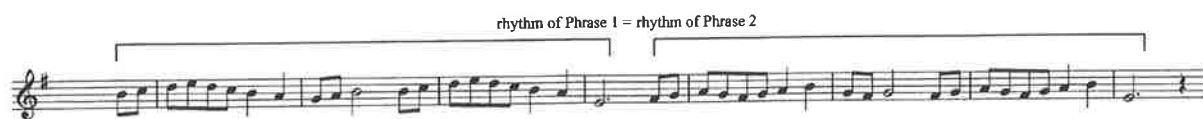
Rachmaninoff’s *Russian Rhapsody* is also composed of relatively independent sections clearly delineated by transitional material, regular pauses and tempo indications (*Moderato—Vivace—Andante—Con Moto/Ritardando—Tempo I*). The theme is announced by the two pianos in unison double octaves before being harmonised (in exactly the same way) by each in turn, and there is a subsequent answering phrase (see Ex. 7)—although I am not able to ascertain whether this is part of the original folk-song, or Rachmaninoff’s own invention.

#### Ex. 7. Rachmaninoff *Russian Rhapsody*: Main theme, extended



There is very little attempt to vary the shape of this tune, and one of the reasons why the work sounds so repetitive is that Rachmaninoff actually chooses, in the early stages, to fill out the first half with passing notes. The intention, no doubt, was to provide momentum, but the characteristic dotted notes and the descending 4ths are both lost (see Ex. 8), making the two halves rhythmically identical.

#### Ex. 8. Rachmaninoff *Russian Rhapsody*: Variation of main theme



<sup>6</sup> Barrie Martyn. *Rachmaninoff: Composer, Pianist, Conductor*. (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Brookfield, Vt., USA: Scholar Press, Gower Pub. Co., c.1990) 47.

<sup>7</sup> The author also speculates on the origin of the work: “it may have been prompted by a visit Rachmaninoff made to a Moscow piano factory. . . . While trying out one of the instruments, Yury Sakhnovsky strummed a Russian song, to which Rachmaninoff, on another piano, responded with a variation on it; Sakhnovsky answered in kind, and between them he and Rachmaninoff improvised a whole set of variations. Whether or not Sakhnovsky’s theme was the one Rachmaninoff used in the *Russian Rhapsody* we have no means of knowing; it is certainly not such as one would expect Rachmaninoff to use, still less invent. . . .” Martyn 47.



Although this work is properly regarded as a student composition, it is remarkable that by 1901 Rachmaninoff was able to reveal such a wealth of ideas in the *Suite* No. 2. As Martyn points out, he “seems to have had so much material on hand that the melodies in the middle of the first two movements get only a single hearing”.<sup>8</sup> Geoffrey Norris sums up the *Russian Rhapsody* as “a *tour de force* of colour—a foretaste of his later two-piano suites in its sumptuousness but insistent (even for only ten minutes or so) in its worrying over and embellishment of the basic folk tune.”<sup>9</sup> Within the next decade, however, Rachmaninoff was to develop not only his capacity for melodic invention but also his modes of embellishment. In the *Vivace* section of the Rhapsody, while Piano 2 delivers the melodic material in unadventurous double thirds, Piano 1 provides an interesting counterpoint in rapid semiquaver pairs (alternating between LH and RH—see Fig. 8), 16 bars of which are written entirely on the upper stave.

Fig. 8. Rachmaninoff *Russian Rhapsody*: bars 51–52<sup>10</sup>



In the final “Tarantella” from the *Suite* No. 2, we find this idea fully developed. Not only is there greater variety in the decoration itself, but there are seventy-six bars of almost uninterrupted quavers—presented on a single stave—to be delivered at high speed (*Presto* ♩. = 96). The following excerpt (see Fig. 9) occurs near the start of the passage in question.

Fig. 9. Rachmaninoff *Suite* No. 2, IV – Tarantella<sup>11</sup>



<sup>8</sup> Martyn 132.

<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey Norris. *Rachmaninoff*. (Oxford; Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001) 79.

<sup>10</sup> Sergei Rachmaninoff. *Russische Rhapsodie (1891) für zwei Klaviere zu vier Händen*. (München-Gräfeling: Verlag Walter Wollenweber, 1993)

<sup>11</sup> Sergei Rachmaninoff. *Suite* No. 2, Op. 17. (New York: International Music Company, 1953), 51

There are glimpses in the Rhapsody of the characteristically lush sounds to be found in the later work. In general, Rachmaninoff uses rhythmic subdivision and conventional hemiolas more frequently than cross-rhythms, but the following passage (see Fig. 10) is clearly an early version of his audible signature.

Fig. 10. Rachmaninoff *Russian Rhapsody*: bars 64–65



While many of the decorative passages—and especially the early *Cadenza*—are directly descended from Liszt, the more lyrical writing of the *Andante* variation (see Fig. 11) is also strikingly reminiscent of Schumann.

Fig. 11. Rachmaninoff *Russian Rhapsody*: bars 129–132



Ten years later, however, the harmonic scheme of the “Romance” from the second Suite reveals Rachmaninoff’s fingerprints in almost every bar (see Fig. 12).

Fig. 12. Rachmaninoff Suite No. 2, III - Romance<sup>12</sup>



<sup>12</sup> Sergei Rachmaninoff. Suite No. 2, Op. 17, 28.

Although there is no scope here for a more detailed discussion, it is fascinating to trace the development of Rachmaninoff's highly individual compositional technique and unmistakably personal style. His own arrangement (for two pianos) of the *Symphonic Dances*, written nearly 40 years later, shows an even greater range of tonal colours and a more efficient use of the instruments to simulate orchestral effects; but the high Romanticism and lush sonorities have already given way to tighter construction and a more seriously considered approach. The style is still extremely distinctive, but the youthful spontaneity and sheer 'sumptuousness' of the second Suite have faded. In this respect Rachmaninoff's work is a perfect example of 'twistonicity': not only did he twist the tonal system to define a music of his own, but as time went on, the music defined the man. His compositions are the true reflection of an honest musician and at the same time an audible documentary of his (emotional) life-experience.

The *Rhapsody on Russian Themes* is undoubtedly influenced by my experience as a pianist, rather than as an accompanist or chamber player. It would, however, be misleading to suggest that there are not a great many other factors involved in the compositional process. While Rachmaninoff uttered very little on the subject of his compositional methods, Percy Grainger (like Stravinsky) was extremely garrulous. In a letter to Herman Sandby, encouraging him to persevere with his composition alongside his career as a cellist, he was lavish with his advice. Packed with insight into the creative process, it deserves to be quoted at length, complete with the author's punctuation and idiosyncratic presentation:

I do not mean only compose, there are hundreds of other ways of developing composition-techniques besides actual writing, the chief thing is constant observation & thought for & on musical-creative matters; when you play music observe it always from the composer-standpoint, note modes of construction, develop *above all a sharp* criticism for 'musical ERFINDUNG': *inventiveness* is the seat of all musical strength, when you see forms and beauty in nature apply it in your mind to the forms and types in music, get to look on Poetry from the setters' stand-point, go for musicalness in Verse, & while reading, *always* take in the metre, rhythms and melodic lines contained therein, & when you *do* find poetry appealing to yr musical requisitions, *always* imagine it composed as you read it, continually think out *exactly* how it should be set, what type, what voices, what tempi, what *kind* of chordal type, what sort of melodic invention etc. etc. when you feel fine emotions, or sweet noble impressions or think strong thoughts, *straight-away* translate them into yr musical language, at least in thought, think out *exactly* how a composition should be to express those lovely things in their fullness.

Thus you will slowly acquire a severe self-criticism, a quick absorption of the good in others and in nature, when you ultimately proceed to actually compose, you will find you know what you want, can master yr form & expression, & are clearly conscious of what sort of stuff you need to create for a certain object. [. . .] The mistake is to compose not knowing what you want to make, to acquire the technique without feeling the necessity for it, & to get into mannerisms because you know nohow to separate yr contrasting styles. If you think in this way you will find life full of the NEED of MUSICAL EXPRESSION, all emotions will require to become compositions. So it is with me. I have already *done* my thinking (the elementary part).<sup>13</sup>

Grainger's letter was written in late September 1901, just three weeks before Rachmaninoff performed his *Russian Rhapsody* with Josef Lhévinne at the Moscow Conservatory, on October 17. If, on some level, it may be interpreted as a sign of the times, one may well ask: how many European composers at the turn of the century were receiving similar advice from their mentors? Whatever the case, it is worth noting that the *Rhapsody on Russian Themes* was written 'by arrangement' in more ways than one, and that it was informed by both musical and extra-musical experiences.

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<sup>13</sup> Percy Grainger. Letter to Herman Sandby, September 29, 1901. Quoted in John Bird. *Percy Grainger*. (New York: Oxford University Press, rev. edition 1999) 76-77.

7

RENAISSANCE REVISITED

*SIX HOLY SONNETS*

## Genesis

After completing the *Five Love Songs* it was tempting to consider writing a choral work for the *Adelaide Chamber Singers*, a group directed by my friend and colleague Carl Crossin. Having selected three of John Donne's "Holy Sonnets", my aim this time was to set the texts in a manner reminiscent of the choral traditions of the High Renaissance, albeit with contemporary overtones. "Death be not Proud", "Batter my Heart" and "This is my plays last scene" were all written and performed in 2000. Two years later, three more sonnets were added in the hope of maintaining a consistency in style after a lengthy break from compositional activity; the more recent additions, "Thou hast made me", "At the round earth's imagined corners" and "I am a little world" became the first three in this cycle of six motets. They were all composed for the *Adelaide Chamber Singers*: an established group comprising less than 20 voices, highly experienced in the art of a *capella* performance and well-versed in literature of the Renaissance and Baroque periods. My intention was to give a personal interpretation of Donne's sonnets through music, using not only traditional key centres but also temporary modes and occasional dissonance in order to reflect the subtle ambiguities of the poetry.

## Method

As with the songs, my first task was to uncover the various layers of meaning in the text. These works were also directly inspired by the poetry, but the method of composition was less spontaneous as I was now writing for unaccompanied voices.<sup>1</sup> In this case it was necessary to find musical ideas which would utilise various vocal techniques to lend characteristic colour to each setting without jeopardising the homogeneity of the cycle as a whole. This process was quite different from the method used for the *Five Love Songs*: whereas previously the relatively simple vocal line had been largely dependent on the piano accompaniment for emotional amplification, now the voices themselves were to be responsible for the entire musical outcome. It was therefore essential to find a convincing musical match for the opening lines, a melodic motif or thematic 'cell' which could be

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<sup>1</sup> The piano part is 'for rehearsal only'. Although it was tempting to compose a simplified version for the pianist, I have chosen to include as many parts as possible so that the more difficult passages can be rehearsed in detail. My justification for this is that, while competent répétiteurs have no difficulty in reading the vocal parts, some rehearsal pianists find this a rather daunting task. They are, however, usually quite capable of reducing the piano score to a harmonic outline when necessary.

developed and varied according to the text and sensibly contained within the relatively limited structure of the sonnet, or its equivalent musical form.

Although little can be gained from an in-depth analysis of these works ‘after the event’, it is worth noting that the key-signatures were a matter of secondary concern and often based on the more stable tonality arrived at in the closing stages rather than on the opening ideas.<sup>2</sup> These key-centres (C, F, F, C, C and F major respectively) give little indication of the range of tonalities presented and are not always obvious from the opening musical statements. Once the initial idea was conceived, continuity was motivated by a conscious commitment to musical word- and thought-painting; melismatic writing was restricted and contrapuntal activity reserved for those sections of the text which appeared to demand a more complex or more considered approach. There was no essential difference between the method used to compose the two groups of “Holy Sonnets”. In each case, the three works were written one after another and the ideas contained in the opening lines of the poems proved of paramount importance. With regard to any ‘programmatic’ features, musical settings of the text have been informed by the choral and vocal traditions of earlier times. However, since word- or thought-painting is not, of itself, sufficient to generate and sustain interest, it seems logical to examine these opening musical statements<sup>3</sup> in relation to the texts and to show how this material was subsequently developed.

The first line of “**Thou hast made me**” presents a paradox: a sense of wonder and confidence in the power of the Creator is immediately undermined by human frailty in the form of an almost rhetorical question, “And shall thy work decay?” The matching musical statement (see Ex. 1) was therefore intended to suggest a healthy existence (stable bass line and use of perfect 4ths and 5ths), growth and progress (an expanding *tessitura* and use of the augmented 4th) and a level of incredulity (repetition of “hast made me”, with more complex tonal implications).

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<sup>2</sup> The exceptions are No.4 “Batter my heart”, which is set in C but ends in B major, and No. 6 “This is my playes last scene”, which begins in D minor and ends in F major.

<sup>3</sup> For the sake of clarity, the motets are discussed in the order in which they were finally arranged.

## Ex. 1. “Thou hast made me”: = bars 1–7

The question that follows clearly presented an opportunity to balance this opening material with a descending phrase (see Ex. 2). The implied fear of mortality was then highlighted by embedding the words “Shall I decay” in the texture, using smaller note values to lend a sense of anxiety.

## Ex. 2. “Thou hast made me”: = bars 8–15

The phrase “Repair me now” overlaps the end of this question to emphasize the urgency of the situation. By bar 21, where the paradox is more clearly spelled out (“I run to death, and death meets me as fast”), the outer lines begin to move chromatically in contrary motion (see Ex. 3) while the inner parts spell harmonic uncertainty.

## Ex. 3. “Thou hast made me”: = bars 22–27

Here we have the usual sonnet form in which the first eight lines (Octet) describe a problem or situation, and the last six lines (Sestet) present some form of solution. This change in tone is reflected in the shift to D $\flat$  major (bars 58–62) and in the restricted use of dissonance for the latter part of the motet. Example 4 shows how closure is achieved by using a descending scale (A $\flat$  major) in the tenor line to suggest the inevitability inherent in the metaphor.



## Ex. 4. “Thou hast made me”: = bars 78–85

And Thou like A - da - ment draw mine iron beart, mine ir - on heart.

Donne’s use of the Petrarchan sonnet form was, however, notoriously inconsistent. The standard rhyming pattern *abbaabba cdecde* was often changed, and ‘enjambment’—where one line runs into another—was frequently used to heighten the emotional tension. This effectively means that formal divisions in the music, if they are genuinely text-driven, will vary from one work to the next. “I am a little world” is unusual in that there is no clear division between the Octet and Sestet. Rather, the shifts in tone occur at line 5 and again at line 10, suggesting something more like ternary form. Furthermore, after the simplicity of line 1, the second line is a rather unusual version of the iambic pentameter:

I **am** | a **lit-**tle world | made **cun-**ning-ly  
Of **E-**lements, | and an | **An-gel-**ike **spright**.<sup>4</sup>

The airy lightness of this text, combined with Donne’s contravention of the rules, suggests a level of subversive humour, so the *staccato* ‘A-ha-ha’ motif at the beginning of the piece (see Ex. 5) was subsequently used throughout the work to maintain a playful disregard for formal expectations.

## Ex. 5. “I am a little world”: = bars 1–4

I am a lit - tle world.

A - ha - ha, a - ha - ha, a - ha - ha, a ha - ha,

A - ha - ha, a - ha - ha, a - ha - ha, A - ha - ha

Corresponding with line 5 of the text, there is a change of both time- and key-signature at bar 18, but the *staccato* motif (together with the opening statement) continues its nervous intrusion (see Ex. 6) as if to acknowledge some comprehension of the complex argument which follows.

<sup>4</sup> Stressed syllables in these examples are printed in bold.

## Ex. 6. “I am a little world”: = bars 18–23

This idea is relinquished in bar 36, where it is cancelled by an emphasis on the word “weeping”; but it returns in the last section which reverts to F major (bar 45), and except for bars 66–68 it characterises the musical texture right until the end (see Ex. 7).

## Ex. 7. “I am a little world”: = bars 67–70

This sonnet, with its compressed fire and water symbolism, appears to celebrate the very essence of metaphysical poetry: the power of metaphor literally triumphs over the very adversity which it describes. A serious treatment of the text with added commentary in the form of a ‘laughing’ motif therefore seemed an appropriate solution.

By contrast, “**At the round earth’s imagined corners**” conforms to the regular Petrarchan scheme of Octet followed by Sestet, and here the imagery is grounded in Donne’s realities, both sacred and secular. In the first eight lines the mystery of resurrection and the authenticity of death are explored visually, side by side, and what follows is an extremely polite and well-considered prayer (“Teach me how to repent . . .”). Here the opening line of the poem suggests a sort of hovering between the ethereal and the actual, something which I tried to capture by staggering the entries (see Ex. 8), layering the text and using enigmatic harmonies which either avoid or thinly disguise functional progression.

## Ex. 8. “At the Round Earth’s imagined corners”: = bars 1–4

At the round earth's *i-mag-ined cor - ners,*  
 At the round earth's *i-mag ined, i - mag ined cor - ners.*

The idea of ‘floating’ harmony was easily expanded in the body of the work and led eventually to a sequence involving wavering *portamenti* in the alto and tenor lines at the beginning of the Sestet (bars 27–38), a texture intended to create ‘other-worldly’ associations while at the same time suggesting the tenuous nature of prayer itself. The opening material returns in bar 40 with the words “here on this lowly ground”, this being spatially opposite to “the round earth’s imagined corners”. The work is brought to a close by the use of a drawn-out perfect cadence (see Ex. 9) which was—almost against my better judgement—totally dictated by the almost obsequious tone at the end of the Sestet.

## Ex. 9. “At the Round Earth’s imagined corners”: = bars 45–50

As if thou hadst sealed my par don with thy blood.  
 As if thou hadst sealed my par - don sealed my par - don with thy blood.

Although it uses the Petrarchan form, “**Batter my Heart**” might be considered ‘rough’ in terms of its rhythmic pattern. In the first four lines Donne uses strategic metrical variation of the iambic pentameter, as well as the technique of enjambment (lines 3–4) in order to draw attention to the contrast between his present experience of God (line 2) and his fervent desire for correction (line 4):

**Bat-ter** | my heart | three-per-| soned God; | for you  
 As yet | but knock, | breathe, shine | and seek | to mend;  
 That I | may rise | and stand, | o’er-throw | me, and bend  
 Your force | to break, | blow, burn | and make | me new.

It would be difficult to read this sonnet without being affected—informed, even—by the unusually strong rhythms of these opening lines. However, whereas in the text the parallel rhythm of lines 2 and 4 actually underlines the contrast noted above, it was felt that a musical version which used identical rhythms would be in danger of doing exactly the

opposite: in fact, it might dull the sense and weaken the meaning considerably.<sup>5</sup> Having begun with an introductory repetition of single consonants, syllables and finally words, three main ideas (see Ex. 10) were already contained in the setting of the first line.

**Ex. 10. “Batter my heart”: Thematic material**

The musical score for Ex. 10 is presented in two staves (treble and bass clef) with a 3/4 time signature. It is divided into three sections:

- 1. Repeated notes:** The first section features a series of repeated notes in the treble clef: B - b - b - b - b - b - b - b - b - a - b - a - b - a - b - a - b - a. The bass clef has a few notes: t - t - t - t.
- 2. Triadic cell:** The second section is labeled "Bat-ter my heart," and shows a triadic cell in the treble clef.
- 3. Conjunct movement:** The third section is labeled "Three per-soned God;" and shows a conjunct movement in the treble clef.

Repeated notes are also contained in the second and third excerpts of Example 10, and clearly a triadic cell and conjunct movement are both capable of expansion. Thus it was possible to ‘compare’ lines 2 and 4 musically by making the first one more elastic (see Ex. 11), using repeated notes, augmentation of an inverted form of the triad and musical ‘adaptation’ of the text.

**Ex. 11. “Batter my heart”: = bars 14–16**

The musical score for Ex. 11 shows three measures of music. The lyrics are: "You as yet but knock, You as yet breathe, You as yet shine,". The melody is characterized by repeated notes and a conjunct movement.

The setting of line 4 (see Ex. 12) echoes more closely the rhythm of the words and a perfect cadence serves to mark the end of the sentence, because in this case there is a clear division between the first and second quatrain.

**Ex. 12. “Batter my heart”: = bars 21–24**

The musical score for Ex. 12 shows four measures of music. The lyrics are: "And bend your force to break, blow, burn and make me new." The melody is characterized by repeated notes and a conjunct movement.

Most of the work is directly driven by the ideas illustrated above (see Ex. 10) although they are sometimes used in a different order (see Ex. 13).

<sup>5</sup> This is an interesting reversal of the process adopted in the previous sonnet, where opposites—the hypothetical “round earth’s imagined corners” and the very real “here on this lowly ground”—were given almost identical musical treatment.

## Ex. 13. “Batter my heart”: = bars 30–33

Rea-son your Vice - roy in me, me should de - fend. Me should de - fend.

Closure was achieved by using the triadic motif for a rather blatant musical description of the word “ravish” in the last line (bar 71, *poco portamente*), and resolution was attained in the sweetness of a major 7th with added 6th in the rather remote key of B major.

“Death be not proud” was the first of the cycle to be composed. Long before any of the other sonnets were chosen, I had entertained the thought that the common school-yard chant ‘Naa—Naa—na-Naa—Naa—’ might play a part in its musical realisation, so it is not surprising that the work opens with this very idea (see Ex. 14) as a gentle introduction.

## Ex. 14. “Death be not proud”: = bars 1–5

Na na na na Na Na na na na Na na na na

Having thus established the general tone of the whole poem, the next step was to find a way to reflect Donne’s preoccupation with the difference between violent death, with all its morbid connotations, and peaceful death, as in sleep. To this end, dissonance and consonance were constantly juxtaposed, so that much of the melodic material emerged directly from the chords themselves, the texture being in this case primarily homophonic. In the first section there is a temporary tonicisation of various keys in relatively quick succession either through the use of real dominants or their tritone substitutes or simply as an outcome of voice-leading. Within the first 16 bars, we move from the instability of augmented triads (bars 1–5) through parallel dominant 9ths (bar 6), a briefly tonicised F# major (bar 9), the suggestion of B $\flat$  minor (bar 11) and A $\flat$  minor (bar 12), to an expanded plagal cadence in G major (bars 16–17). After settling comfortably in E major at the end of the Octet (bars 27–30), the persistent ‘Naa—Na—na-Naa—Naa—’ motif is reinstated to accompany the dense imagery contained in lines 9–10 (see Ex. 15).

## Ex. 15. “Death be not proud”: = bars 31–34

Thou art slave to Fate, Chance kings and des-per-ate men

Na na na na na Na na na na na

Although it was not consciously planned, the dissonant treatment of the word “Death” at the beginning (bar 7) is negated in the final bars by the increasing level of consonance in the last five chords which deliver the words “death, thou shalt die”. In similar vein, and again through direct engagement with the text, the ‘mocking’ motif is gradually overtaken and erased by the imagery in lines 11–12 (bars 39–44), only to mutate into something much more powerful (see Ex. 16), a variation of which reappears with the words “we wake eternally”.

## Ex. 16. “Death be not proud”: = bars 45–50

One short sleep past, we wake e - ter - nal - ly, And death shall be no more

we wake e - ter - nal - ly we wake e ter nal - ly

Just as Donne, after all, has the last laugh, it was hoped that the musical transformation of this simple phrase might lend some weight to the work as a whole.

Of the six motets, “This is my playes last scene” is the most contrapuntal, perhaps the most dramatic in style. The poem’s visual imagery, being eminently conducive to musical elaboration, at once initiated a style reminiscent of the early 17th century madrigal, at times with Monteverdian overtones. The work begins squarely in D minor with a dominant pedal point which never resolves: rather, it is interrupted in bar 11 (see Ex. 17) by a sudden dissonance describing “gluttonous death”.

## Ex. 17. “This is my playes last scene”: = bars 7–11

My span's last inch, my min-utes la - test point, \_\_\_\_\_ death

Ah, my race hath this last pace last inch last \_\_\_\_\_ point, And glut-nous death will in-stant-ly un-joynt,

What follows suggests the dominant of E minor; but then a B major chord in bar 15 leads directly to G major for the words “but I shall sleep a space” (see Ex. 18) and a further chromatic shift occurs two bars later.

Ex. 18. “This is my plays last scene”: = bars 15–17

And I shall sleep a space, But my ev-er wak-ing part shall see that face.

After the  $\text{I}\frac{1}{2}$  in B $\flat$  major, the parallel mode is introduced to accommodate the fear which “already shakes my every joint”; this is depicted more literally in bars 18–22.

The opening of the Sestet begins with an echo of bar 15, but this time there are no sudden harmonic twists. Instead, a lyrical passage (see Ex. 19) utilises the melodic material in a manner intended to suggest a temporary glimpse of Paradise.

Ex. 19. “This is my plays last scene”: = bars 22–25

Then as my soule, to heav'n, her first seat, as my soul to heav'n— takes flight, my soule to heav'n takes flight to her first seat takes flight

Then as my soul takes flight, my soul takes flight

In this work, the use of pedal points—evident from the outset—plays a significant role in the compositional process. Repeated notes are transformed into thematic material in bar 7 and afforded still higher melodic status in bar 15. By bar 22 they also double as integral chord factors in a series of altered dominants, the tonal implications of which are immediately realized in bar 23 (still over a dominant bass). In bar 34, functioning partly as an anacrusis, they become useful in delivering the unison imperative “Impute me righteous”. Finally, in the closing bars, their dual function as both melody and bass line serves to stabilise both melodic and harmonic activity, thus bringing the work—and the whole cycle—to a purposefully peaceful and deliberately conventional close.

## Performance and Revision

The cycle was not presented in its entirety until November 2003. Two performances took place on successive nights (the second of which was recorded) and another one two weeks later at a Lunch Hour Concert in Elder Hall.<sup>6</sup> One of the surprises associated with the rehearsal and performance of the *Six Holy Sonnets* was the fact that the cycle as a whole proved technically more demanding for the singers than many other works which are actually much more ‘contemporary’ in style. In addition, when the works were first written I held the view that slower *tempi* were probably more appropriate, whereas by now I have come to accept the fact that some of the motets sound more convincing at a slightly faster pace.<sup>7</sup> While much of the revision has been ‘cosmetic’ rather than musically substantial, it has been directly influenced by discussions with the conductor, Carl Crossin, and by a (subjective) evaluation of the degree to which the live performances fell short of my ‘ideal’ version through lack of clear instruction in the score. Herein, however, lies an intriguing enigma: to what extent was my own ‘ideal’ influenced by what had already been achieved in performance? And to what extent have I continued to ‘compose’ the works in the light of these first interpretations?

“**Thou hast made me**” was originally written in 6/4 with the tempo indication *Lento* ♩=140, a marking which now appears quite incongruous, although it does indicate an intentional emphasis on slow subdivision of the dotted minims. Eventually it became clear that a 6/8 time signature would be more appropriate as the notation is more familiar, and ♩=46 is a more conventional indication of the slow tempo. Other notational changes relate to breathing and articulation. For example, when the various voices do not deliver the text in unison, it was important to check note values in the parallel parts in order to provide clear definition and textual clarity. It became obvious that for long phrases ending with a comma, long notes would need to be cut short, whereas rests would allow the singers to breathe comfortably. At other times rests might be added to encourage the articulation of

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<sup>6</sup> The recording of the performance in Elder Hall is included in Volume Three. Although it represents an earlier version of the work than that found in Volume One, the changes are minimal, as will be apparent from the following discussion.

<sup>7</sup> There is an interesting parallel in the fact that some of the recorded interpretations of piano works by the composers themselves (for example, Rachmaninoff, Ravel and Prokofiev) are considerably slower and often more ‘angular’ than those we have come to regard as more ‘definitive’. Whereas I previously regarded this as a rather strange phenomenon, I now understand it as part of the process whereby new compositions gradually take on a life of their own as ‘ownership’ is transferred to the performer.



certain consonants or create an extra layer of counterpoint within the vocal texture. In the following example (see Fig. 1) the bland, steady duplets seem to counteract the effect of the staggered text.

Fig. 1. “Thou has made me”, v.1: = bars 22–27

The musical score for Fig. 1 consists of two staves, A2 (Alto) and T (Tenor), in a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are: "I runne to death, I runne to death, I runne as fast, meets me as fast,". The A2 part features a series of duplets (marked with a '2' over a bracket) over the words "runne", "death", "runne", "death", "runne", "as", "fast", "meets", "me", and "as". The T part also features duplets over the words "run", "to", "death", "run", "to", "death", "run", "to", "death", "as", "fast", "meets", "me", and "as".

By contrast, the final version (see Fig. 2) appears to heighten the tension and underline the meaning.

Fig. 2. “Thou has made me”: = bars 22–27

The musical score for Fig. 2 consists of two staves, A2 (Alto) and T (Tenor), in a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics are: "I runne to death, I run to death, I run as fast, meets me as fast,". The A2 part starts with a fermata over the first note, followed by duplets (marked with a '2' over a bracket) over the words "runne", "to", "death", "run", "to", "death", "run", "as", "fast", "meets", "me", and "as". The T part also features duplets over the words "run", "to", "death", "run", "to", "death", "run", "to", "death", "as", "fast", "meets", "me", and "as".

Such adjustments were made throughout the cycle in order to achieve more colour and precision while at the same time making the score more user-friendly. Eventually it became clear that, in terms of performance psychology, even the graphic effect of such changes should not be underestimated.

There were also difficulties with the time-signature in “I am a little world”, which was originally written in 5/4 and 9/4 with the metronome marking  $\text{♩} = 132$ . Here it was difficult for the conductor to make ‘beating’ decisions to help the singers with the grouping of 5 (or 9) even crotchets, a problem which was largely solved by rewriting the first section in 5/8, where the quavers could be beamed according to the required configuration. In this instance, the metronome mark was later changed to  $\text{♩} = 144$ . The second section beginning at bar 18 was originally written in 9/4, in a misguided attempt to suggest longer lines and drive the argument forward; however, because the “a-ha” motif is constantly used as punctuation in various parts, the use of 3/8 is undoubtedly easier for the singers to follow and should therefore reduce the risk of mistiming. We need only consider the problems

associated with bars 30–35—where the chromatic part-writing is already quite demanding (see Fig. 3)—to understand that the original version was unnecessarily ambiguous.

Fig. 3. “I am a little world”, v. 1: = bars 30–35

The musical score for Figure 3 consists of six staves, each with a vocal line and lyrics. The staves are labeled S1, S2, A1, A2, T., and B. The lyrics are: "Powre new seas in mine eyes That so I might drowne\_ my world with my lands, a - ha, a - ha, I might drowne\_ my world\_ with my". The score shows chromatic part-writing and rhythmic ambiguity in the original version, with the final version using a hemiola to clarify the rhythm.

The upper parts suggest dividing the bar into three dotted minims (or beating in three), whereas the lower parts indicate a dotted minim followed by three minims (or beating in two). With the note values halved and barlines appearing on a more regular basis, the final version appears to make the working *hemiola* clearer and helps to minimise the risks associated with the performance of this passage.

This motet also presented another problem: three quite distinct forms of vocal articulation had been imagined, only two of which had been clearly realised in the score. The draft version contained ‘*staccato*’ markings not only for the “a-ha-ha” motif but also for most of the accompanying material where the vocal line is repeatedly interrupted by rests. Whereas the opening melody was marked ‘*leggiero*’, at bar 18 I had tried to indicate a change by using the word ‘*espressivo*’. However, these instructions were not clear enough for the choir to achieve the (albeit subtle) contrasts in texture that were envisaged. In the final version, ‘*staccato*’ markings are reserved solely for the “a-ha-ha” motif. The opening statement, and all the writing which involves text (whether melodic, harmonic or rhythmic in character), is marked ‘*leggiero, poco marcato*’, whereas the contrasting material which enters at bar 18 is marked ‘*legato espressivo*’. Thus it is hoped that the score now

indicates more clearly the three types of articulation required at various points throughout the work. Although this might appear fussy in the extreme, the use of articulation can actually help the listener to comprehend and enjoy the more formal aspects of any work—however short—and is therefore worth careful consideration by the composer.

Whatever the chosen key-signature, “At the round earth’s imagined corners” would always have presented challenges with regard to the notation of pitch. While all of the motets have undergone some modification by the use of enharmonic equivalents, this one has been tampered with more than the others. Decisions were often hard to reach and were sometimes even reversed several times before a passage “settled”, as it were, into legibility. Here again, the original time signature of 9/4 was changed to 9/8, and the metronome marking increased from  $\text{♩} = 96$  to  $\text{♩} = 38$ . By quoting the opening bars it is possible to show what effect these combined changes might have on the choristers. In the first version (see Fig. 4), the opening interval of a diminished 4th was particularly uninviting.

Fig. 4. “At the round earth’s imagined corners”, v. 1: = bars 1–4

In the final version it is clear that, despite a significant increase in the number of accidentals, major 3rds and perfect 4ths prevail.

There is perhaps an added advantage in the fact that the halved note values lend an appropriate lightness to the score, whereas the crotchets and minims in the draft version suggest an unwanted feeling of gravity. Minor improvements also included a revision of text for the imitation of trumpets in bar 9, where “Pah, pah, p-p-p trumpets” was rewritten as “Pah, Pah, pa-pa-pa trumpets” to express the voicing of each syllable. At bar 11 an added *Poco più mosso* indicates that from here on a little more movement is desirable, with

*Tempo I* returning after the pause in bar 39. Finally, bar 16 was rewritten (see Figs. 5 and 6) to eliminate an unnecessarily complex rhythmic problem that would have wasted valuable time in rehearsal had it not been resolved by the conductor’s proposal for a creative compromise.

Fig. 5. “At the round”, v. 1: = bar 16

Fig. 6. “At the round earth’s”: = bar 16

The issue at stake here was the triplet figure in the Baritone part which, in the first version (Fig. 5), was not only hurried but rather off-putting for those engaged in the two-against-three rhythms. By using a slower rhythm for the word “infinities”—one which would align precisely with the soprano parts—the result is not only more coherent but much easier to achieve (see Fig. 6).<sup>8</sup> There seems little point in insisting on rhythmic complexity which, in the long run, does nothing to enhance the work and serves only to demoralise the performers. In fact, the ability to avoid such pitfalls looms as one of the greatest challenges in writing choral music.

The monotonous repetition of *staccato* crotchets in 5/4 time proved a better match for the text of “**Batter my Heart**”, where single letters were originally used as text in the opening stages of the first and final sections. An explanatory footnote suggesting the use of the phonetic ‘ə’—as in ‘bə, tə’ etc.—was later added to avoid confusion. The first draft had included a very awkward passage in which the second sopranos and altos doubled the firsts

<sup>8</sup> This effect could actually be disguised by adding a *tenuto* accent over the second syllable of “in-fi-ni-ties”.



Fig. 9. “This is my playes. . .”, v. 1: = bars 41–43

The musical score for Figure 9 consists of seven staves, each representing a different voice part. The lyrics are: "flesh, and de vil." The staves are labeled S1, S2, A1, A2, T., Bar., and B. The lyrics are written below the notes on each staff. The music is in a 4/4 time signature and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The lyrics are: "flesh, and de vil." The notes are: S1: G4, A4, B4, G4; S2: G4, A4, B4, G4; A1: G4, A4, B4, G4; A2: G4, A4, B4, G4; T.: G4, A4, B4, G4; Bar.: G4, A4, B4, G4; B.: G4, A4, B4, G4.

Various ideas were contemplated, including one that would have reduced the last note to a quaver in all voices except the lowest two; these would have simultaneously pronounced the word “devil” in a  $\text{♩}$  rhythm, followed by a quaver rest. Rhythmically, this was not entirely satisfactory and after a good deal of hesitation I eventually settled on the solution which appears in Volume One, where three of the seven parts pronounce the word more clearly, but the overall rhythmic pattern remains undisturbed. In this final version it is hoped that the idea of parting, only with difficulty, from “the world, the flesh and devil” is more successfully captured.

In an article entitled “Once good; twice better”, Alain de Botton writes: “it is a particularly romantic myth that leads us to suppose that artists could never improve what they previously delivered to the world.”<sup>9</sup> However, he also points to the dangers of reworking material from a new artistic stance, and cites Henry James as an example:

Writer Compton Mackenzie recalled James telling him: ‘I wasted months of labour upon the thankless, the sterile, the preposterous, the monstrous task of revision. There is not an hour of such labour that I have not regretted since.’ . . . . . Though very few writers revise their work directly, it is perhaps true that all writers are involved in revising themselves, for they do so whenever they publish new work. A new book is always an attempt to atone for the faults of a previous one; despite the merits of the occasional rewrite, the best way to revise any work of art may be just to move on and create something new.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Alain de Botton. “Once good; twice better”. *Weekend Australian* 25-26 March, 2006: Review 40.

<sup>10</sup> Botton 40.

In revising these works after such a long period of time, I have been acutely aware of this problem and therefore loathe to make any more radical changes lest the works take on an altogether different character—or one which might reflect a ‘revised’ self. The main purpose of the exercise was to acquire a better understanding of the principles of good choral writing and to make the works clearer and more accessible to performers and conductors alike.

### Comparative Exploration

As my intention was to set these texts “in a manner reminiscent of the traditions of the High Renaissance”, it is relevant at this point to examine a small section of *a capella* writing by Monteverdi. In addition, since reference was made in Chapter One to a number of other settings of poems by John Donne, a brief discussion of four songs by Benjamin Britten is included here. Although the songs might also have been dealt with in the first chapter, my aim now is to show how a musician of Britten’s calibre responded to identical texts and to indicate the enormously significant role of the piano accompaniment in creating a variety of moods to underpin Donne’s arguments in relation to spiritual dilemma. Writing for unaccompanied choir, however, presents quite a different challenge, so the techniques used by each of these composers provide a useful backdrop to the *Six Holy Sonnets*.

Written in 1610 and published in 1614, a year after he arrived in Venice, Monteverdi’s *Sixth Book of Madrigals for Five Voices* contains music which is extremely powerful. The second of the two laments—described by one writer as “large-scale emotional madrigal cycles”<sup>11</sup>—is the *Sestina: Lagrime d’amante al sepolcro dell’amante*, a setting of a poem by Scipione Agnelli in which the shepherd Glauco laments the loss of his beloved nymph, Corinna. There is general agreement among Monteverdi scholars that this particular cycle, in which all the settings deal with a sense of loss, is heavily influenced by the composer’s personal grief. As John Whenham explains:

Monteverdi’s wife, the singer Claudia Cattaneo, died in September 1607, shortly before Monteverdi was to begin work on . . . his contributions to the wedding festivities [for the Duke of Gonzaga]. To make matters worse, the singer Caterina

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<sup>11</sup> Paolo Fabbri. *Monteverdi*. Trans. Tim Carter. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 141.

Martinelli. . . who was to have sung the title role of Arianna, died on 7 March 1608 at the tragically early age of eighteen.<sup>12</sup>

While there is no need to explain how Monteverdi was experimenting in fruitful ways with the madrigalian traditions of the time, it is relevant to note that his selection of texts for this book confirmed his interest in “the large-scale articulation of musical form”.<sup>13</sup> The ‘*Sestina*’ was a poem of six 6-line verses in which the same words come at the end of the lines, in various permutations, in each verse. In an erudite Chapter on “Artusi, Monteverdi and the Poetics of Modern Music”, Tim Carter quotes from (and paraphrases) various theorists, stating that “to ‘express’ (*esprimere*) a madrigal, motet, sonnet, or other kind of poetry, the musician must ‘proceed imitating the affections with the harmony’”.<sup>14</sup> However, in his final paragraph he expresses some frustration with the source materials by asking a number of pertinent questions before reaching an inevitable conclusion:

Does the composer imitate affections, sentiments, or words? Does music express texts, conceits or affections? What is imitation, what is expression, and how are they connected? What is the relationship between text, word, conceit, sentiment and affection? . . . . Monteverdi’s own ‘natural path to imitation’ was a path through a terminological and philosophical minefield, as his later Venetian music was to prove.<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, whatever the historical background has to offer, informed scholarship is no substitute for a serious study of the music. In Monteverdi’s lament we find that his use of contrapuntal techniques is also directly subservient to the poetry. The first verse begins with the lines: “*Incenerite spoglie, avara tomba / Fatta del mio bel Sol terreno Cielo*” (Remains reduced to ashes, miserly tomb become the earthly sky of my sweet sun).<sup>16</sup> The musical setting begins in the modal equivalent of E minor (See Fig. 10) with the complete minor triad suggesting something solid and sepulchral, and eventually rises to the dominant B major for the word “*cielo*” (sky).

<sup>12</sup> John Whenham. Notes to *Il Sesto Libro de Madrigal 1614*. The Consort of Musicke, dir. Anthony Rooley. CD (Virgin Classics 0777 7596052 5) 6.

<sup>13</sup> Fabbri 140.

<sup>14</sup> Tim Carter. *Monteverdi and his Contemporaries*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000) 193.

<sup>15</sup> Carter 194.

<sup>16</sup> English translations are by Avril Bardoni and are taken from the Notes to the CD cited in fn.11.



Fig. 10. Monteverdi *Sestina*: bars 1–14<sup>17</sup>

**SESTINA**  
*Lagime d'Amante al Sepolcro dell'Amato* Claudio Monteverdi

The musical score for bars 1–14 of Monteverdi's *Sestina* is presented for five voices: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "In ce-ne-ri - te spo - glie, a - va - ra tom - ba, fat - ta del mi - o bel sol, ter - re - no cie - lo. Ahi las - so, Ahi las - so, re - no cie - lo Ahi las - so, ahi sol, ter - re - no cie - lo." The score shows staggered entries for each voice part, with the Soprano 1 part starting first, followed by the other voices. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and a final cadence at the end of the section.

Following the same ‘musical’ rationale, line 3—“*Ahi lasso, i’ vegno ad inchinarvi in terra*” (alas, I kneel before you on the ground)—begins with falling melodic intervals for the expressive “*ahi lasso*”, where the staggered entries communicate a ‘sighing’ effect, and then the *tessitura* descends with quasi-pictorial ramifications (see Fig. 11) until the sopranos reach a low B for the word “*terra*”.

Fig. 11. Monteverdi *Sestina*: bars 20–27

The musical score for bars 20–27 of Monteverdi's *Sestina* is presented for five voices: Soprano 1 (S1), Soprano 2 (S2), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "ve - gnoad in chi - nar - vi, i' ve - gnoad in chi - nar - vi in ter - ra. Con voi chius' è'l mio cor' a mar - mi in se - no. Con voi chius' è'l miocor' a mar - mi in se - no. Con voi chius' è'l miocor' a mar - mi in se - no. i' ve - gnoad in chi - nar - vi in ter - ra. Con voi chius' è'l miocor' a mar - mi in se - no. vi in - tar - ra." The score shows staggered entries for each voice part, with the Soprano 1 part starting first, followed by the other voices. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and a final cadence at the end of the section.

Here we can also see that for line 4 of the text—“*Con voi chius' è'l mio cor' a marmini in seno*” (My heart is in there with you, enclosed by marble)—the music returns to the static

<sup>17</sup> The examples are taken from a draft performance edition which is currently being prepared by Carl Crossin. This is based on the edition by Malipiero published in 1941-2.



Thus the work continues, the setting of all six verses replete with meticulous word-painting by means of rhythmic variation, dynamic shading, contrasting textures, and a contrapuntal ingenuity which effectively simulates complex harmonic progression. With early music of this nature, it might be argued that such subtleties become truly audible only if one has made a detailed study of the score, and—perhaps especially—if one understands the original Italian text. But on another level, there is a certain rhythmic vitality and stylistic assurance in the setting of the text which is immediately recognisable. Fragile though it might be, it is this quality, this straightforward but highly instinctive setting of words to music which I hoped might inform my own writing when I began work on the *Six Holy Sonnets*.

Turning now to Benjamin Britten, it is fortunate that his song cycle *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* was completely unknown to me at the time of writing because it includes four of the same sonnets. The style could easily be described as ‘twistonal’, and there is a wealth of word-painting in which the piano part plays the main role. The musical ideas are simple, and there can be no doubt that they are the result of—or directly associated with—Britten’s remarkable pianistic abilities. Though often quite short in duration, these songs might almost be described as passionate piano solos with vocal accompaniment were it not for the fact that it is the text itself which drives the harmonic content and progression. They are discussed here in the order in which they appear in Britten’s cycle.

“**Batter my Heart**” (No. 2, duration 2' 15")<sup>18</sup> begins in C minor with a triplet *staccato* ‘battering’ motif which is repeated in quick succession in alternate registers (see Fig. 14) and persists throughout almost the entire song. This in turn engenders a 4-note melodic cell (clearly visible in bar 1) which is used as a basis for the vocal line, while both melody and accompaniment are harmonically twisted to underline the meaning of the text at any given point.

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<sup>18</sup> The duration of each song (in brackets) is taken from a recording by the composer and Peter Pears.

Fig. 14. Britten “Batter my Heart”: bars 1–4<sup>19</sup>

The musical score for Figure 14 shows the first four bars of the song. The voice part is in a high register, with lyrics: "Bat-ter my heart, three per-sond God; for, you An yet but knoeke, breathe, shine, and". The piano accompaniment features a driving, rhythmic pattern in the right hand and a more active bass line in the left hand. The tempo is marked "Presto agitato" with a metronome marking of 160, and the dynamics are "f".

In diatonic terms there is a strong emphasis on (unresolved) dominant harmony, but already in bar 5 there is a switch to the parallel mode (C major) for the words “seeke to mend”. From bar 12 the text continually drives the subtle shifts in key-centre: “I like an usurpt towne to another due” sets off a rising sequence which moves chromatically to suggest E minor (“labour to admit you”), F minor and perhaps a fleeting D $\flat$  major (“but, Oh,”) before settling again on the dominant of C minor (“to no end”). The setting of “but he is captived and proves weake or untrue” reveals an obviously intuitive use of word-painting: the rising 4th is at first postponed by the singer’s repetition of a B $\natural$  (see Fig. 15) and then transformed into an augmented 4th for the word “untrue” (B minor).

Fig. 15. Britten “Batter my Heart”: bars 21–22

The musical score for Figure 15 shows bars 21 and 22. The voice part has lyrics: "But is cap-tiv'd, and proves weake..... or un-true.....". The piano accompaniment continues with a driving pattern, marked "sempre più f".

The opening of the Sestet clearly demands a sudden change in tone, but whereas I chose at this point to soften the harmonic intensity by introducing a note of sentimentality, Britten does exactly the opposite: the phrase “Yet dearly I love you and would be loved faine” is realised as a passionate declaration, using a three-fold version of the melodic cell (see Fig. 16) punctuated by four *fortissimo* F $\sharp$ <sup>7</sup> chords in the piano accompaniment.

<sup>19</sup> Benjamin Britten. *The Holy Sonnets of John Donne* Op. 35. (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1946).

Fig. 16. Britten “Batter my Heart”: bars 23–26

Figure 16 shows the musical score for bars 23–26 of Britten's "Batter my Heart". The vocal line (top staff) begins with a fermata, followed by the lyrics "Yet deare-ly I love..... you and would be lov-ed faine,". The piano accompaniment (bottom two staves) features a triplet figure in the right hand and a chromatic arpeggiated figure in the left hand. Dynamics include *ff* and piano markings.

This is superbly balanced by a relatively sudden *pianissimo* (see Fig. 17) and the use of inversion in the vocal line for the words “but am betroth’d unto your enemy”—the only time in the song where this occurs—before the accompaniment wends its way upwards to settle in C natural minor for the beginning of the last section.

Fig. 17. Britten “Batter my Heart”: bars 27–29

Figure 17 shows the musical score for bars 27–29 of Britten's "Batter my Heart". The vocal line (top staff) includes the lyrics "But am be-troth'd un-to your en-e-mie:". The piano accompaniment (bottom two staves) features a triplet figure in the right hand and a chromatic arpeggiated figure in the left hand. Dynamics include *pp* and piano markings.

At this point the triplet figure is taken over by the right hand and, along with the vocal line, continues its chromatic roving while the left hand delivers an arpeggiated C minor 7 chord (see Fig. 18), providing a tonic pedal point which remains in the ear until the end of the song.

Fig. 18. Britten “Batter my Heart”: bars 30–31

Figure 18 shows the musical score for bars 30–31 of Britten's "Batter my Heart". The vocal line (top staff) includes the lyrics "Di- vorce mee, un- tie, or". The piano accompaniment (bottom two staves) features a triplet figure in the right hand and a chromatic arpeggiated figure in the left hand. Dynamics include *pp cresc. poco a poco* markings.

Britten also succumbs to the temptation of melismatic treatment for the word “ravis”, but whereas I chose to end the melodic line on the major 6th of a B major 7 chord, he allows the singer—at last—to complete the descending diatonic scale fragment in the vocal line using rhythmic augmentation (see Fig. 19) and ending squarely on the tonic C.<sup>20</sup>

Fig. 19. Britten “Batter my Heart”: bars 38–44

It should be clear from these examples that Britten uses one text-based musical metaphor—in this case, the ‘battering’ motif—as a unifying device throughout the song. Thus the consistent texture serves as a general frame of reference while deviations from the key centre, melodic repetition and/or augmentation are used to express additional subtleties in the emotional content.

In “At the round earth’s imagined corners” (No. 7, duration 2' 30"), three basic ideas provide the impetus and backbone for the whole song: a simple ‘trumpet’ motif, a quintuplet (‘circular’) melodic cell, and a *tremolo* figure, or atmospheric ‘fill’ (see Fig. 20). Set in D major with Lydian overtones, the first line clearly indicates a musical association with brass instruments both harmonically (piano LH) and melodically (vocal line).

<sup>20</sup> Another interesting point is that there is a similar treatment of the word “Oh” in bar 16, where Britten uses descending quavers from F natural minor (F-E<sup>b</sup>-D<sup>b</sup>-C-B<sup>b</sup>-F) in a  $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$  rhythm, but the key-centre is not defined: in a way, this makes the ending even more convincing.

Fig. 20. Britten “At the round earth’s. . .”: bars 1–2

Largamente e maestoso (♩ = 40)

VOICE  
At the round earth's im - a - gla'd cor-ners, blow Your trumpets,

PIANO  
*p sempre*

After 6 bars of D major/Lydian there is a sudden switch to A major/Lydian for 2 bars (see Fig. 21) and it is against this simple tonic-dominant backdrop that the following drama—“All whom warre, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,/ Despaire, law chance hath slaine”—unfolds.

Fig. 21. Britten “At the round earth’s. . .”: bars 9–13

*poco a poco cresc.*

warre, dearth, age, a - gues, ..... ty-ran-nies, .. Despaire, law, chance hath slaine, and

*poco a poco cresc.*

you whose eyes Shall be - hold ..... God ..... and

*f sempre più*

Here the key-centres move rapidly from A major through B $\flat$ , B and C $\sharp$  major with destabilising dissonance before returning to the tonic D, and there are also several changes of time-signature (5/4 : 3/4 : 4/4 : 2/4) signifying, as it were, the insecurity of human existence. Then, after a short piano interlude, the Sestet begins with a contrast in dynamics (now *pianissimo*) and a complete change in colour. Here Britten uses the same material but in the lower register (see Fig. 22), with the ‘trumpet’ motif now muted by the right hand in the bass clef, and the tremolo figure a foreboding rumble deep in the bass.

Fig. 22. Britten “At the round earth’s. . .”: bars 18–21

The musical score for Figure 22 consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line (treble clef) and piano accompaniment (bass clef). The vocal line has lyrics: "But let them" above the staff. The piano part features a complex texture with a tremolo in the right hand and a more active bass line. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics: "sleepe, Lord ..... and mee mourne a - space, For, if a -". The piano accompaniment continues with similar textures. Dynamics include *pp* and *pp ma marc.*

The small ‘circular’ cell referred to above is expanded in the piano part to form decorative whirling figures which break up the sustained *tremolo* and add interest to the accompaniment. Not until the end do we see it augmented (bar 28), and it is interesting to note that Britten also seems to have noticed a change in tone at the end of the sonnet. Whereas the intimacy of the final lines<sup>21</sup> had caused me to ‘down tools’ and use a long and overtly conventional perfect cadence, Britten makes an even bolder decision by allowing the pianist to retire gracefully (see Fig. 23), leaving the singer to complete his prayer alone.

Fig. 23. Britten “At the round earth’s. . .”: bars 28–32

The musical score for Figure 23 consists of two systems. The first system shows the vocal line (treble clef) and piano accompaniment (bass clef). The vocal line has lyrics: "Teach me how to re - pent;". The piano part features a *dim.* dynamic and a *sva bassa* marking. The second system continues the vocal line with lyrics: "for that's as good As if thou hadst seal'd my par - don,.. with thy blood." The piano accompaniment continues with similar textures. Dynamics include *dim.* and *con espansione*. The score ends with a double bar line and a small asterisk.

There is, however, a definite finality here in his use of the Lydian and major scales, and the rhythmic emphasis on  $\hat{1}-\hat{5}-\hat{2}-\hat{1}$  suggests nothing less than complete closure in its simplest form.

<sup>21</sup> Teach me how to repent; for that's as good/ As if Thou hadst seal'd my pardon, with thy blood.



The shortest song in this group, “Thou hast made me” (No. 8, duration 1' 30") begins in E $\flat$  minor with a 15-bar introduction which can only be described as a fast, ‘running’ motif (see Fig. 24) taken from the phrase “I runne to death, and death meets me as fast”.

Fig. 24. Britten “Thou hast made me”: bars 1-4

While this continues helter-skelter almost uninterrupted throughout, the vocal line maintains steady crotchets and minims; stability and confidence are realised by the use of repeated notes, and doubts are represented by descending scale fragments, the first of which appears in bar 19 (see Fig. 25), where the opening words are immediately undermined by an unstable incomplete dominant minor 9th.

Fig. 25. Britten “Thou hast made me”: bars 15-19

Figure 26 shows that, as in my own version, repeated notes are used for the setting of “I dare not move. . .”.

Fig. 26. Britten “Thou hast made me”: bars 30-34

The following section is formally marked in the vocal line by the introduction of dotted rhythms, leaps, and rising scales (see Fig. 27)—quite the opposite of what has gone before:

Fig. 27. Britten “Thou hast made me”: bars 35–44

an-y-way, Des-paire be-hind, and death be-foye doth cast Such ter-ror,  
and my fee-ble flesh doth waste By sinne In It, which it t'wards Hell doth weigh;

For the Sestet, Britten finally introduces an Eb major rising arpeggio (see Fig. 28) which is doubled in the piano part for the words “Only Thou art above”, and “I rise again”.

Fig. 28. Britten “Thou hast made me”: bars 45–54

One-ly thou art a-bove,..... and when t'wards thee By thy  
leave I can looke, I rise..... a gaine;.....

However, the tonal context quickly returns to ambiguity for the text which follows.<sup>22</sup> In the last two lines the singer—in a desperate attempt to regain composure—delivers seventeen Ebs in a row before repeating the material from bar 19 (see Fig. 29).

<sup>22</sup> But, our old subtle foe so tempteth me,/ That not one hour myself I can sustaine.

Fig. 29. Britten “Thou hast made me”: bars 70–74

The musical score for Figure 29 shows the final bars of Britten's setting of Donne's sonnet. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a high register and features a melodic line with some ornamentation. The piano accompaniment is in a lower register and features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The tempo marking "[largamente...]" is placed above the vocal line. The lyrics "A - da - mant..... draw mine i - ron heart." are written below the vocal line. The piano accompaniment is marked with dynamics such as "ff" and "fff".

After one more bar of the ‘running’ motif, the work concludes with four thunderous E<sup>b</sup> minor chords. Despite my own attempts, at the end, to cast some doubt on the final outcome by repeating the words “mine iron heart” with a tinge of harmonic dissonance and ending on the less finite  $\hat{5}$ , I believe Britten is more successful in portraying the real anxiety which underlies the argument as a whole. While Donne suggests strongly in all these Sonnets that faith is no guarantee against the potential terror of death, these settings probably come down more heavily on the side of anxiety whereas my own tend to resolve more optimistically.

“Death, be not proud” (No. 9, duration 3' 50") is the last in Britten's cycle, and it is my impression that he, too, was at pains to find a way to reflect the mocking, almost patronising tone of the opening lines. But whereas I decided on a refined (musical) version of the school-yard chant, Britten chose a Purcellian treatment reminiscent of Brahms.<sup>23</sup> This involves a unison ground bass (see Fig. 30) and a circular harmonic progression in the key of B major which is almost totally diatonic—there are very few accidentals in the entire song—and which, in terms of rhythmic emphasis, constantly bypasses the tonic until the final chord in the last bar, where the word “die” is marked *fortissimo*. There are also Brahmsian overtones in the hemiola (effectively three bars of 3/4 within a 5 bar phrase in 4/4 time) and in the 5-bar phrase itself.

<sup>23</sup> On first hearing this song I was immediately reminded of the *Vier ernste Gesänge* Op. 121, and in particular the first, “Denn es gehet dem Menschen”. I have subsequently discovered that Graham Johnson had already noted these Brahmsian overtones in his essay “Voice and Piano” for *The Britten Companion*. He writes: “The last sonnet, ‘Death, be not proud’, is a passacaglia descended from Purcell, yet could such a song have been written for voice and piano without taking German *Lieder* into account?” He goes on, however, to point to the third Brahms song, rather than the first. “Throughout the cycle there are moments of illustration which remind us of *Lieder* (‘Die Wetterfahne’ of *Winterreise* in the opening bars of ‘What if this present’ and the majesty of ‘O Tod, wie bitter bist Du’ . . . in the last song, ‘Death, be not Proud’), yet it is pure underivative Britten, and represents one more step in the cosmopolitan widening of his language, a language that had already encompassed Rimbaud and Michelangelo.” Graham Johnson. “Voice and Piano”. In Christopher Palmer, ed. *The Britten Companion*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1984) 292.

Fig. 30. Britten “Death be no proud”: bars 1–8

Allegro molto moderato e sostenuto (♩ = 88)

VOICE

PIANO

*sempre piano*

Death be not proud, though some have cal - led thee

At the beginning of the second quatrain (“From rest and sleepe”), it was fascinating to discover a similarity with my own setting of the words “much more must flow”. At this point Britten introduces quavers (see Fig. 31).

Fig. 31. Britten “Death be no proud”: bars 24–2

.... Much plea - sure, then from thee, much more ..... must flow,

Here, the rhythmic shapes used in the vocal line (bars 26–27) bear an almost uncanny resemblance to those that I used at this point in the choral setting (see Ex. 20).

Ex. 20. “Death be not proud”: bars 24-27

Plea - sure, then from Thee much more must flow - must flow

Quite apart from other minor similarities (such as the one noted above), it is clear that Britten’s musical intentions were the same: to use the music as a resonating chamber for the text itself. It comes as no surprise that most of the accidentals occur at the beginning of the Sestet (“Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men”), and once again the sudden introduction of dotted rhythms effects a change of emotional emphasis. His use of the ground bass (in the accompaniment) as the main melodic material throughout—surely a

humorous touch—is nothing less than a *tour de force*. With the exception of a few passing notes, it continues doggedly at its original pace regardless of the added dissonances and dotted rhythms (see Fig. 32).

Fig. 32. Britten “Death be no proud”: bars 40–43

The image shows a musical score for Benjamin Britten's "Death be no proud", bars 40-43. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line has lyrics: "men, And dost with poy - son, warre, and sick ness". The piano accompaniment is marked "marcato" and "molto maro.".

Finally, it is heartening to realise that Britten could also be tempted to use an ‘overtly conventional and drawn-out perfect cadence’—indeed, the final chords deliberately eschew any tonal refinement (see Fig. 33)—in order to bring the entire cycle to an end.

Fig. 33. Britten “Death be not proud”: bars 59–63

The image shows a musical score for Benjamin Britten's "Death be not proud", bars 59-63. It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line has lyrics: "death, thou shalt die." The piano accompaniment is marked "cresce ed allargando" and "ff".

In an essay on Benjamin Britten’s vocal music, Peter Pears points out that the song “Thou has made me” is almost entirely in strict two-part counterpoint, but hastens to add (in parenthesis) that “Britten doesn’t care for counterpoint that sounds like Counterpoint.”<sup>24</sup> Pears also makes the comment that Britten never claimed to be an innovator:

But if Britten is right, and he has made no actual innovations, there blows in his vocal music at least . . . a strong revitalizing south-east wind which has rid English song of much accumulated dust and cobwebs, and has renewed the vigour of the sung word with Purcellian attack. If Britten is no innovator, he is most certainly a renovator, and having thus cleaned his house, he has a right to feel at home in it.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Peter Pears. “The Vocal Music”. In Donald Mitchell, Hans Keller, eds. *Benjamin Britten: a Commentary on his works from a group of specialists* (London: Rockliff Publishing Corporation, 1952) 71.

<sup>25</sup> Pears, in Mitchell, Keller eds., 73.

In extending this metaphor to evaluate my own work, I am led to the conclusion that, while it might appear to represent nothing new, it may also be perceived as a shed containing a valuable collection of old tools still in good working order.

# 8

## MIXED MARRIAGES

*FOUR DUALITIES*

## Genesis

In August 2000, in conjunction with the bicentennial celebrations, the former Flinders Street School of Music<sup>1</sup> organised a ‘Festival of Australian Music’ comprising a series of concerts featuring Australian works. Of the 85 composers represented, some were well-known or already emerging as significant artists; others were students with varying degrees of experience and several were performers who wrote something specially for the occasion. My own contribution to the event took the form of a Lunch Hour Concert. Three works had already been completed by June of that year,<sup>2</sup> but in order to present a varied program of approximately 50 minutes’ duration I needed to write one more—and thus it was that the first of the four *Dualities* came into existence. Encouraged by two of my colleagues who were willing to perform the work, I chose to write a piece for alto flute and marimba, a decision which was justified on two counts: first, contemporary repertoire for the alto flute was somewhat scarce, and secondly, the School possessed an excellent marimba (known affectionately as ‘Big Bertha’) with a range extending to the low C.

When my candidature began in August 2002, the idea of producing several more *Dualities*—small chamber works for relatively unusual combinations—afforded an opportunity to gain experience in writing for instruments with which I was as yet unfamiliar, for example the harp and the guitar. A work for multiple percussion was also planned, but this turned into a piece for two xylophones and snare drum—largely because I had become fascinated by the juxtaposition of contrasting sonorities and the way in which these pairings could affect mood, texture and formal design. During the composition of *Dualities 1 for Alto Flute and Marimba* I had been quite conscious of the two instruments literally acting as partners, each with its own individual personality but willing to participate in (musical) discussion and engage in a series of adventures involving mutual support and ‘role reversal’. In expanding the *Dualities* to include three more short works, I continued to develop the idea of a relationship between two quite different ‘characters’ while at the same time experimenting with small formal structures. This set of four *Dualities*—for alto flute and marimba, horn and harp, *cor anglais* and two guitars, two

<sup>1</sup> The Flinders Street School of Music, part of the Adelaide College of Technical and Further Education, was amalgamated with the Elder Conservatorium of Music, The University of Adelaide, on 1 January, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> These works—the *Five Love Songs*, the *Trio for Harpsichord, Recorder and Viol*, and the last three of the *Six Holy Sonnets*—have already been discussed in previous chapters.



xylophones and snare drum—might therefore be regarded as a series of ‘mixed marriages’ in which two instruments reveal their true identities while sharing the limelight in various ways. They are included in the portfolio in order to demonstrate how a variety of musical ideas—based largely on the instruments’ natural characteristics—can lead to the development of appropriate formal structures, each of which is dictated by the raw material and its latent emotional content.

## Method

### *Dualities 1 for Alto Flute and Marimba*

Aside from their obvious differences, the alto flute and ‘concert grand’ marimba also appear to share certain characteristics: a seductive tone, rich sonority—and a certain *grandeur*. It is therefore not surprising that when writing for this particular combination my initial ideas were mellow and muted rather than brisk or bright. A slowly moving melodic line (alto flute) underpinned by steady repeated notes (marimba) seemed an appropriate way to reveal the instruments’ individual sustaining powers. The alternating time-signature (6/4 : 7/4) was intended to avoid predictability and heighten the tension leading to the flute *cadenza* in bars 13–14, where there is a genuine ‘role reversal’. Here the marimba begins to drive the action and the flute remains reasonably static until a climax is reached in bar 27. At bar 19, however, the flautist is required to ‘vocalise the lower part’ in a series of major 9ths designed to portray a developing relationship between the two ‘characters’.

This work is generated almost entirely from a 3-note melodic shape in which the first interval is usually a descending major 2nd and the second interval an ascending 3rd, 4th or 5th, although the direction is sometimes altered. Example 1 shows two such cells as they are first pronounced by the flute (bars 1–4) and the marimba (bars 15–18).

#### Ex. 1. *Dualities 1*: melodic cells



Given the key-signature of G major, the first 27 bars are tonally enigmatic. They include an E $\flat$  (bar 2), B $\flat$  (bar 10), A $\flat$  (bar 12), and a short *cadenza* (bars 13–14) which is played over a IV $_w$ , giving a strong impression of C major. Chromatic (unaccented) *appoggiaturas* provide the incentive for a variety of note groupings in the *cadenza*, and eventually the key of G major is more firmly established in bar 24. Valiant attempts by the flute to attain finality are, however, thwarted by the marimba's harmonic meanderings and after a moment of musical indecision the flute again takes the initiative by introducing a more playful middle section (*Scherzando*) at bar 28.

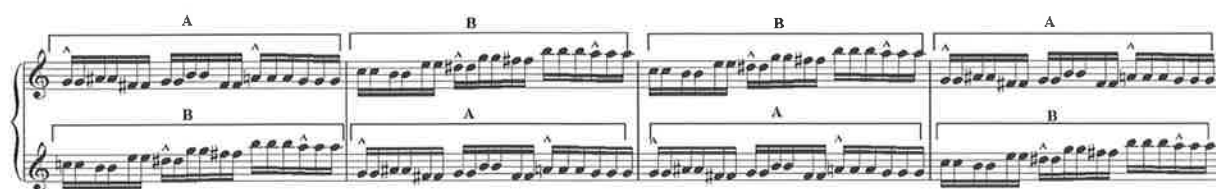
Beginning squarely in F $\sharp$  major, this section also contains thematic material directly derived from the 3-note cells described above, here rhythmically extended to include the first two notes of a second cell, as indicated in Figure 1. The idea of monotonous repetition is now modified so that each extended cell is played twice, and the melodic line is delivered in *quasi*-canon. Accents in the marimba part also serve to outline the shape of the original cell, thus creating another layer of interest.

Fig. 1. *Dualities 1*: = bars 28–32



As the flute climbs into the higher registers and begins to flaunt its more virtuosic characteristics, the marimba shifts temporarily into reverse (bars 40–42) as if unable to compete. Eventually, however, a bargain is struck and the two instruments form an equal—if somewhat calculated—partnership by presenting identical material in linear reflection of each other (see Fig. 2). The ‘repeated note’ pattern reoccurs here in a different guise while regular accents from both players ensure that an expanded variation of the melodic cell (in reverse) is projected four times in succession.

Fig. 2. *Dualities 1*: = bars 43–46



At this point the marimba picks up the material which was delivered by the flute in the first cadenza, and both instruments engage in an improvisatory dialogue in which 2nds are often inverted as 7ths and larger intervals play a more significant role. After another brief moment of imitative patterning (bars 60–61) the excitement subsides, and the final section represents a return to the opening mood (*Lento*). By now, however, the music consciously reflects what has transpired in the foregoing ‘improvisation’: irregular groupings of repeated notes are now integrated into the melodic line; the marimba provides full harmonic support; the last cadenza (bar 80) is shared equally between the players and the opening material becomes a joint concern.

It would of course be possible to produce a simple table outlining the formal structure of the work, to label individual motifs and compare the length of various sections etc., but this would be of little value in describing the essential musical outcome. The emotional impact of this short work resides in what one might call its ‘storyline’, whereby the two instruments reveal their individual *personae* before engaging in joint activities. Improvisatory freedom—checked at times by mutual consensus in the form of imitative patterns—leads eventually to a richer harmonic scheme and the delivery of more sophisticated rhythmic and melodic interaction. Moreover, while most of the musical dialogue creates a landscape of tonal uncertainty, the work concludes unequivocally in G major to suggest that the two protagonists have by now resolved their affairs satisfactorily.

### *Dualities 2 for Horn and Harp*

The second work in this set was intended as an exercise in writing for the harp, an instrument which is often described as ‘purely diatonic’. Late one evening, in order to test the computer’s harp sound, I hastily entered a few bars (see Fig. 3) which remained unaltered for several weeks.

Fig. 3. *Dualities 2*: = bars 1–2



For some reason, this simple sketch (and the surprisingly realistic harp sound) hung in my imaginative consciousness. As an introduction, it soon attracted a partner in the form of a moderately-paced, lyrical melody suitable for the French horn, and the first 15 bars were

easily completed within a diatonic framework (B $\flat$ : I-V-I-IV-iii-ii-V-I). In this first section, which is simply a working out of the lyrical and ‘accompanying’ ideas, attention was paid to melodic imitation (see Fig. 4) in order to suggest an unusually comfortable working relationship between the two instruments—this time from the very beginning.

Fig. 4. *Dualities 2*: = bars 10–14



When writing for the harp, the technical issue of pedal-changing requires that thought be given not only to the pedal-settings themselves (and enharmonic equivalents), but also to the timing, i.e. the minimum time in which such changes can be comfortably executed. A sudden shift from B $\flat$  major into A major therefore necessitated the inclusion of a bar in which the horn effectively calls for a change of key (bar 16). Bars 17–26 present another lyrical interlude, this time in a different colour but again strongly diatonic (A: I-vi-IV-iii-ii-I-i). In bar 26 it is now the harp which affects a transition (A major followed by the parallel A minor) to the new key of F major. Here a contrasting rhythmic pattern is introduced (see Ex. 2) to encourage the horn to display its more ‘brassy’ characteristics, although the melodic outline is closely related to the previous material.

Ex. 2. *Dualities 2*: = horn, bars 27–30



In bars 32–33 the horn initiates a change of direction: there is a return to the key of A major for a lively dialogue using chords I, V and iii (C $\sharp$  minor). After working easily together for some time, the instruments now engage in a rather unusual interchange (bar 42) leading to a dramatic climax (see Fig. 5) in which they clearly accommodate each others’ needs.

Fig. 5. *Dualities 2*: = bars 44–47

At this point it was necessary to take stock, as the music had developed quickly of its own accord and there was by now a pressing need to consider the proportions of the work as a whole. A return to the ideas contained in bar 26 provided a logical follow-on and triggered a decision to revisit the mood (and content) of each of the foregoing sections in reverse order, thus extending the work by winding down the musical activity in much the same way as it had evolved. While the harp indulges in more soloistic passage work, the horn now settles back into the comfort zone of its dotted rhythms, preparing the ear for a return to the more lyrical interaction heard earlier. Bars 59–71 represent a transposed and extended version of bars 17–26, and after a ‘false’ ending (bars 71–73) the opening section returns in a simplified version. Although the formal structure is more symmetrical here than in *Dualities 1*, it was nevertheless important to give the impression that the musical events which had taken place had in some way transformed the two ‘characters’. For this reason the final section is marked *Meno mosso* and delivery of the material is more tentative: while the relationship is still intact, there is now a lack of complacency and a more careful interaction between the partners. Figure 6 provides the musical evidence although it is clearly audible from bar 74.

Fig. 6. *Dualities 2*: = bars 82–86

In the case of *Dualities 2* it seems relevant to show how the musical activity literally retraces its steps throughout the second half of the piece. While it is unnecessary to explain all the emotional subtleties expressed by transition sections and the reordering of lyrical material, Table 8.1 presents a simple outline of the work’s formal structure.

Table 8.1: *Dualities 2—Structural analysis*

Bars	Section	Key	Chords	Description
1–16	A1	B $\flat$ major	I–IV–iii–ii–I	Lyrical opening statement (1)
17–26	A2	A major	I–vi–IV–iii–ii–I–i	Lyrical opening statement (2)
27–32	B1	F major	I and V	Dotted rhythms introduced, horn solo, harp accompaniment
33–38	B2	A major	I and V	Dotted rhythms continue, harp solo, horn accompaniment
39–43	C	C $\sharp$ minor	i and V	Change of texture and abrupt exchange of melodic fragments
44–46	D	F major	vii dim 7	Climactic interchange between partners
47–51	B2	B $\flat$ major	I and V	Dotted rhythms reintroduced but with slight variation
52–58	B1	D major	I and V	Dotted rhythms continue and section extended to form a new transition
59–67	A2	A minor	i–VI–iv–i–bII–vii–VI	Lyrical material returns in modified form
68–73	A1	F major	IV–iii–ii–V–I etc.	Lyrical material from second half of A1, extended to include transition material (harp solo)
74–87	A1	B $\flat$ major	I–IV–iii–ii–I	Return of opening material in simplified form.

One glance at the ‘Chord’ column in Table 8.1 reveals the use of cadences and cadential idioms in combination with non-cyclic progressions which are, nevertheless, largely functional in character. Thus the concept of ‘twistonality’ may also represent a more traditional approach, where key centres are well-defined but tonal interest is achieved through contrapuntal activity in which the use of imitation creates a non-invasive level of dissonance.

### *Dualities 3 for Cor anglais and 2 Guitars*

*Dualities 3* was originally intended for *cor anglais* and one guitar, and in the very early stages it seemed sensible to discuss the work with a colleague in order to check that the guitar part was ‘playable’. While there were no serious errors, the suggestion was made that

two guitars might provide an even more colourful background for the sensuous sounds of the *cor anglais*. This proved to be valuable advice. The addition of a second guitar facilitated more sustained harmonic support for the penetrating voice of the *cor anglais* while easing the technical demands on both guitarists; also, the richer supporting textures almost certainly encouraged more virtuosic writing for the solo instrument. In terms of the *Dualities* ‘theme’, i.e. the pairing of two different musical ‘characters’, emphasis is still placed on the creation of an evolving partnership, but in this case—with one guitarist free to imitate fast, single-line passages while the other maintains harmonic support—there is more room to manoeuvre. More risk-taking serves to heighten the drama, and several opportunities are found to promote the idea of a *menage à trois*. The choice of key (E minor) was an intuitive response to the rather melancholic voice of the *cor anglais* in the lower register; it also promised to present a new set of problems in relation to chord progression and voice-leading within the confines of a tonal structure.

As in the previous work, *Dualities 3* begins with a gentle introductory statement (see Fig. 7) which already contains the seeds of a lyrical melody.

Fig. 7. *Dualities 3*: = guitars, bars 1–4



In this example horizontal brackets indicate the small melodic cells which were naturally incorporated into the first 6-bar phrase delivered by the *cor anglais* (see Ex. 3).

Ex. 3. *Dualities 3*: = *cor anglais*, bars 1–4



In contrast to the almost unbroken melodic line delivered by the horn in *Dualities 2*, here the *cor anglais*—after its initial statement—is frequently interrupted by the guitars. While there is a shared responsibility for the delivery of material, the emphasis here is on the fact that the linear narrative will be informed both rhythmically and melodically by an on-going interaction between the main protagonists.

As noted earlier, each of the four *Dualities* was conceived as a work in which short, spontaneously occurring musical ideas (connected in some way to the resonating properties of the instruments in question) would be developed in linear fashion until the music began to ‘write itself’. This was particularly evident in the case of *Dualities 3*, where the sudden intrusion of regular, block chords from the guitars in bar 42 (see Fig. 8) came as a real surprise.

Fig. 8. *Dualities 3*: = guitars, bars 41-44



This simple strategy, however, proved very useful in terms of the overall structural design: as the work continued, the chords reappeared miraculously at moments when there was to be a subtle change of pace. Here, they announce the introduction of triplets in the accompaniment (from bar 45) which, for the most part, are simply used to enliven the harmonic background. Then at bar 60, the *cor anglais* seemed to veer off in a direction which was totally ‘uncharacteristic’. At the time I was fully prepared to erase this material (see Ex. 4), believing it to be a rather ugly distortion of the lyrical ideas heard to this point.

Ex. 4. *Dualities 3*: = *cor anglais*, bars 60–65



Nevertheless, after another burst of emphatic chords from the two guitars, the *cor anglais* was urged to continue a musical dialogue involving cross rhythms of two against three (bars 68–69) and three against four (bars 70–73) leading to a showy *cadenza* which features semiquaver passagework from both instruments as well as accompanying *tremolos* and punctuating chords from the guitars.

This surprisingly rapid organic development of the raw material now needed to be offset by a contrasting section, and the *Lento* which begins at bar 83 was consciously intended as a quiet, contemplative interlude in which a slow harmonic rhythm and restrained (one might almost say ‘stunted’) melodic activity prevail. For the whole of the



middle section, the *cor anglais* is limited to the use of five pitches (G, A, B $\flat$ , B and C), but this restriction is significantly alleviated by the harmonic changes from the guitar. While it does not represent a complete analysis of this section, Example 5 shows the variety of chords presented by the guitar in support of these few notes as they are heard from the *cor anglais* in different melodic and rhythmic permutations.

Ex. 5. *Dualities 3: Cor anglais notes and accompanying chords* (= bars 83 . . . 114)

E $\sharp$ 7   Gm   Em   F $\sharp$ 7   Dm   F7   EM   C7   FM7   E7   DM   E $\sharp$ 7   C9

The use of octave leaps and harmonics in the guitar parts also serves to create a certain emptiness and a feeling of temporary stasis: indeed, a gentle *accelerando* was needed to instigate a return to the earlier musical momentum, where *Tempo I* is reinstated at bar 116.

By this stage it looked as if *Dualities 3* was to be in simple ternary form. How, then, could the relationship between the players evolve into something different? How could real development take place within such a simple structure? The answer lay not in the formal (spatial) design but in the tonal structure itself: the 'A' section returns in the major mode—and in the first instance the transformation is heightened by using the bright key of F major, rather than the parallel mode (E major). Furthermore, the last section is not just a transposition of the earlier material. Often the melodic line is contracted or reshaped, and changes are wrought in the harmonic structure to accommodate these reworkings. Musical events are experienced in the same order—unlike the situation in *Dualities 2*—but subtle shifts in the melodic contours and new harmonisations provide a freshness and renewed vigour calculated to retain the listener's interest. The first 'A' section (excluding the *cadenza*, bars 74–82) had been 73 bars in length; the reprise covers the same ground in 58 bars (bars 116–174), at which point the guitar's block chords—reduced now to four (bar 175–6)—herald the impending closure.

The ending, however, posed a problem, as F major was still the prevailing tonality and the piece was supposed to close in the key of E major. Could this still be achieved without the modulation sounding contrived? The solution was to create additional material

in order to effectively counter-balance the *cadenza* in the first section, and to embed in this mini-*Coda* an enigmatic chord, marked with a pause, to facilitate a gentle tonicisation of E major for the closing bars. This required subtle engineering in order not to dispel the sense of natural progression which had been cultivated throughout the work. The relevant passage is illustrated in Figure 9.

Fig. 9. *Dualities 3*: = bars 177–183



In these final bars the *cor anglais* plays a secondary role, much as it did in the early stages, but the ending provides a smile of reassurance: the *cor anglais* pronounces the final E on a weak beat while the guitar chord has the 5th (B) in the upper voice, suggesting a gentle, open-minded compromise. Once again, the notion of ‘twistonality’ is linked to musical language which is clearly traditional, but here the use of major and minor modes has become an integral part of the formal design.

#### *Dualities 4 for 2 Xylophones and Snare Drum*

The last work in the set is a virtuosic, two-part ‘pattern piece’ for xylophones and snare drum. Basically contrapuntal in style, it has a tonal orientation which is twisted diatonically (major/minor), modally (Lydian references) and chromatically in order to provide some sense of harmonic direction although there is no attempt to use functional harmony as such (i.e. chords which are 5th-related). When the piece was first performed, the suggestion was made that it might be more effectively played on two marimbas because the sound would be clearer and better in tune. While it is true that any two instruments of the same type always reveal different tonal qualities, in the case of the xylophone this is often exaggerated because of its limited sustaining power. Two xylophones played simultaneously are very likely to sound slightly out of tune, and it is certainly unrealistic to expect a perfect match; however, the work already contained a good deal of close dissonance so it was felt that the texture would only be enhanced by a slight variation in intonation. Furthermore, as it was expressly intended to take advantage of the instrument’s

brittle sounds and its capacity for crisp articulation, a certain ‘rusticity’ was envisaged as part of the original conception. The instrumentation therefore remained unchanged.

The initial idea for this piece stemmed from the thought that, if one had never played the xylophone and were suddenly given the opportunity to do so, one might start by producing something very simple—for example, a melodic fragment such as the one shown in Example 6.

**Ex. 6. *Dualities 4*: melodic cell**



Using 6/8 time, these notes are first arranged in a repetitive pattern of four bars’ duration. When the second xylophone enters, major and minor versions occur simultaneously (see Fig. 10), setting the stage for an eccentric improvisation with minimalist overtones.

**Fig. 10. *Dualities 4*: = bars 5–8**










While it is unnecessary to describe the compositional process in detail, it is worth noting that at bars 17 and 21 the first E is repeated, and in bars 25 and 29 it is played three times, shifting the pattern off-centre—a technique reminiscent of ‘phase’ music. Also, from bar 25 Xylophone 2 has a series of accents which direct the ear to a series of notes (D–E–F#–G#), each one lasting for 4 bars. This technique is used throughout the work to create a layer of melodic interest which sometimes supports and sometimes overrides the harmonic implications.

The piece is built in sections, with clear changes in the rhythmic and/or melodic patterns occurring in bars 37 (introduction of semiquavers), 61 (quavers and compound intervals), 69 (augmentation), 75 (semiquavers for both xylophones), 83 (static, repeated notes), 87 (quotation from Saint-Saëns’ “Fossils”) and 91 (snare drum solo). Within this structure, each section is made up of 2-, 4- or 6-bar phrases, with slight alterations in the pattern (and/or note values) taking place at regular intervals; but rhythmic predictability is largely counteracted by the minimal changes in pitch which are intended to create a sense of forward momentum. The snare drum plays an important role in ‘calling’ for various

changes in the rhythm and helping to drive the piece along. While one could almost attempt a Schenkerian analysis of *Dualities 4*, this would be a purely intellectual exercise after the event and would provide no indication of the compositional process or the rationale behind it. Instead, Table 8.2 represents a simple overview of the textural patterns and structural design of the work, exactly as they occur in real time.

**Table 8.2: *Dualities 4*—Textural Patterns and Structural Design**

Bars	Section	Pattern	Descriptive Commentary
1–36	A	Xyl. 	Variation in pitch & register. Construction of 4-bar phrases. G $\natural$ and D added to the mix. . .
37–60	B		Semiquavers shared between Xyl. 1 and Xyl. 2. Shifts in temporary tonic: E, F, F $\sharp$ , G etc.
61–68	C		Return to quavers, larger compound intervals, accents in Xyl. 2 (4 bars) followed by Xyl. 1 (4 bars)
69–74	D		Augmentation, Xyl.1—6-bar phrase
75–82	E		Semiquavers for both Xylophones, with thematic material projected through accents in Xyl. 1 (4 bars) followed by Xyl. 2 (4 bars).
83–86	F		Temporary standstill. Melodic activity ceases (4 bars)
87–90	G		Quotation from Saint-Saëns' "Fossils" (from <i>Carnival of the Animals</i> ) to introduce Snare Drum solo.
91–106	H	SNARE DRUM SOLO	May include some improvisation.
107–109	G (Var.)		Variation on bars 87-90

110–113	F (Var.)	Variation on bars 83–86
114–121	E (Ret.)	Bars 75–82 in retrograde (Xyl. 2 only)
122–127	D (Ret.)	Bars 69–74 in retrograde (Xyl. 1 & 2)
128–135	C (Ret.)	Bars 61–68 in retrograde (Xyl. 1 & 2)
136–159	B (Ret.)	Bars 37–60 in retrograde (Xyl. 1 & 2)
160–187	A	A with some variation. Wind-down.
188–201	Coda	Variation on A; humorous ending.

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As can be seen from Table 8.2, the idea of some evolutionary development led, in this instance, to the repetition of melodic material in retrograde (referred to elsewhere as ‘melodic reversal’). Not only are the sections revisited in reverse order, but the melodic material itself is often played backwards—although not always by both xylophones, and not always with strict adherence to the rules! At first the ‘retrograde’ principle had been strictly imposed for the entire second half. On hearing the earlier version of the work, one critical admirer was somewhat confused and clearly lost interest in material that was no longer fully comprehensible. It seemed wise, therefore, to apply the principle sparingly in order to ensure that the audience did not lose track of events. When the relevant adjustments were made—with frequent concessions in the form of clear tonicisation and repetition of some material in its original form—the result was much more satisfactory.

From this discussion it should be evident that the *Four Dualities* represent four very different approaches to the use of functional harmonic progression. We have already seen that *Dualities 1* is played out in an environment of tonal insecurity, whereby tension is created by the temporary appearance of key-centres which seem to call for—and eventually achieve—cadential confirmation. In this case, the listener is treated to a variety of rhythmic patterns which compensate for the lack of harmonic stability and drive the narrative in various ways. By way of contrast, *Dualities 2* reveals a predominantly diatonic setting in which multiple key-centres are firmly established, colouring and helping to identify the various sections. Here, imitative melodic counterpoint is used to sustain interest; the climax is reached through the tonal ambivalence of a diminished 7th chord and key-centres are revisited in a different order in the last section. *Dualities 3* presents a different scenario

in which the main material first appears in a minor key and is later translated into the major mode. While fewer key-centres are properly established, the use of more colourful 7th chords and roving, chromatically inflected harmony help to provide momentum; in addition, the chord progression includes some surprises when the 'A' section returns. In *Dualities 4*, however, chords are tonicised only by implication, i.e. by the inevitable association of audible scale fragments with their corresponding key or mode, and—in the case of the fleeting musical quotations from Saint-Saëns' "Fossils"—by aural association with a completely different work. The major/minor ambivalence is given a thorough work-out, and the 'stereophonic' ending is intended to suggest that the entire exercise has actually been undertaken in a spirit of *bonhomie*.

As for their formal design, *Dualities 1–4* actually represent a series of variations on ternary form. Given the simplicity of the raw material, the compositions were largely informed by a desire to take maximum advantage of the instruments' natural characteristics and to create meaningful dialogue between the partners. As short pieces they presented opportunities to explore the A–B–A form, and to develop formal structures appropriate to a variety of musical styles and emotional content. Although the underlying theme of 'relationship' between the participants might be considered rather abstract, the emphasis (figuratively, at least) was on the fact that mutual respect, meaningful conversation and spontaneous adventures form the pre-requisites for a successful partnership. Any on-going complacency seemed—literally—out of the question.

## Conclusion

In Part B the discussion has focussed on a number of different compositional techniques, all of which may be comfortably described within the framework of 'twistonality'. Finally, Part C looks at three works which were written for special occasions and tailored to meet the needs of three very different ensembles. In each case it was necessary to consider the matter of 'accessibility'—both in terms of the musical language itself, and the level of difficulty for the performers—so the notion of 'twistonality' is now broadened to include a more practical approach to composition involving a specific set of performance conditions and/or requirements.

# PART C

## RECAPITULATION

# 9

## MUSICAL FLIRTATION

*THE SUN RISING*



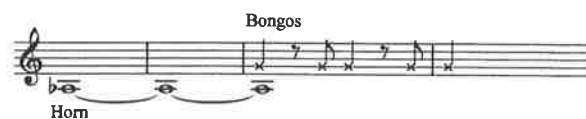
## Genesis

Sometimes the act of musical composition can be triggered simply by a spontaneous reaction to a given set of circumstances. During the 2004 Easter break, an advertisement appeared for a concert entitled “Women with Altitude”, a program of works by women composers (as yet unannounced) to be presented later in the year by the vocal trio *Eve*. Sensing that it might be interesting to write a short work for this particular group, I decided to set John Donne’s “The Sun Rising” for three female voices, French horn and bongos. In retrospect it appears an unusual, perhaps even unlikely combination, although at the time it seemed quite feasible. Unaware of the dangers involved (and perhaps in some way affected by the boisterous tone of the poem) I launched headlong into a holiday project marked all over with freedom, fun—and flirtation.

## Method

Spontaneity, however, provided no immediate solution to the problem of formal structure. The poem’s three 10-line stanzas suggested a strophic setting; however, the text is laden with innuendo, and clearly—to do it justice—I needed to vary the musical language sufficiently to support both story-line and metaphor. In this case, a reasonable explanation of the compositional method must start with the material contained in the first stanza. The work begins rather tentatively, with each of the players making a separate entrance: this was, after all, a frivolous experiment which would fail miserably if the horn proved too strong to accompany three individual voices. The introductory ploy (see Ex. 1)—vaguely intended to suggest both a sun rising (the horn) and a knock at the door (the bongo)—was later to prove useful as transitional material between the stanzas (bars 39–40, 76–78).

### Ex. 1. *The Sun Rising*: = bars 1–4



After reflecting momentarily on the various ways in which a great actor might inflect the opening words, “Busy old fool” (anger? annoyance? surprise? resignation?), I decided to combine three somewhat exaggerated musical versions in the opening statement (See Ex. 2).

Ex. 2. *The Sun Rising*: = bars 4–6

1. (anger?)                      2. (annoyance?)                      3. (surprise?)

Bu-sy old fool, \_\_\_\_\_                      Bu-sy old fool,                      Bu-sy old fool,

This was followed by an indignantly unanimous melodic outburst (see Ex. 3) for the words “unruly sun”.

Ex. 3. *The Sun Rising*: = bars 7–8

Un - ru - ly sun,

Meanwhile, the horn has a rising whole tone scale (see Ex. 4) which acts as a kind of question mark, foreshadowing what is to come.

Ex. 4. *The Sun Rising*: = bars 7–8

Horn

The questions put to this unwelcome guest needed to be clearly enunciated, so a continuation of chordal texture (see Ex. 5) seemed appropriate.

Ex. 5. *The Sun Rising*: = bars 9–15

Why dost thou thus, through win - dows, and through cur - tains call on us?

Must \_\_\_\_\_ to thy mot - tions lo - vers run?

Then follows a more treacherous chromatic passage (see Ex. 6) culminating in a descending *portamento* on the word “Go”.

Ex. 6. *The Sun Rising*: = bars 16–21

Sau - cy pe - dan - tic wretch, go chide late school-boys and sour pren - ti - ces, Go \_\_\_\_\_

After a hunting-call from the horn (bars 22–23), the last 4 lines of the stanza are set freely—with a none-too-subtle emphasis on the notion that “the King will ride” (bars 23–26), a rising sequence (bars 27–31) and a musical realisation of the slower rhythm of “hours, days, months, which are the rags of time” (bars 32–35). A repetition of the first line (bar 36) brings the stanza to a close, but meanwhile the tonal centre has become rather elusive, enabling a fresh juxtaposition between the transitional material (bars 38–40, now a semitone lower) and the opening of the second verse (bar 40).

As with the other vocal works, the compositional method was here again dictated by the text itself. It soon became clear that the formal structure of the poem might be maintained by repeating the musical material at the beginning of each stanza and taking a more improvisatory approach to the latter part of the verse. This seemed in keeping with the spirit of the poem, where the argument gradually moves from a feeling of constraint (the sun as an unwelcome intruder) to one of absolute power (the sun as a valued servant). With some transposition and minimal variation to suit the new text, the second stanza makes use of all the material quoted in Examples 1–6, although the whole tone scale now descends (bar 44) in order to emphasize the fact that here we have a rhetorical question, in inverted form. In a spirit of fun, the word “eclipse” is underlined by a written-in pause (bar 47), “a wink” is depicted by quick horn *glissandi* (bar 49) and from line 16 there is further free musical association with the brilliantly colourful imagery. There is another rising sequence to accompany the interrogative text (bars 58–61) before hunting-calls from the horn remind us that “the Kings whom thou saw’st yesterday” were riding (bars 64–65), and serve to accentuate the blatant allusion to sexual activity couched in the retort: “All here in one bed lay” (bar 72). The stanza is again brought to a close with a repetition of the opening question, abridged and rearranged to avoid grammatical inversion (bars 73–75), and the transitional material returns (bar 76), this time transposed down a tone.

In the third stanza, further use is made of the material quoted in Example 2 (bars 78–80), Example 3 (bars 81–82), and Example 6 (from bar 84), but in such a way as to suggest that formal constraints need no longer apply. In bar 47, after the first 4 lines of text, the music breaks out of the mould, propelling itself towards the conclusion through another rising sequence (bars 95–98) and a return of the material from Example 5 (bars 101–104), although without the descending *portamento*. At this point it became obvious that the

penultimate line would provide a more effective ending to the song than the more metaphysically obtuse last line; I therefore had no hesitation in reversing the order. Whereas previously the repetition of text had rounded off each stanza by referring back to its initial idea, here it was used to preserve the penultimate line in its entirety (bars 105–108), and to lend a sense of finality to the work as a whole. Although *The Sun Rising* was written over a period of three days, the last stanza proved the most difficult. At one stage I had smuggled into the horn part a quotation from Elgar’s *Land of Hope and Glory*—to accompany the reference to “all States and all Princes”—but it proved an unnecessary distraction, flippant rather than flirtatious. As it was, I had more than enough material from which to construct the last verse; the problem was, how to keep the momentum of the argument and a sense of increasing freedom, while at the same time drawing the music to a logical conclusion.

I had begun with no key signature, and although in the early stages there was a strong sense of B♭ major, it seemed preferable in such a short work to allow for freely roving harmony and to use accidentals where necessary. Awkward augmented intervals and passages involving the whole tone scale have necessitated frequent use of enharmonic equivalents in order to maintain legibility, although the outcome has not always been ideal. This work might be described as ‘twistonal’ in the sense that, although it moves through various key centres, it never settles for very long in any particular key. The fact that the first stanza appears to end in B♭ major, the second in F♯ major and the third in A major seems hardly detrimental to the tonal landscape as a whole. Rather, it might be interpreted as an attempt at aural seduction, whereby the tonality secretly aligns itself with the narrator in advancing the argument while reflecting the protagonist’s subtle shifts in tone and stance.

## Performance and Revision

Although *The Sun Rising* was not performed in the concert for which it was originally intended<sup>1</sup>, it was later presented in public on two separate occasions and included on a commercial CD released by *Eve* in November, 2005. As a result, there have been

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<sup>1</sup> On this occasion, neither the horn player nor the percussionist were available. Some thought was given to the suggestion that the horn might be replaced by another instrument, but this idea was eventually rejected in favour of a later performance by the original dedicatees.

opportunities to attend rehearsals, to listen carefully to three completely different recordings and to consider some of the problems which have arisen in performance. In revising the work for this portfolio, attention has been focussed on a number of issues including balance, legibility, articulation and clarity. The following discussion explains these problems and how they have been solved.

It was always apparent that, with such an unusual combination, it would be difficult to achieve an ideal blend between the instruments and voices; indeed, the problem was evident at the first rehearsal. Resisting the temptation to rewrite the dynamics in the horn part, I was equally loathe to suggest that the instrument be subdued to the point where it no longer revealed its natural characteristics. Instead, the players positioned themselves in various ways until finally a solution was found: with the horn player and percussionist standing a little further back on stage, the voices could be heard more clearly without jeopardizing the ensemble. Strangely enough, I had always imagined that any balance problems would be easily corrected with a mixing desk and that a studio recording of the work might be better than a live performance, whereas in fact quite the opposite occurred. The recording of the live performance in Elder Hall is, I believe, more successful than the later studio recording in which, although the vocalists and instrumentalists were separately miked, the instrumentalists were allowed to dominate occasionally at the expense of vocal clarity. For this reason, it is the live performance which is included in Volume Three.<sup>2</sup>

The original time-signature of 4/2 was chosen to minimize down-beats and promote the idea of an uncomplicated, freely-moving vocal line. This was interrupted on four occasions by a bar of 3/2 (bars 15, 52, 57 and 90). In most of the musical examples given above the 4/2 time-signature still stands; however, the score is obviously clearer in 4/4—by comparison, 4/2 looks rather obsolete if not pretentious. The 3/2 bars have remained unaltered except for bar 57, where it was agreed that an extra crotchet rest would allow the performers more time to pitch the difficult entry in bar 58 with more accuracy.

Matters of articulation and clarity may be grouped together, as it is in this area that most of the revision has occurred. While in general terms problems of balance were able to

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the recording was made prior to the revision discussed in this chapter and therefore it does not provide an exact representation of the final score published in Volume One.

be solved relatively easily, on some occasions the lack of clarity was almost certainly due to an over-use of ‘*staccato*’ markings in the vocal line, where often none—or only a ‘*poco marcato*’—was called for. In some sections the vocal writing became too ‘instrumental’, and it was found that the desired effect (and especially stronger dynamics) could be more easily achieved with all three voices enunciating the words at the same time. The following examples illustrate the extent to which this work has been simplified for inclusion in the portfolio.

Figure 1 shows how the first version of *The Sun Rising* was liberally sprinkled with *staccato*.

Fig. 1. *The Sun Rising*, v. 1: = bars 9–12

The musical score for Figure 1 consists of three staves, each representing a different voice part. The lyrics are: "Why dost thou thus, through win - dows, and through cur - tains, call on us?". Above the first two staves, there are markings for triplets (indicated by a '3' and a bracket) and staccato (indicated by a vertical line with a diagonal slash). The third staff also has staccato markings. The music is written in a 2/4 time signature.

The intention was to ensure clear, crisp consonants and a light, almost cheeky delivery, but later this appeared rather fussy. Many passages were therefore rewritten with less articulation but with some of the note values halved. This is also evident in the next example (see Fig. 2), where ‘*staccato*’ markings used in conjunction with wide leaps had been rather intimidating.

Fig. 2. *The Sun Rising*, v. 1: = bars 16–19

The musical score for Figure 2 consists of three staves, each representing a different voice part. The lyrics are: "Sau - cy pe - dan - tic wretch, go chide late school-boys and sour pren - ti - ces,". Above the first two staves, there are markings for triplets (indicated by a '3' and a bracket) and staccato (indicated by a vertical line with a diagonal slash). The third staff also has staccato markings. The music is written in a 2/4 time signature.

In such passages, the articulation and some of the leaps have now been omitted (see Fig. 3) in order to lessen the degree of difficulty.

Fig. 3. *The Sun Rising*: bars 16–19

Musical score for Figure 3, showing three vocal staves. The lyrics are: "Sau-cy pe-dan-tic wretch, go chide late school-boys and sour pren-ti-ces,". The score includes dynamic markings (mf) and articulation (accents) over the notes.

Too many rests, however, especially in a quick tempo, can also cause problems for singers. On reflection, some of the vocal writing was quite awkward (see Fig. 4); apart from the rests in the first bar, it is hard to imagine how three individual voices could produce an effective *crescendo* while competing rhythmically to deliver slightly different versions of the text.

Fig. 4. *The Sun Rising*, v. 1: = bars 23–26

Musical score for Figure 4, showing three vocal staves. The lyrics are: "Go tell court-hunts-men that the King will ride,". The score includes dynamic markings (mf, f) and articulation (accents) over the notes.

In this case the solution was to remove the rests and strengthen the vocal parts by aligning more of the notes and words as shown in Figure 5.

Fig. 5. *The Sun Rising*: = bars 23–26

Musical score for Figure 5, showing three vocal staves. The lyrics are: "Go tell court-hunts-men that the King will ride,". The score includes dynamic markings (mf, f) and articulation (accents) over the notes, with a more aligned vocal line compared to Figure 4.

A similar situation was evident in bars 50–52, where the temptation to create an individual line for one of the singers—with independent text setting (see Fig. 6)—actually lessened the chances of realizing a smooth *crescendo*.

Fig. 6. *The Sun Rising*, v. 1: = bars 50–53

The image shows three staves of musical notation. The top two staves are for voices, and the bottom staff is for a horn. Each staff has a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The top two staves have a triplet of eighth notes at the beginning of the phrase. The lyrics are: "But that I would not lose her sight so long:".

This was subsequently re-written to promote clearer delivery of the text while allowing the horn to indulge in a natural *fp* (see Fig. 7). At the same time an enharmonic change in Voice 2 (bar 53) provides a more satisfactory settling of the tonality at this point.

Fig. 7. *The Sun Rising*: bars 50–53

The image shows four staves of musical notation. The top staff is for a horn, and the bottom three are for voices. The horn staff starts with a dynamic marking of *fp* (fortissimo piano) and has a melodic line. The voices have a triplet of eighth notes at the beginning. The lyrics are: "But that I would not lose her sight so long:".

While the tendency to tinker with word-order is sometimes musically motivated, it can also spring from a desire to clarify meaning for the listener, and at one point this had been taken to extreme by inserting words that were not actually contained in the original text. In its first published version, the work was prefaced by a copy of the poem, annotated in order to explain some of the more difficult or ambiguous passages. This page is included here as Appendix B, where a footnote explains that the phrase “both the Indias of spice and mine” means the East and West Indies, which Donne had elsewhere referred to as “the land



of Perfumes and Spices”, and “the Land of Gold and of Mynes” respectively. As a result, the first setting included an artificial ‘explanation’ (see Fig. 8) delivered by Voice 3.

Fig. 8. *The Sun Rising*, v. 1: = bars 57–61

The musical score for Figure 8 consists of three vocal staves. The top staff is the vocal line, the middle is the alto line, and the bottom is the bass line. The lyrics are: "Look, tell me Whether both the In-di-as of spice and mine Be where thou left them, or". The score includes dynamic markings such as *ppp*, *p*, *mf*, and *cresc.* The time signature is 7/4.

In the final version this extraneous text has been erased, together with the last repetition of the phrase “where thou left them”, on the grounds that both were unnecessary and cumbersome. Bar 57 (see Fig. 8) was referred to earlier in the chapter; the final version also shows the time-signature changed to 7/4 to allow better preparation for the entry in bar 58.

Some consideration needs to be given to the dangers of hearing instrumentally when writing for the voice, particularly in a small ensemble such as this. Towards the end of the second stanza I wanted to generate excitement commensurate with the metaphysical metaphor inherent in the inevitable association of “Ask for those kings” (who were riding), with “All here in one bed lay” (alluding to sexual activity). My initial response (see Fig. 9) was to use augmented chords in imitative fashion, to quicken the rhythms in the horn part and add a percussive trill while the three voices indulged in staggered entries.

Fig. 9. *The Sun Rising*, v. 1: = bars 64–69

The musical score for Figure 9 consists of three vocal staves. The top staff is the vocal line, the middle is the alto line, and the bottom is the bass line. The lyrics are: "Ask for those Kings, those Kings whom thou saw yes - ter - day.". The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*. The time signature is 7/4.

However, this is the very point at which the texture needs to be as dense as possible, and by thinking ‘instrumentally’, I had unwittingly created the opposite effect, making it very difficult for the singers to achieve a proper climax. This has now been corrected by using all three voices from bar 65.

There are two more examples of this kind of revision. The first is found in bars 90–92, which in the first version (see Fig. 10) appeared verbally cluttered.

Fig. 10. *The Sun Rising*, v. 1: = bars 90–92

The musical score for Figure 10 consists of three vocal staves. The top staff has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The middle and bottom staves have dynamic markings of *f*. The lyrics are: "my. Thou, sun, art half as hap - py. In that the my. Thou, Sun, art half as hap - py as we, In that the my. Thou, art half as hap - py, half as hap - py as we. In that the".

As can be seen in the final version (bars 90–92), the words have subsequently been aligned in the lower two voices in order to facilitate clearer delivery of the text. The second example is in bars 95–98, where again the text needed further clarification. Here, the original version (see Fig. 11) was easily altered so that two of the three singers could deliver the words (see Fig. 12).

Fig. 11. *The Sun Rising*, v. 1: = bars 95–98

The musical score for Figure 11 consists of three vocal staves. The top staff has a dynamic marking of *p*. The middle and bottom staves have dynamic markings of *mp cresc.* and *mf*. The lyrics are: "Ah and since thy du - ties be to warm the world, that's Thine age asks ease. Ah Ah the world, that's Ah Ah ties be to warm the world, that's".

Fig. 12. *The Sun Rising*: = bars 95–98

The matter of revision has been dealt with more extensively in this chapter because *The Sun Rising* has been performed more frequently than other works in the portfolio, and because the first draft (written spontaneously, in ‘holiday’ mode) was found to contain serious errors of judgement.

### Comparative Exploration

It is not possible to compare this setting of John Donne’s poem with any other work which uses the same instrumentation. Nevertheless, it was interesting to discover that in 1964 “The Sun Rising” was one of three John Donne poems set for voice and piano by Elizabeth Maconchy.<sup>3</sup> While this song is very different in style from my own work, a brief analysis reveals enough quirky similarities to throw new light (by default, as it were) on the idea of ‘twistonality’. Several of these are apparent in the very opening bars (see Fig. 15).

Fig. 15. Maconchy “The Sun Rising”: bars 1–8<sup>4</sup>

contd.

<sup>3</sup> The work is the last in the series of Three Donne Songs published by Chester Music, and a “perusal score” has been made available to me by Samuel Wilcock from the Sales Department of the Chester Novello publishing company. Elizabeth Maconchy (1907-1994) was highly acclaimed during her lifetime and was made a DBE in 1987 in recognition of her outstanding contribution to contemporary music.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Maconchy. *Three Donne Songs*. Vocal Score. (London: Chester Music, n.d.), Perusal Score.

Sun, Why dost - thou thus Through win - dows and -  
 Why dost - thou thus Through win - dows and -

There is no key-signature; the ‘riding’ theme is suggested right from the beginning by the rollicking compound rhythms and off-beat accents; remarkably, the phrase “Busy old fool” has been repeated, possibly even in imitation of the speaking voice, and the phrase “unruly Sun” involves a sudden upward thrust over a minor 10th; there are hints of the augmented chord and whole tone scale which continue throughout the work, together with the use of enharmonic equivalents. Such parallels (and many more are discernible) suggest, mainly, that Maconchy’s work is also very much text-driven. Of quintessential difference, however, is the fact that the opening lines produce no tonal expectations. Instead, the opening chord (with and without the C introduced in bar 6), with its inherent acidity, becomes a touchstone throughout the work for other harmonies in which the degree of consonance is entirely dictated by the meaning of the words themselves. Nowhere is this more evident than in Maconchy’s setting of the words “Whether both the Indias . . . lie here with me. Ask for those Kings” (see Fig. 16).

Fig. 16. Maconchy “The Sun Rising”: bars 56–63

Whether both the In - dias of spice and mine Be where thou leftst them, or lie - here  
 with me. Ask for those kings

There is no clumsy attempt to use cadential idioms or to indulge in the traditional harmonic progression of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; yet with a rare combination of wit and discretion, Maconchy succeeds in creating a tonal landscape which is totally convincing. In the second and third bars of Fig. 16, one clearly hears a  $D\flat^{7(b5)}$ , but any expectations of tonal resolution are immediately quelled in the following bar. Here, the piano gives way to the gentle drama of a whispered indirect question and what follows is an unexpected, altered  $D^7$ , a fleeting smile which, in the bars that follow (see Fig. 17), soon turns into an unbridled sonic grin.

Fig. 17. Maconchy “The Sun Rising”: bars 64–67

The image shows a musical score for three systems. The first system contains the vocal line and piano accompaniment for the first two bars. The vocal line has the lyrics: "whom thou saw - est yes - - - terday, And thou - shalt hear, -". The piano accompaniment features a complex harmonic texture with various chords and dynamics like *f* and *p*. The second system contains the vocal line and piano accompaniment for the next two bars. The vocal line has the lyrics: "All - here - in one - bed - lay -". The piano accompaniment continues with similar harmonic complexity, including a section marked *con ped.* (con pedale).

If the narrator’s presence is largely accounted for by a constant return to the harmonic material of the opening bars, Maconchy also finds a way to portray the poem’s subtle shift in emphasis by introducing a similar chord with completely different tonal implications. This variation appears first in the passage immediately following the bars quoted above (see Fig. 17) and is clearly recognisable by its enharmonic alteration (see Fig. 18).

Fig. 18. Maconchy “The Sun Rising”: bars 72–74

The image shows a musical score for three systems. The first system contains the vocal line and piano accompaniment for the first two bars. The vocal line has the lyrics: "She -". The piano accompaniment features a complex harmonic texture with various chords and dynamics like *f* and *ff*. The second system contains the vocal line and piano accompaniment for the next two bars. The piano accompaniment includes a section marked *poco sostenuto* and *più f*. The third system contains the vocal line and piano accompaniment for the final bar. The piano accompaniment includes a section marked *ten. of* and *con ped.* (con pedale).

From here on, these two possibilities continue to exist side by side—sometimes literally appearing in alternate bars. They eventually dominate the last 11 bars in which the repetitive, descending bass line is propelled upwards to a point of closure (see Fig. 19) and the whirling motion at last finds its centre of gravity, concomitant with the last line of the poem.

Fig. 19. Maconchy “The Sun Rising”: bars 106–110

The musical score for "The Sun Rising" by Maconchy, bars 106–110, is presented in two systems. The first system contains the vocal line and the first two staves of the piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in a high register and features lyrics: "centre is, these walls, thy". The piano accompaniment includes a right-hand part with dynamics markings of *f*, *ff*, and *ff*, and a left-hand part with dynamics markings of *f* and *ff*, and a "Ped." (pedal) marking. The second system continues the vocal line with the lyric "sphere." and the piano accompaniment. The right-hand part has dynamics markings of *f*, *ff*, and *ff*. The left-hand part has dynamics markings of *f* and *ff*, and includes a "Ped." (pedal) marking. The score is dated "March 1964".

Viewed alongside the ‘fun’ work presented in this portfolio, Maconchy’s version of “The Sun Rising” is a highly sophisticated and complex song that illustrates a craftsmanship refined and perfected over many decades. While it might be regarded as rather esoteric by nature, it reveals a personal style influenced, at times, by Bartók<sup>5</sup> and Janáček, but thoroughly distinctive in character. The vocal line, often angular and melismatically perverse, shows a bold, instrumental approach almost defiant of rhythmic convention; and the piano part is well positioned in all registers for ease of execution. Strictly speaking the work is atonal, but it may also be described as ‘twistonal’ on the grounds that certain chords function as a harmonic fulcrum, providing the listener with aural reference points

<sup>5</sup> There are many aspects of the musical language which are reminiscent of Bartók, but perhaps one of the more notable examples is in the vocal line, where “honour’s mimic” is set to the notes G<sup>5</sup>–D<sup>5</sup>–B<sup>5</sup>–C<sup>#5</sup>–G<sup>#4</sup>–E<sup>#4</sup>, a subtle variation on the descending augmented chords from the opening of the second movement of Bartók’s Suite Op. 14.

as the musical drama unfolds. Voice-leading is assured and consistent, and the material is utilized with such economy that musical form is effectively self-generating. The fact that the tonal system has been twisted successfully to produce something entirely new only confirms Maconchy's own intentions, which were stated with equal perspicacity. In an article on the composer, violinist Anne MacNaghten writes:

Introducing her **Sixth Quartet** at the I.C.A. in February 1952, she said, 'Writing music, like all creative art, is the impassioned pursuit of an idea. . . The great thing is for the composer to keep his head down and allow nothing to distract him. The temptations to stop by the way and to be side-tracked by felicities of sound and colour are ever present, but in my view everything extraneous to the pursuit of this central idea must be rigorously excluded – scrapped.'<sup>6</sup>

So much for the idea of musical self-indulgence: this is a serious composer indeed. Maconchy is even more outspoken on matters of compositional technique. The article continues:

Bartok's music she discovered by herself, by chance. It set fire to her imagination, opening up new worlds. It also convinced her that she must set about the problems in her own way. 'The form. . . must proceed from the nature of the musical ideas themselves – one cannot simply pour music into a ready-made mould. The composer must try to evolve a form that is the inevitable outcome of his own musical ideas and provides for their fullest expression.' She believes that further harmonic and rhythmic advance must come through counterpoint. 'To crowd new and extraneous notes into existing harmonies may perhaps add a certain colour, but it does not represent any real development. On the other hand the several threads of the music moving in melodic lines can coalesce vertically to create a new harmonic interest. A counterpoint of rhythm exists side by side with melodic counterpoint. By the free movement of several rhythms simultaneously we can hope for more rhythmic development than by any amount of experiment with monodic rhythms.'<sup>7</sup>

After a cursory glance at just one of her songs, none of this comes as a surprise. Despite the fact that her personal style is the result of rigorous intellectual discipline, Maconchy nevertheless maintained that music must be the expression of emotion. "For me the best music is an impassioned argument. The rigid self-discipline which the composer must impose on himself must always be directed to the fullest expression of the underlying emotion and never to its exclusion."<sup>8</sup> There can be no doubt that this principle is at work in "The Sun Rising", where her passionate involvement in the text is everywhere apparent. From the vantage point of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century the notion of 'twistonality'—in its various

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<sup>6</sup> Anne MacNaghten. "Elizabeth Maconchy". <http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/fyfeholt/macnaghten.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> January, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> MacNaghten.

<sup>8</sup> MacNaghten.

guises—is thus helpful in describing the disciplined writing of those composers who have steadfastly refused to follow the latest trends and whose work represents a uniquely individual style crafted from free 12-note composition with or without the use of key centres and/or functional harmonic progression.



# 10

## UTILITARIAN MUSIC (1)

*A CAROL TRILOGY*

## Genesis

In early 2005 I was asked by a close family member to consider writing a work for *The Kapelle Singers* of Adelaide, a mixed choir with which he sang on a regular basis. The group is made up of good amateur and semi-professional singers, and under the direction of Colin Curtis they had already given impressive performances of many large-scale works, both *a capella* and with accompaniment. In December each year they present “Carols from around the World” at a public concert in St. Peter’s Cathedral, and as they were keen to include an Australian work I accepted the invitation to compose something for their Christmas concert. Clearly it should not be too technically demanding, and I decided that to err on the side of tradition would be preferable to providing a ‘new work’ that was dissonant, complex, or dull enough to dampen their enthusiasm!

Turning to *The Oxford Book of Carols*<sup>1</sup> for inspiration, it was not long before I found three poems (two secular and one sacred) which were immediately appealing: “Welcome Summer”, “Blow, Blow thou winter wind” and “I sing the birth was born tonight”.<sup>2</sup> With words by Geoffrey Chaucer (1340–1400), William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and Ben Jonson (1573–1637), they could easily be arranged chronologically to form *A Carol Trilogy*. The first was extremely simple and appeared to lend itself to lyrical treatment, whereas the Shakespeare carol was already well-known and might provide a more contrapuntal centrepiece. Ben Jonson’s poem, although it had four verses, suggested the possibility of a through-composed chorale. Once the texts were chosen my work began in earnest and all three settings were completed in five days, 25–30 May, 2005.

In many ways, the compositional process was similar to that used for the *Five Love Songs* and the *Six Holy Sonnets* because motivic and harmonic ideas were largely text-driven. Nevertheless, aside from the fact that I was now writing for an amateur choir, there were also three different authors. The challenge was thus to create a musically homogenous ‘trilogy’ while capturing the diversity of tone and sentiment contained in each poem. My intention, therefore, was to place an emphasis on melody in the first, counterpoint in the

<sup>1</sup> Dearmer, P., Vaughan Williams, R. and Shaw, M. *The Oxford Book of Carols*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1928).

<sup>2</sup> Nos. 128, 171 and 168 from *The Oxford Book of Carols*. “Welcome Summer” is set to an Irish Traditional tune, “Shakespeare’s Carol” is given in two settings by Dr. Arne and R.J.S. Stevens, and “Ben Jonson’s Carol” is set by Rutland Boughton. In *A Carol Trilogy* I have taken the liberty of naming “Welcome Summer” after the poet as well, i.e. “Chaucer’s Carol”.

second and harmony in the third carol so that—although the tonal language would remain consistent—changes in the vocal texture would highlight variations in the poetic idiom and emotional content.

## Method

“Chaucer’s Carol” is a very simple text, a roundel (the earliest form of carol) from the end of his book, *The Parliament of Fowles*. The opening lines evoked an immediate association with the well-known round, “Sumer is icumen in”—with which Chaucer himself may have been familiar—and though this is pure speculation on my part, it is interesting to discover that in the only surviving manuscript of the famous “Cuckoo Song” (see Ex. 1), there is a liturgical text written in red beneath the first set of words.

### Ex. 1. “Sumer is icumen in”: Dual text<sup>3</sup>



“This early Middle English *rota*, a canon for several voices, survives in a manuscript from Reading Abbey dating from the mid-thirteenth century . . . The alternative Latin text in red ink beneath it is a lyric on the Passion. The main critical debate on the poem has centred on the relationship between the two texts: which came first, and what is the relationship between them?”

Although this information might appear superfluous, indirectly it confirms my reading of Chaucer’s text, which I took to be more serious that it appeared on the surface. The poem’s opening line, “Now welcome summer with thy sunne soft,” is immediately followed by a contrasting reference to the past winter and its long, black nights. “St. Valentine that art full high aloft” clearly depicts the birds who are now in flight, having been conceived in early Spring, i.e. around 14 February.<sup>4</sup> The lines “Well have they cause for to gladden oft,/since each of them recovered hath his make” are a poignant description of the natural urge to procreate, and although the sun has shaken off “this winter’s weathers” and driven away “the longe nightes black”, the poem appears to allude directly

<sup>3</sup> This illustration (London, British Library, Harley MS 978f. 11v) and accompanying text were found online at <http://www.soton.ac.uk/~wpwt/harl978/sumer.htm>, 23 September, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> “For this was on Seynt Valentynes day,/ Whan every foul cometh there to chese his make [mate]...” (Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Parliament of Fowles*, circa 1380). Geoffrey Chaucer (1342/43–1400) brought together the imagery of blooming spring and the tradition that birds choose their mates in spring to describe the courtship of Richard II and Anne of Bohemia. In *The Parliament of Fowles* Chaucer also chose Saint Valentine as a patron for that marriage, which is the first mention of Saint Valentine in a love poem.” © Canadian Heritage Information Network 2004.

<http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/Valentin/English/4/441.php3>, 23 September, 2006.

to the stark contrast between the realities of life and death. In this sense, Chaucer expresses equally the joy of summer and a deep awareness of what has gone before and is certain to come again, so the overall mood is wistful, even serious, rather than celebratory. Thus it is the overall tenor of the poem—rather than ‘individual-word-painting’—which explains the use of parallel major and minor modes and unresolved (or ‘stand-alone’) 7th chords throughout the work.

In “Chaucer’s Carol”, since melodic content was to be of primary interest, most of the text is delivered by a small section of the choir while the remaining choristers provide static harmonic support. Tonality as such is somewhat undermined by the use of second inversion chords, which tend to lack stability when used independently (i.e. rather than as passing chords, or as part of a final cadence). The thematic material was heavily influenced by natural speech rhythms and a simplicity of structure allowed for adjustments to be made according to the text at any given point. The first four phrases illustrate how melodic contours and internal rhythms were adapted to fit the words (see Ex. 2), the last few of which are echoed by the chorus, confirming harmonic orientation rather than firmly established key-centres.

### Ex. 2. “Chaucer’s Carol”: thematic material adapted to text

Now wel - come sum mer, with thy sun - ne soft,  
 That hast this win - ter's wea thers o - ver - shake  
 And driven a - way the lon - ge night - es black.  
 Saint Val - en - tine that art full high on loft,

When the first line (“Now welcome summer” etc.) returns at bar 17, the music moves up a semitone to G $\flat$  major, but as in the opening bars, the chord is heard again in second inversion. In keeping with what I believe to be Chaucer’s more serious ‘sub-text’, there is once again a musical reflection on “this winter’s weathers”. This time, however, it is created by what one might call an aural illusion. Instead of reappearing in the parallel minor, yet another variation on the melodic line is delivered by the lower voices (altos and

baritones) over an  $A\flat M7$  chord in first inversion. This gives the impression of lowering the tonal centre when in fact the opposite occurs (see Ex. 3). The effect is achieved by a combination of change in the vocal register (*tessitura*) and very direct voice-leading.

**Ex. 3. “Chaucer’s Carol”:** = bars 18–22

Now wel-come sum-mer with thy sun-ne soft  
7 That hast this win-ter's wea-ther o-ver-shake.

In this carol the melodic material is always delivered either as a single line or in unison octaves. The only exception comes in bars 25–26, where there is a token gesture towards ‘word-,’ or rather, ‘thought-painting’. Here the idea of producing offspring provokes the only example of repetition in the melodic line: a rising major 2nd is used three times in succession (see Ex. 4), and the phrase is delivered simultaneously, in parallel motion, in three different parts.

**Ex. 4. “Chaucer’s Carol”:** = bars 25–27

since each of them re-cov-ered hath his make;

At the time I hoped that this would be subtle enough to be musically effective without sounding ‘*cliché*’d; but more importantly, it promoted the idea that the next line—“Full blissful may they singen when they wake”—should be an augmentation of the first phrase delivered by the whole choir in unison. According to my interpretation, this was another significant part of the ‘sub-text’, suggesting a reference to the Resurrection, or at least the possibility of an after-life. Thus the melody has now become self-sufficient, involving the whole choir: F major (by tonal implication) is followed by a  $C^9$  in second inversion which, by a subtle twist of the aural imagination, doubles as a substitute for chord ii (see Ex. 5) since G is the bass note and all chord factors of the G minor triad are present. Nevertheless, when followed immediately by chord I (now heard for the first time in root position), it naturally forms part of a conventional V–I cadence.

## Ex. 5. “Chaucer’s Carol”: = bars 28–31

Full bliss - ful may they sing-en when they wake Now wel - come

Two other small points are worth noting in relation to “Chaucer’s Carol”. One is that in rehearsal the suggestion was made that the *portamento* marked in bars 32–33 should be executed by one singer rather than by the whole section because otherwise, especially at a moderate tempo, there was a danger of intonation and ensemble being compromised. When this idea was put into practice, the difference in the sound was quite remarkable; it therefore received my unconditional approval. The second point is that for the entire work—apart from the D $\flat$  in bars 17–20, the unison melody quoted in Ex. 4 and the final low F—the basses are only required to sing the note ‘C’. This is simply a private joke: the ‘close family member’, whose idea it was that I should write for *The Kapelle Singers*, is a bass baritone!

Shakespeare’s poem “**Blow, blow thou winter wind**” is from *As You Like It*, Act II. It consists of two verses and a chorus, but of the two settings in the *Oxford Book of Carols* only the later one includes the chorus.<sup>5</sup> I also chose to omit it on the grounds that, although it clearly refers to the Christmas season, there is a radical change in tone—and the last line appears to be quite cynical:

Heigh-ho! Sing heigh-ho! Unto the green holly:  
 Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:  
 Then, heigh-ho! The holly!  
 This life is most jolly.

The first two poems in the Trilogy are clearly secular, but I had already set the first in a manner intended to highlight its allegorical tone (referred to above as the ‘sub-text’). I now chose to concentrate on the stern moral aspect of the Shakespearian text in the hope that growing musical complexity might help to suggest a gradual shift from the secular to the sacred. This, in turn, influenced the choice of key-centre for “Shakespeare’s Carol”: C minor, or—in relation to the previous carol—the dominant minor. In order to avoid a sudden, blatant announcement of the new key, the 2-bar introduction (see Ex. 5) moves

<sup>5</sup> A footnote below the second version indicates that “Dr. Arne (1710–78) does not include the chorus, as Stevens (1757–1837) does.” *The Oxford Book of Carols*, 357.

from a neutral  $D\flat$  chord (with no 3rd) to an ambiguous minor 6th ( $C-A\flat$ ) which is retrospectively defined as F minor in second inversion, even though the C chord in bar 3 (see Ex. 6) is qualified only by an  $E\flat$  in the melodic line.

**Ex. 6. “Shakespeare’s Carol”: = bars 1–4**

When hearing this for the first time, the listener (with no knowledge of the new key-signature) might hear the first 2 chords as  $I-V^6$  in  $D\flat$  major. Following on from the previous carol,  $\flat VI-\flat III$  in the key of F major are not so far removed. Once the melody begins, however, the chords are instantly re-interpreted as  $\flat II-iv^{\flat}$  in the new key.

Since my energies in the initial stages were focussed on these subtleties of tonal ambivalence and the possibility of increasing contrapuntal activity while maintaining strong harmonic support, I paid little attention to the shape of the melody, which appeared quite naturally—almost of its own accord. It therefore came as a complete surprise when several people later said it reminded them of the Anglican hymn (see Ex. 7), “Let all mortal flesh keep silence”.<sup>6</sup>

**Ex. 7. “Let all mortal flesh keep silence”: Picardy 87.87.87**

Although the striking resemblance of “Shakespeare’s Carol” to the opening bars of the hymn was purely accidental, it now seems appropriate that this “traditional carol melody” possibly dates from the seventeenth century. Of course, since I copied the words of the poem directly from *The Oxford Book of Carols*, it could also be that I was subconsciously

<sup>6</sup> Hymn No. 418 from *The Australian Hymn Book: with Catholic Supplement*. Melody Line edition. (Sydney: Wm Collins, 2001), 498. The tune is identified in *The Australian Hymn Book* as a “French traditional carol melody (17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century) from ‘Chansons Populaires des Provinces de France, 1860’”, and “as in the ‘English Hymnal’, 1860.” The text is acknowledged as “from the Liturgy of St. James c. 5<sup>th</sup> cent, *tr.* Gerard Moultrie 1829–85”.

influenced by Thomas Arne's well-known setting (see Ex. 8)<sup>7</sup>, which begins—almost literally—with an inversion of the same material!

**Ex. 8. Thomas Arne: “Blow, blow, thou winter wind”<sup>8</sup>**

(CHRISTMAS, SECULAR)

*Moderato.* *mf* DR. ARNE [Arr. M. S.]

1 Blow, blow, thou win - ter  
freeze, thou bit - ter

Whatever the case, in my own work a combination of ascending and descending scale fragments is set against punctuating chords which also deliver the text but at a slower tempo, providing—in the first instance—a kind of rhythmic counterpoint. The use of parallel fourths in bar 7 begins to thicken the texture and by bar 9, where the main activity shifts to the lower voices (see Ex. 9), the accompanying chords begin to create a melodic counterpoint as well.

**Ex. 9. “Shakespeare’s Carol”: = bars 9–12**

As man's in - gra - ti - tude. As man's in - gra - ti - tude.

The words “Blow, blow,” are reinserted mid-way through the first verse (bars 13–14) allowing the same material to be used again in an expanded version. The melodic contours are now stretched (see Ex. 10), and the inclusion of another bar of 7/4 bar marks the end of the first stanza.

<sup>7</sup> In an article on Thomas Arne in *Groves Music Online*, Peter Hollman and Todd Gilman write: “In the theatrical season 1740–41 (Thomas Arne) composed music for the Drury Lane productions of *The Tempest*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night* and *The Merchant of Venice*, including songs such as ‘Where the bee sucks’ and ‘Under the greenwood tree’ that have never been surpassed or forgotten since they were written.” <http://www.grovemusic.com/shared/views/article.html?section=music.40018.1#music.40018.1>, 24 September, 2006.

Writing for the *Groves* Fifth Edition, however, William H. Husk gives more precise information: “Under the greenwood tree”, “Blow, blow, thou winter wind” and “When daisies pied” were written on 20 December, 1740, “the same year in which Shakespeare’s *As You Like It* was being performed at Drury Lane Theatre, after having been laid aside for forty years”. In *Groves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Vol. 1. Eric Blom, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1954) 209.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Arne. “Shakespeare’s Carol”. No. 171, *The Oxford Book of Carols*, 352.



## Ex. 10. “Shakespeare’s Carol”: = bars 21–23

At the beginning of the second stanza the two introductory chords begin one step higher but are ‘frozen’ into 4ths (see Ex. 11) to accompany the words “Freeze, freeze,” and the minor 6th (C–A $\flat$ ) is delayed to give a tinge of previous colour (and a hint of tonal uncertainty) to the anticipated tonic chord.

## Ex. 11. “Shakespeare’s Carol”: = bars 24–27

From here on the texture thickens considerably through parallel transposition of the melodic line, reaching a climax (bars 32–33) which takes longer than expected to subside (bars 34–37). A complete change of colour (D $\flat$  major in second inversion) is used for a more lyrical treatment of the line “Though thou the waters warp”, facilitating the enharmonic change to C $\sharp$  minor (bar 43) and allowing for a more dramatic repetition of the line “As friend remembered not” (bars 46–48) a semitone lower. Simple ‘twistonality’ thus helps to provide a structural solution, since key relationships and the juxtaposition of distantly related chords are crucial to an explicit revelation of the poem’s penetrating emotional content.

In keeping with the idea of a musical triptych or ‘trilogy’, the last carol is also set in F major. The longest of the three poems, “**Ben Jonson’s Carol**” consists of four 6-line stanzas which are overtly sacred (and occasionally sentimental) in tone. Compared with Chaucer’s superbly compact imagery and Shakespeare’s metaphorical austerity, Jonson’s text is clearly more narrative in style. While there are moments of theological density (e.g. “The Word, which heaven and earth did make,/Was now laid in a manger”), the language also has evangelical overtones: neither a simple allegory nor a burst of impassioned rhetoric, this is a sweet-and-sour account of the Christmas story delivered in metaphysical poetry. Thus the music is through-composed as a lilting chorale in 6/8 time. In order to reflect the

taut structure of the poem together with its emotional content, regular pauses outline formal divisions in the text, while directional (if not entirely ‘functional’) chord progression becomes an important compositional device, steering the tonality in various directions in order to amplify the dramatic events and provide on-going momentum.














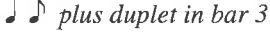

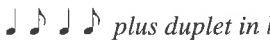
Of the three carols, this one is clearly the most celebratory in character. It therefore opens with the female voices in unison (see Ex. 12) and quickly rises from F to G $\flat$  major in order to establish a sudden sense of awe and wonder.

**Ex. 12. “Ben Jonson’s Carol”: = bars 1-9**

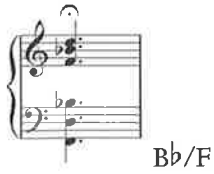







The musical score for 'Ben Jonson's Carol' (bars 1-9) is presented in a single system. It features a treble clef and a 6/8 time signature. The melody is written in a simple, repetitive style, with lyrics: 'I sing the birth was born to-night, The au-thor both of life and light; The an-gels did so sound it, The an-gels did so sound it.' The bass line is mostly rests, with some chords in the final bars.

This work was literally ‘through-composed’ in linear fashion by an intuitive process whereby the text itself—i.e. the meaning of individual words, phrases and concepts—dictated the voice-leading, the chord types, the harmonic direction and the implied (but often ambiguous) key-centres suggested at the cadence points, which are invariably marked with a pause. In the first stanza the third and last lines are repeated in order to provide rhythmic stability, but this ‘echo effect’ is varied for the second verse, where only some of the third line is reiterated, and the last line not at all. In order to counteract what could have become a monotonous rhythm (♩ ♪ ♩ ♪) delivered in regular phrase lengths, pauses occur in the third stanza at the end of lines 2 and 3, and duplets are introduced as the main rhythmic unit leading to a climax in bars 58–59. Although this is a very simple composition, the use of block chords in a prevailing tonal context with an uninterrupted time-signature of 6/8 meant that tedious repetition had to be avoided both rhythmically and harmonically. In order to show how this was done, Table 10.1 provides a summary of the musical structure in relation to selected phrases, the relevant text and its position within the poem.

Table 10.1: “Ben Jonson’s Carol”—Summary of Harmonic and Rhythmic Structure<sup>9</sup>

Verse, line	Bars	Last chord	Implied Key	Text and Rhythm
V.1, line 3	6–7	 G <sup>b</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup> M	“The angels did so sound it”.  etc.
V.1, line 3	8–10	 G <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup> M	“The angels did so sound it”.  etc.
V.1, line 6	15–16	 D <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>b</sup> M	“Yet searched, and true they found it.”  etc.
V.1, line 6	17–19	 D <sup>b</sup>	D <sup>b</sup> M	“Yet searched, and true they found it.”  etc.
V.2, line 3	24–25	 B <sup>9</sup> ( <sup>b5</sup> ) <sup>13</sup>	E(M/m?)	“And freed our soul from danger.”  etc.
V.2, line 3	26–27	 A <sup>7</sup> ( <sup>b9</sup> )	D(M/m?)	“. . . our soul from danger.”  <i>plus duplet in bar 26</i>
V.2, line 6	31–33	 G <sup>7</sup> ( <sup>13</sup> )	CM	“Was now laid in a manger”.  <i>plus duplet in bar 31</i>
V.3, line 2	36–37	 G <sup>b</sup> M <sup>6</sup> /D <sup>b</sup>	G <sup>b</sup> M	“The Son’s obedience knew no No;”  <i>plus duplet in bar 37</i>

<sup>9</sup> In this Table popular chord notation has been used in order to clarify the mixed (enharmonic) spellings which have occurred as a direct result of the voice leading; notation is inconsistent as legibility sometimes required the use of different accidentals in the various parts. The Table is simply intended to give an overview of the work. While it records accurately the amount of text repetition and the placement of pauses in relation to the poem’s structure, it does not illustrate completely the variety of chord-types used, or the number of key-centres visited. Tritone substitutes were also employed as a variable and are intended to act as a musical reflection of the slightly ‘cloying’ religious tone of Jonson’s verse.

Verse, line	Bars	Last chord	Implied Key	Text and Rhythm
V.3, line 3	38–39	 B $\flat$ /F	B $\flat$ M	“Both wills were in one stature.” ♪ ♪ combined with ♪ ♪ <i>duplet</i>
V.3, line 6	44–45	 D7	GM	“And took on him our nature” ♪ ♪ <i>Duplets</i>
V.3, line 6	46–48	 G13	CM	“And took on him our nature” ♪ ♪ <i>Duplets</i>
V.4, line 2	51–52	No pause	A $\flat$ M	“Who made himself the price of sin” ♪ ♪ ♪ <i>combination</i>
V.4, line 2	53–54	No pause	A $\flat$ M	“Who made himself the price of sin” ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ etc.
V.4, line 3	55–56	 G $\flat$ 7 <sup>(<math>\flat</math>5)</sup>	C $\flat$ M/FM	“To make us heirs of glory.” ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪
V.4, line 3	57–59	 F7	CM	“To make us heirs of glory.” ♪ ♪ <i>Duplets</i>
V.4, line 4	60–61	 F	FM	“To see this babe, all innocence,” ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪
V.4, line 5	62–63	 F/C	FM	“A martyr born in our defence” ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪
V.4, line 6	57–59	 FM7	FM	“Can man forget the story?” ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪ ♪

While this Table indicates that the chorale was largely conceived within a ‘twistonal’ framework, using both diatonic and chromatically inflected harmony, the ending reveals a return to the simplicity of F major in order to bring symmetry to the Trilogy as a whole.

In this chapter I have tried to show how texts by three different authors might be set to music so that the characteristic tone of each poem is captured but at the same time contained within a larger stylistic framework. While each of the carols is made up of similar musical elements, each has been designed in such a way as to favour a certain ingredient, thereby producing subtle variations in flavour equivalent to stylistic divergence in the texts. The use of three different time-signatures (4/4, 5/4 and 6/8) helps to establish a characteristic rhythm for each carol, yet all three are almost identical in length (c. 2' 33", 2' 42" and 2' 40"). Tonal symmetry is achieved by the choice of keys (F major/C minor/F major) and by the extended use of simple diatonic harmony (F major) for the beginning of the first and the closing bars of the third carol. As an exercise in composition, *A Carol Trilogy* provided the opportunity to explore an approach to text-setting in which the musical language was twisted to reflect the overall tone of the poems rather than the meaning of individual words.

Fortunately the choir's reaction to these works was positive. Although many passages needed careful practice, "Chaucer's Carol" proved the most technically demanding—largely because of the soprano leaps to the high F and G<sup>b</sup> in the opening phrases. "Ben Jonson's Carol" also took time to settle as swift chord changes and unexpected modulations required the singers to pay strict attention to intonation. These problems, however, were eventually solved in a series of rehearsals and *A Carol Trilogy* was successfully performed by *The Kapelle Singers* on 16 December, 2005. In designating this work as 'utilitarian', I refer to the fact that it was purposely designed to accommodate the vocal strengths and weaknesses of a relatively large, mixed amateur choir. Thus the concept of 'twistonality' may also be informed by practical considerations relating to matters of style, transparency of structure, duration, and/or level of difficulty. Seen from this perspective, the term 'twistonal' might also be useful in describing educational music which invites the listener to accept new ideas within the confines of a more familiar tonal landscape.

# 11

## UTILITARIAN MUSIC (2)

*FOUR CORNER FANFARE*

## Genesis

In late 2002, soon after the commencement of my candidature, it was suggested that I should write a fanfare for use at Graduation ceremonies, and that this might involve arranging the players in all four corners of the University's Bonython Hall. The work should last "about two and a half minutes" but be flexible enough in duration to accommodate academic processions of varying size. If the 'four-corner' idea were to be realised, the work needed to be scored for an even number of instruments; and for such an occasion it seemed appropriate to write for the Elder Conservatorium's Brass Ensemble. Thus an agenda was soon established. The new work would be:

- a simple fanfare suitable for use as a processional, and therefore probably in 4/4 time;
- music with a sense of occasion, totally accessible to the general public;
- a work scored for 10 brass instruments;
- something which was moderately difficult, a challenge for students but capable of being rehearsed and performed within a relatively short time-frame; and
- a piece which might prove effective at various speeds, and/or with some built-in flexibility in terms of its total duration.

## Method

I began with a very simple 2-bar phrase in the key of B $\flat$  major (see Ex. 1), using a typical fanfare rhythm and a strong tonic/dominant relationship to facilitate imitation of the opening motif at the half-bar by each pair of instruments in turn. As this idea took hold, the material was extended to form an 8-bar phrase which divides neatly into 4 segments.

### Ex. 1. *Fanfare*: = bars 3–10

The musical notation for Ex. 1, *Fanfare*, bars 3–10, is for Tpt in B $\flat$ . It consists of two staves of music. The first staff contains segments A and B, and the second staff contains segments C and D. Segment A (bars 3–4) begins with a half rest, followed by quarter notes G $\flat$ 2, A2, and B2. Segment B (bars 5–6) begins with a half rest, followed by quarter notes G $\flat$ 2, A2, and B2. Segment C (bars 7–8) begins with a half rest, followed by quarter notes G $\flat$ 2, A2, and B2. Segment D (bars 9–10) begins with a half rest, followed by quarter notes G $\flat$ 2, A2, and B2. The notation includes various rhythmic values and accidentals.

I then began to incorporate the idea of parallel transposition to thicken the harmonic texture, but by the time I reached bar 9 it became obvious that some sort of scheme should

be devised in order to develop these ideas in an orderly fashion. I needed to create a graphic representation of what had already been written, and to decide how to build on this initial structure. This diagram is represented by Table 11.1, where the letters ‘A’, ‘B’ etc. refer to the 2-bar phrases shown in Example 1 above. The numbers ‘1’ and ‘2’ indicate parallel transpositions at the 4th and 5th; the letter ‘v’ represents a slight variation of the melodic material and the letter ‘s’ stands for the simplified version used in the bass:

**Table 11.1: Four Corner Fanfare—Schematic Representation**

Bars	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Tpt 1	A			B			D	
Tpt 2	A			B		C1	D1	
Tpt 3		A		B		C	D2	
Hn 1		A		B		C1	D	
Hn 2		A		B		C	D1	
Tbn 1		A		B		C1	D2	
Tbn 2			A		B		C	A
B Tbn			A		B		C1	A
Euph			A		B		C	D
Tba			A		B		C1	

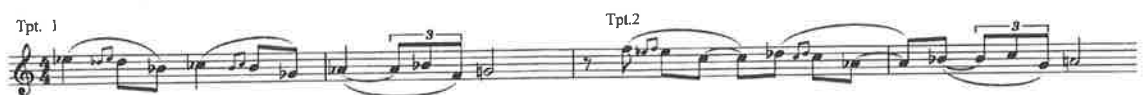
  

Bars	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
16Tpt 1	Av		Bv		Cv		Dv	
Tpt 2	Av		Bv		Cv		Dv	
Tpt 3		Dv		Cv		Bv		Av
Hn 1		Dv		Cv		Bv		Av
Hn 2		Dv1		Cv1		Bv1		Av
Tbn 1		Dv2		Cv2		Bv2		Bv
Tbn 2		RE- PEAT		Dv		Cv		Bv
B Tbn		RE- PEAT		Dv1		Cv1		Bv2
Euph		As		Bs		Cs		Ds
Tba		As		Bs		Cs		Ds

This clarified things considerably and enabled me to continue writing in a purely contrapuntal style allowing the harmonies to emerge of their own accord. The occasional dissonance did not detract from the character of individual phrase segments and a simplified bass line provided harmonic stability. I eventually veered away from the plan in bar 16, however, sensing that a change of pace was needed as well as a change of key.

The introduction of a more lyrical idea (see Ex. 2) now seemed appropriate: the following phrase (an extension of ‘C’ in Ex. 1) is presented in a rising sequence at bar 19.

**Ex. 2. Four Corner Fanfare: = bars 19–22**





While these 4 bars provided a contrast in mood, the music seemed to demand a return to the triplet figures in order not to lose momentum. The fanfare motif was therefore incorporated into the prevailing A<sup>7</sup> harmony (bars 23–24) which heralds the appearance of a more stately idea (incorporating ‘horn fifths’) in D major. In this section the pivotal tonic/dominant relationship continues, and a simple I–V–I chord progression (see Ex. 3) strides forward over a tonic pedal point in the new key.

**Ex.3. *Four Corner Fanfare*: = bars 25–26**



Meanwhile, the semiquaver triplet figures are continued at first in the accompanying voices, and then featured again in the subsequent material, all of which is derived from Example 1. The second half of the piece is more homophonic in style partly because of the necessity to accumulate tension by the use of more colourful chords, and in order to facilitate an audible return to the original key of B $\flat$  major. However, the use of imitation continues within a predominantly tonal context.

By bar 30 the music seemed to be making its own way towards an inevitable conclusion, and once the climax was reached it seemed logical to include dramatic pauses based on the rhythm of ‘C’ above (bars 38–39), and a final *rallentando* which could be rhythmically manipulated to define the time-line governing the procession itself. In other words, if the conductor were to keep an eye on the proceedings, the last beat of the final chord might easily be delayed to coincide with the arrival of academic staff at their final destination.

## Performance and Revision

The work was scheduled for performance at the Graduation ceremonies in August 2003. In anticipation of the fact that the ‘four-corner’ idea would work, I prepared a diagram to indicate how the players might arrange themselves in the hall (see Table 11.2).

**Table 11.2: *Four Corner Fanfare*—Arrangement of Players**

<b>Stage</b>	
Tpt 1	Tbn 1
Tpt 2	Euph
Hn 1	
B.Tbn	Tpt 3
Tuba	Hn 2
	Tbn 2
<b>Rear of Hall</b>	

Unfortunately this exercise served only to highlight the fact that the ensemble would need to be unconducted, so I decided to write an elementary organ part which would essentially duplicate the material presented by each of the four groups of players, on a rotating basis. I also added a 2-bar introduction which would set a clear tempo without detracting altogether from the simplicity of the opening fanfare motif. The intention was that the organ should assist—or effectively conduct—the ensemble and help to focus the sound within the venue. The students, however, were relatively inexperienced and, since there was limited rehearsal time, the idea of performing from the four corners of the hall (or even from opposing sides) proved unrealistic. Instead, it was decided that the players should assemble—with their conductor—in the balcony above stage right. The organ, situated in the opposite balcony (stage left), was used merely in order to create a more balanced, ‘stereophonic’ sound within the hall. Rehearsals soon revealed that the cross-rhythms were actually quite tricky from the point of view of ensemble and that the work was more difficult for the players than I had imagined. Nevertheless the performances were able to be timed correctly on each occasion and, in terms of the original brief, the outcome was satisfactory.

In revising the work for inclusion in the portfolio, I have been greatly assisted by the Notes provided by the conductor, Howard Parkinson.<sup>1</sup> He points out that in the first two rehearsals the work seemed “messy and hard to grasp”, but that in the end it “worked well

<sup>1</sup> Howard Parkinson is currently Head of Brass Studies at the Elder Conservatorium of Music, The University of Adelaide. The quotations and numbered points in this paragraph are taken from the typed Notes which he provided some time after the performance.

and was very effective". He suggests that even with a professional ensemble it would be very difficult to "keep it tight" in the four corner set-out, although I believe that, given enough rehearsal time, this could be achieved. All of his suggestions (given here in italics) gave valuable insight into the problems which arose and were solved in rehearsal; my reactions are given in normal type.

1. *bar 12: Added a crescendo to Tpt 3, Tbn 2 and B.Tbn.*

This suggests that these players did not follow through on the *crescendi* marked in previous bars, and as a result the score remains unaltered.

2. *bar 14: Added a triplet ♭G for Tpt 3 on the second half of the second beat to match Tpt 1 and Tpt 2. This really helped the ensemble.*
3. *bar 15: Added triplet Gs to Tpt 1 and 2 in last beat of bar.*

These were very valuable suggestions which have been adopted in the final version. The original notation (see Fig. 1) now seems quite bizarre and I could see no reason not to double the G in Tpt.3 (bar 14). Bar 15 has also been rectified (semiquaver rests replaced by Gs) to assist with the ensemble.

**Fig. 1. Four Corner Fanfare, v. 1: = bars 13–15**

4. *bar 19: Had to adjust dynamics to bring out the horn line. Brought the horns up a notch.*

**Fig. 2. Four Corner Fanfare, v. 1: = bars 19–20**

Inexperience meant that I did not allow for the fact that although the Horn line was to be of secondary importance, the trumpet is considerably brighter. The original markings (see Fig. 2) have therefore been adjusted in order to achieve a better balance.

5. *bar 23: Overall dynamic set at mp (excluding sfz)*

*bar 24: Overall dynamic set at mf (excluding sfz)*

I have since altered all the *sfz* markings to *sfp*, which should alleviate the problem, especially since there is a *crescendo* marked in bar 24.

6. *bar 34: Last beat and a half—doubled the top horn line (may not be necessary with professional horns, but we could not get it through with the players we had at the time).*

I did not feel that this warranted a change in the notation, although I have now changed the *fp cresc.* to *mf cresc.* for Horn 1.

7. *bar 40: Last beat for Tpts – held this for 2 triplet quavers which gave us a clean cut-off with the horns.*

**Fig. 3. Four Corner Fanfare, v. 1: = bars 39–40**

The image shows a musical score for five parts: Tpt. 1, Tpt. 2, Tpt. 3, Hn. 1, and Hn. 2. The score covers bars 39 and 40. It features a crescendo leading to a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The notation includes triplets and various rhythmic values.

This was another very reasonable suggestion which shows that great care needs to be taken when considering expectations of tightness in the ensemble. The original version (see Fig. 3) now looks quite shabby in comparison.

Other minor changes have included rationalisation of the instrumentation to avoid the overuse of extreme registers, and numerous alterations to the rhythmic notation, whereby dotted notes replaced ties or beams were added over rests to improve legibility. One of the more radical notational alterations was to thicken the texture in bars 36–37 where, according to the first version, the Euphonium ceased its melodic activity on the third beat of bar 36. This passage was almost always disappointing in performance although I had imagined the rising scale to be clearly indicative of a move towards the final cadence. Realising that performers are sometimes liable to be ‘spooked’ by passages which they feel are structurally significant (or particularly difficult), I added a further doubling for the euphonium in order to increase the team effort and perhaps secure a more reliable outcome. In the following examples, Figure 4 shows bars 36–37 as they appeared in the first version, and Figure 5 shows how the passage was altered to provide a richer texture and achieve a more definitive approach to the climax.

Fig. 4. *Fanfare*, v. 1: = bars 36–37

Musical score for Figure 4, showing bars 36-37 of the first version of the Four Corner Fanfare. The score includes parts for Tpt 1, Tpt 2, Tpt 3, Hrn 1, Hrn 2, Tn Tbn 1, Tn Tbn 2, B. Tbn, Euph, and Tba.

Fig. 5. *Fanfare*: bars 36–37

Musical score for Figure 5, showing bars 36-37 of the Four Corner Fanfare. The score includes parts for Tpt 1, Tpt 2, Tpt 3, Hrn 1, Hrn 2, Tn Tbn 1, Tn Tbn 2, B. Tbn, Euph, and Tba.

### Comparative Exploration

The first version of the *Four Corner Fanfare* was written on Boxing Day, 2002. This was largely the result of an intuitive approach in which the choice of simple melodic material and a paradigmatic fanfare rhythm acted as incentives for natural musical development. However it was crucial, in the early stages, to map out the structure of the first 16 bars, because with this solid foundation the subsequent sections were easier to imagine and the ending presented itself in due course as a logical conclusion. Because the work is relatively short, it provides a clear example of the need for a combination of intellectual discipline and spontaneous improvisation. The first nine bars (which have since remained unaltered) were written in ten minutes, whereas over an hour was spent on the graphic design and subsequent realisation of the following seven bars according to the plan. The organ part (including the 2-bar introduction) was added several months later and may almost be regarded as optional since it was not part of the original conception; it simply duplicates existing material without adding any musical substance.

Bearing in mind the fact that this was to be a ‘simple fanfare’, it seems relevant to ask how the initial eight bars were effectively able to generate the rest of the work. In terms of its internal structure, how did this piece suddenly begin to write itself? What serves to make the work accessible, perhaps on some level even satisfying? One way of explaining this is to suggest that, while the opening bars form a balanced, almost self-contained musical statement (albeit one which ends in an imperfect cadence), they also contain a

variety of essential musical ingredients. Whether one is listening to a miniature work of this nature, or a large-scale work of symphonic proportions, a certain amount of emotional satisfaction is always derived from a composition in which the structure is inherent, as it were, in the opening phrase. I refer here to something which is heard and understood at an almost subconscious level, but which nevertheless proves very powerful. Lest this idea be regarded as a dangerous generalisation, it is worth expanding here for the purpose of demystification. Two well-known works from the classical repertoire serve as illustrations.

A good example of organic development within a tonal context is Beethoven's Violin Concerto, Op. 61. I have always been fascinated by the way in which all three movements are completely self-contained, musical gems in their own right, and yet the concerto as a whole seems to be more than the sum of its parts. Its rhythmic structure is entirely straightforward, the first 2 movements being in common time and the last in 6/8. Its harmonic structure is also relatively unadventurous, relying heavily on tonic-dominant equilibrium; the outer movements are in D major, while the slow movement is in G major, with plenty of emphasis on the dominant D. However, in terms of its melodic structure, a brief examination of the three movements reveals an interesting phenomenon. In the first movement, once the timpani has announced the time-signature, the opening theme (see Fig. 6) is a simple rearrangement of the D major scale.

Fig. 6. Beethoven Violin Concerto, I: bars 1-9<sup>2</sup>

With the exception of one 3rd and two 4ths, the intervals are all diatonic 2nds (the majority of which are descending) and from bar 13 (see Fig. 7) there is more of the same.

<sup>2</sup> Ludwig van Beethoven, Violin Concerto, Op. 61, (New York: Edwin F. Kalmus, 19-), Miniature Score.

Fig. 7. Beethoven Violin Concerto, I: bars 13-17



At bar 18 (see Fig. 8) this is counterbalanced by a sequence of uninterrupted ascending scale passages.

Fig. 8. Beethoven Violin Concerto, I: bars 18-21



Finally, at bar 43 we have the most memorable tune of all (see Fig. 9) consisting almost entirely of rising and falling scale passages interspersed with leaps from scale degrees  $\hat{1} - \hat{5}$ ,  $\hat{2} - \hat{5}$  and  $\hat{5} - \hat{1}$ .

Fig. 9. Beethoven Violin Concerto, I: bars 43-50

The second movement begins with a truncated version of the ascending scale and quickly moves to melodic arpeggiation (see Fig. 10). For me, this movement stands as an unparalleled example of how beautifully scales and arpeggios might be combined within a simple diatonic framework.

Fig. 10. Beethoven Violin Concerto, II: bars 1-9

II. 55

Larghetto  
con Sord.

VIOLINI I.  
II.

VIOLE

VIOLONCELLI  
CONTRABBASSI

Vai.  
Vie.  
Ve.  
Cb.

Entering in bar 11 (see Fig. 11), the violin presents arpeggiated chords in juxtaposition to the orchestral scale fragments so that a perfect balance is achieved between the two.

Fig. 11. Beethoven Violin Concerto, II: bars 10-13

Cl. Do

Cor. Sol

Vao pr.

Vai.

Vie.

Ve. Cb.

P. R. 492

In the third movement it is the arpeggio motif which becomes the dominating factor (see Fig. 12).

Fig. 12. Beethoven Violin Concerto, III: bars 1-8

RONDÒ  
Allegro  
SOLO sul Sol

VIOLINO PRINCIPALE

VIOLONCELLI

Vao pr.

Ve.



Whereas in the slow movement the arpeggio often played an accompanying role, here the process is reversed (see Fig. 13): the arpeggio is interrupted by the truncated scale.

Fig. 13. Beethoven Violin Concerto, III: bars 9–13

Eventually the scale passages return in a subsidiary role (see Fig. 14) while at the same time outlining the chord factors and rhythmically reflecting, as it were, the process of arpeggiation.

Fig. 14. Beethoven Violin Concerto, III: bars 44–49

Thus we discover that, over the course of the three movements, the melodic material is largely derived from scales and arpeggios in such a balanced and symmetrical fashion as to create an organic whole.

Another illustration of this type of 'organic' writing can be found in Bach's Fugue in C# minor from Book I of *The Well-tempered Clavier*.<sup>3</sup> Of all the fine examples in the 48 Preludes and Fugues, this one is particularly interesting because it appears to evolve so

<sup>3</sup> J.S.Bach. *Das Wohltemperierte Klavier*, I, ed. Franz Kroll. (Frankfurt: C.F.Peters, n.d.).

naturally from its relatively small parts. Quite aside from its strict, formal structure, we discover that three basic melodic cells have been used to outline the 3 segments of a minor chord (e.g. C#–E; E–G#; G#–C#) in notes of various length. The unusually brief opening subject (consisting only of scale degrees  $\hat{1}$ ,  $\hat{3}$  and  $\hat{2}$ —see Ex. 5) clearly defines the minor third in minims and semibreves.

**Ex. 5. Bach *WTC Bk. I*, Fugue No. 4: subject, bars 1–3**



Then, after a double exposition, the major third is filled out in quavers (see Ex. 6).

**Ex. 6. Bach *WTC Bk. I*, Fugue No. 4: bars 35–38**



And finally, although it appears first in another key, the last interval (see Ex. 7) is unveiled:

**Ex. 7. Bach *WTC Bk. I*, Fugue No. 4: bars 82–84**



Here all the note values are represented, and from this point on there is a real sense of impending closure. Since the whole Fugue is largely predicated upon these three ideas, it is little wonder that the jigsaw fits together with such precision and that the musical outcome is so immensely satisfying.

In microcosm, and at a very basic level, it is possible that a similar principle might be at work in the *Four Corner Fanfare*. Example 1 shows four 2-bar phrases, each with its own melodic and rhythmic characteristics—ingredients which proved useful in stimulating musical continuity. There can be no doubt that phrase ‘C’ inspired the more lyrical passage (see Ex. 3); that it probably also led to the idea quoted in Ex. 4; that the suspensions and continuous movement in bars 19–22 were deemed a necessary antidote to frequent punctuation (rests); that the absence of a complete scale allowed this to become a feature in bar 36; or that phrase ‘A’ also contained the idea of a closing gesture. In short, much of the music wrote itself according to models in which the most basic diatonic elements are manipulated to form an organic whole.

On the one hand, one could argue that the musical language in this work is highly conventional and that ‘twistonality’ is therefore negligible. On the other hand, one of the more distinctive features of the *Four Corner Fanfare* is its quasi-contrapuntal writing. The imitative melodic pattern (bars 3–18) based on chords I and V but tonally distorted through simultaneous parallel transposition is a technique which could certainly be described as ‘twistonal’. In any case it was important, in this penultimate chapter, to show how detailed architectural planning was combined with a more spontaneous approach, and to explain how—even at a subconscious level—formal structures may still be informed by historical models in order to meet utilitarian criteria.

## Conclusion

In Part C I have looked at three different works in order to show how the concept of ‘twistonality’ can also embrace a compositional process flexible enough to address specific stylistic requirements, performance standards, and even audience expectations. The reader will remember that in the Introduction, a number of questions were raised concerning the nature of originality, the relevance of scholarship, the importance of accessibility, and the relationship between process and product. While it was noted that “definitive answers to such controversial issues . . . lie well beyond the scope of this submission”, Part D revisits some of these concerns while attempting to place the research within a wider social context.

# PART D

## CODA

# 12

## TOWARDS A PERSONAL AESTHETIC

## Rationale

Of the many regular listeners for whom classical music is one of life's essential ingredients, most are not musically literate. Sometimes these amateur 'enthusiasts' venture opinions on music which are summarily dismissed (or entirely overlooked) by members of the profession, mainly because their literary descriptions and theatrical or cinematic representations of performance or instrumental teaching are either misguided, or exaggerated. Musicians tend to hear a hollow ring and shy away from interpretations of a subjective world which (they believe) they understand in far more detail, a world in which they recognize far greater subtlety of nuance. Professional musicians are generally outnumbered, however, by those who might have become musicians but for the lure of safer, more suitable or more lucrative careers. Practising amateurs and those who have had some early musical training make up a large proportion of live audiences. Avid collectors of recordings and CDs, they are often well-informed about the arts in general. When they turn their attention to music, non-specialist writers and philosophers with some musical training often provide a healthy commentary on the most abstract of the arts. At best, they reveal their own musical expectations, disappointments and enthusiasms in language which is clear and concise, and since their concerns are normally expressed within a wider social context, their comments on the state of contemporary music deserve serious consideration by performers and composers alike.

While such intellectual dialogue has long formed part of the fabric of cultured society, many professional musicians still admit indifference to outside opinions. Ideas that might be expected to exert some influence on musical trends often remain isolated, far removed from the concert hall and the recording studio, and rarely discernible within the individual teaching environment. At the same time, the trend towards artistic fusion has rapidly increased: a merging and dissolving of art-forms, together with an emphasis on individual stardom—for performers, composers and even the critics themselves—has been greatly assisted by revolutions in technology, the media's rise to power, and the arrival of instant global communication. The new culture provides a veritable quagmire of 'informed commentary'; one need only read the latest CD reviews to realise that self-aggrandising or superficial evaluation can be both damaging and prejudicial. What, then, should be taken seriously?

Fortunately, humanistic scholarship is easily recognizable. In order to provide a wider frame of reference for the discussion of works in this portfolio, I refer here to various writers who have influenced or supported my own musical aesthetic: indeed, most of the quotations selected for inclusion in this chapter had already come to my attention in the normal course of events. They neither relate specifically to any of the compositions nor were selected in order to evaluate, judge or justify any particular compositional style or method. They are simply statements which have found resonance within my own psyche, thoughts which have echoed or altered my existing *Weltanschauung*, ideas which have stimulated my creative endeavours. Moving from the general to the more particular, this final chapter pays tribute to some of the many writers who have helped to shape my personal experience, encouraged me to challenge authority and resist certain conventions which I might otherwise have comfortably espoused.

### The Social Context

To cite here even a handful of the most vivid, the most passionate or the most convincing descriptions of the purpose of art in society might appear self-indulgent, but a brief glance at some relatively recent examples is pertinent to this discussion. One of the most compelling is given by Edward de Bono in his best-selling book on lateral thinking, *I am Right, You are Wrong*.<sup>1</sup> Having categorised the aesthetic, emotional and perceptual aspects of art, de Bono quickly homes in on the latter, stating that “culturally, we have left perception to the world of art (not just high art, but art in the broadest sense).”<sup>2</sup> In answer to the question: “Does art change perceptions or reinforce the ones that already exist in society?”<sup>3</sup>, he argues his way, with colourful examples from everyday life, towards the following stance:

So we could say that art serves all three purposes: to reflect the perceptions that exist; to accelerate a change in perceptions; and occasionally to initiate a change in perceptions. Art does all this with assurance, dogma, righteousness, emotional intensity, blinkered vision and every trick of propaganda. Art is, and probably has to be, extremely intolerant. So we have all the arrogance and logic of belief systems in action once again. But we do not mind if all this is heading in the right

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<sup>1</sup> Edward de Bono. *I am Right, You are Wrong*. (London: Viking, 1990), 227.

<sup>2</sup> de Bono 227.

<sup>3</sup> de Bono 227.

direction (never mind how 'right' is determined). There may not be a mass following at the beginning, but if there is at the end then that must be 'right'.<sup>4</sup>

What is interesting is that de Bono then goes on to question whether society should "happily leave perceptions to the 'art' side while logic, science and mathematics get on with all the other aspects."<sup>5</sup> His answer is a resounding "no" on the grounds that:

. . . art may change perceptions but does nothing to encourage valuable perceptual habits. The righteousness and certainty I have mentioned already are the opposite of the subjective nature of perceptions or the possibility of looking at things in different ways. We may rely on art for perceptual enrichment but not for perceptual skills.<sup>6</sup>

One might expand this idea to suggest that, whereas perceptual habits might suddenly be changed through a mass following of currently fashionable ideas, perceptual skills (or valuable perceptual habits) are likely to emerge over a longer period of time. Such an argument might be applied in a variety of historical contexts to both musical composition and performance (as a re-creative art). For example, in the latter part of the eighteenth century a mass following led to a period of frenzied but weak artistic activity in which composers aligned themselves to new homophonic conventions only to become almost indistinguishable from one another in style. Subsequently there was a rapid decline in the art of figured bass realization as keyboard players became facile executants of shallow passage work at the expense of a much more demanding practice. Eventually, however, homophonic experimentation became almost synonymous with the development of sonata form. Andrew Ford refers to this when he cites a more recent example of mass following. In a chapter on John Adams, he remembers

something . . . Martin Buzacott had said to me many years ago. He suggested that capital-M Minimalism – the minimalism of the 1960s and 1970s, . . . the minimalism that used to continue the same way for hours – was only the beginning of something. Buzacott compared it to the advent of sonata form in the late eighteenth century, pointing out that the Classical style did not spring up, fully formed, in the Viennese masterpieces of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven; there had been lesser examples before them, experimenting with the form. . . . Buzacott's thesis was that Young, Riley, Reich and Glass were all Sammartinis; the really great composers of minimalism – the so-called post-minimalists – were yet to come.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> de Bono 228.

<sup>5</sup> de Bono 229.

<sup>6</sup> de Bono 229.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Ford. *In Defence of Classical Music*. (Sydney: ABC Books, 2005) 125.



An equally relevant but rather more disturbing observation has been made by John Ralston Saul in *The Unconscious Civilization*.<sup>8</sup> His main argument is that our society is increasingly in danger of putting conformism before genuine democracy, and corporatism before the individual; that language is used increasingly to represent special interest groups, rather than citizens of the community. Lamenting the manipulation of music and language by today's propagandists, Saul points out that these two arts "naturally express the emotive. Love, religion, nationalism, patriotism can be celebrated. But they can also be manipulated to wipe out thought."<sup>9</sup> The following statement is of particular interest:

The odd thing is that the tendencies of serious music—the art which in the past has produced the true magic of uncontrollable liberation—have turned in the second half of the twentieth century towards an arid, mechanistic rationalism. With a few remarkable exceptions, the field of public engagement in contemporary music has been left wide open to the propagandists.<sup>10</sup>

Such an opinion warns that the contemporary musical environment is in some way dysfunctional, or at least under serious threat. Propagandists prey on the unsuspecting, the vulnerable, those with potential allegiance to an idealistic cause. In a political sense, propagandists seek to convert the weak, to attract followers who will intellectually embrace a given ideological creed. Could Saul be referring here to those who, for the sake of overthrowing the degenerate musical regime of tonality, have hijacked audiences for the purpose of brainwashing them with complex serialism, indeterminacy, long-winded minimalism and deliberate musical anarchy? Or, indeed, to the fact that musical institutions have seized on the opportunity to encourage their eager young clients to make intellectual capital from antimusic?<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> John Ralston Saul. *The Unconscious Civilization*. (Melbourne: Penguin, 1997) 65-66.

<sup>9</sup> Saul 65-66.

<sup>10</sup> Saul 66.

<sup>11</sup> This paragraph had already been written when I discovered that similar thoughts have been expressed by the Australian composer Ross Edwards. As Margaret Barrett points out in her article "Teaching Composition: Lessons from an 'eminence' study", "Ross Edwards insists on the need to develop a strong and individual technique, cautioning the young composer against being 'hoodwinked by some tenured guru keen to recruit disciples and palm off a brand of bogus technical facility as a sure-fire career booster' (Composing Notes, 2004, p.59)." *Sounds Australian* 66 (2005): 40.

Even more recently I discovered that Howard Goodall's views are equally relevant. In an article entitled "What the Kids Think about Music", he explains that for today's school students, the experimental music of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century is "of tangential, non-musical interest – like a science experiment. It does not engage with their senses or their emotions at all. To some extent this explains their passionate distaste—one might even say loathing—for avante-garde modernism. Make no mistake about this. Theirs is not—as is sometimes alleged—an antipathy born of ignorance, or even of a squeamishness about dissonance (towards which they are entirely neutral), it is a mistrust of things that seem to be 'clever-clever', music for a PhD's sake, you might say." *Music Forum* 12.1.(2005-6): 33.

Thirty years ago David Cope described antimusic as “those sounds which destroy the mind (*danger music*), which don’t exist (*minimal and concept music*), or which come about without the hand of man (*biomusic and soundscapes*)”, music in which the composer is “in search of the ultimate paradox”, music which “is in reality an ‘anti-Western-tradition music’.”<sup>12</sup> The reality is that the ‘anti-Western-tradition’ is still very much alive, and that this “desperate search to invent that which truly has no alternative”<sup>13</sup> has continued under the guidance of many who have had minimal training or little experience in instrumental performance, and who have reacted negatively towards the music of the nineteenth century. At the same time, for many highly skilled practising musicians still working within the Western European performance traditions, music is primarily a means of emotional communication, rather than a vehicle for the delivery of any political or pseudo-philosophical stance. While it is true that the more traditional performer-composer might be both liberated and constrained by historical conventions (especially those pertaining to his own instrument), his musical language is traditionally linked to the past. Ravel’s advice to his own students, should they ever lack inspiration, was to spend time studying the works of the great composers:

If you have nothing new to say, you cannot do better, while waiting for the ultimate silence, than repeat what has been well said. If you do have something to say, that something will never be more clearly seen than in your unwitting infidelity to the model.<sup>14</sup>

Nothing could have been further from the mind of John Cage when he wrote his disarmingly novel 4'33" “for any instrument or combination of instruments”. What Ravel might have understood as a catastrophic lack of inspiration (or perhaps even a joke), Cage justified in psychological terms as:

something which seems at first to be a giving up of everything that belongs to humanity – for a musician, the giving up of music. This psychological turning leads to the world of nature, where, gradually or suddenly, one sees that humanity and nature, not separate, are in this world together; that nothing was lost when everything was given away. In fact everything is gained.<sup>15</sup>

Shock value, however, is short-lived. In the long term, four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence accompanied (elsewhere) by a philosophical explanation is unlikely to

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<sup>12</sup> David H.Cope. *New Directions in Music, Second Edition* (Dubuque: Wm C. Brown, 1980) 196.

<sup>13</sup> Cope 196.

<sup>14</sup> Roger Nichols. *Ravel*. (London: J.M.Dent & Sons, 1977) 118.

<sup>15</sup> John Cage. *Silence*. (Cambridge, Mass.:The M.I.T. Press, paperback edition, 1961) 8.

satisfy either the listener or the performer for whom music is a powerful means of emotional fulfilment. Cope alerted us to the fact that the avant-garde was “dead by its own hand and because its very life constantly shivered above a pit of self-destruction”<sup>16</sup>, but he also believed that we were on the verge of a significant era in which:

The prejudiced and insecure may still shelter behind a mainstream door, yet those who venture forth freely to take quiet advantage of the evident skills of both recent schools of thought (tradition and innovation, technique and intuition) are, will, and have been braving an exciting new credible sensitivity into the world of music.<sup>17</sup>

Such sentiments have doubtless been expressed on a regular basis within every civilization. After all, Plutarch noted that “music, to create harmony, must investigate discord”.<sup>18</sup>

### The Creative Process

In their introduction to Theodor W. Adorno’s *Philosophy of Modern Music*, the English translators concede that “the difficulty of [his] German is a matter of legend.”<sup>19</sup> The following passage, describing the dialectics of loneliness in relation to Schoenberg, is potentially intimidating:

The forms of art reflect the history of man more truthfully than do documents themselves. Every ossification of form insists that it be interpreted as the negation of the severity of life. That the anxiety of the lonely becomes the law of aesthetic formal language, however, betrays something of the secret of that loneliness. The reproach against the individualism of art in its later stages of development is so pathetically wretched simply because it overlooks the social nature of this individualism. “Lonely discourse” reveals more about social tendencies than does communicative discourse.<sup>20</sup>

Adorno’s famous polemic on the rights and wrongs of Schoenberg and Stravinsky respectively is, for any musician, hard going, and in many ways confusing. It is more palatable today when distilled by other writers like Edward Said, who explains that “Adorno’s main argument about modern music is that its exclusivism and hermetic austerity do not constitute something new but testify rather to a quasi-neurotic insistence

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<sup>16</sup> Cope 266.

<sup>17</sup> Cope 266.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Mason. *The Piano Tuner*. (London: Picador, paperback edition 2004) frontispiece.

<sup>19</sup> Theodor W. Adorno. *Philosophy of Modern Music*. Trans. Anne G. Mitchell, Wesley V. Blomster. (London: Sheed & Ward, 1973. Paperback edition 1987) xiv.

<sup>20</sup> Adorno 43.

on music's separate, almost mute, and formally non-discursive character as an art."<sup>21</sup> Said points to the fact that, after modernism, music experienced a fragmentation of intellectual labour whereby academic music departments now separate historical musicology, theory, ethnomusicology and composition, and suggests that "we can regard the nature of public performance today—professionalized, ritualized and specialized though it may be—as a way of bridging the gap between the social and cultural spheres on the one hand, and music's reclusiveness on the other."<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to Adorno's dense and weighty theoretical speculation, Anthony Storr in *The Dynamics of Creation*<sup>23</sup> appears to be as comfortable with his subject matter as is David Attenborough in the animal world, and to share the same enthusiasm for clear communication with his audience. Far from being intimidating, his style is engaging to the point of being almost infectious:

Man carries with him throughout life a discontent, varying in degree, but always present, as a consequence of the intrinsic frustrations of his infancy. This drives him to seek symbolic satisfactions: ways of mastering the external world on the one hand, and ways of integrating and coming to terms with his internal world on the other. It is by means of his creativity, both in art and science, that man has survived and achieved so much. His prolonged and unsatisfactory infancy is itself adaptive, since it leaves him with a 'divine discontent' which spurs him on to creative achievement.<sup>24</sup>

Here we have clarity, optimism, and a profound sense of wonder. An experienced psychiatrist and a trained (though not professional) musician<sup>25</sup>, Storr appears here to be completely non-judgemental. When he subsequently suggests that "one of the most interesting pieces of research that could be undertaken would be to study how far inspiration appears to the creative in unorganized, uncontrolled form, and how far form and content go together"<sup>26</sup>, he hardly needs to continue with his explicit examples of the contrast between Beethoven and Mozart, and their very different approaches to composition. We are already convinced that both forms of inspiration exist, and are

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<sup>21</sup> Edward W. Said. *Musical Elaborations*, (London: Vintage, 1992)16.

<sup>22</sup> Said 17.

<sup>23</sup> Anthony Storr. *The Dynamics of Creation*. (London: Penguin, 1972).

<sup>24</sup> Storr, *Dynamics* 203.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony Storr. *Music and the Mind*. (London: HarperCollins, paperback edition, 1997) 124. In a chapter on "The Solitary Listener" Storr claims that music has been "a vital part of [his] life since early childhood", and recounts his experiences as a pianist, viola player and chorister. He notes that "playing in an orchestra and singing in a choir are exhilarating experiences; but playing in a string quartet is better still."

<sup>26</sup> Storr, *Dynamics* 246.

equally credible. In his concluding chapter, Storr gives an account of the meaning of music which, although intensely personal, is carefully argued, well balanced and enlightening:

There are those who maintain that musical patterns have no relation to human emotions; and that our appreciation of music is purely aesthetic. In this view, music has no meaning outside itself, and the listener's enjoyment of a musical work is the consequence of his appreciation of its structure. Of course the appreciation of musical form is a vital aspect of musical appreciation in general; but it is impossible to accept that this constitutes the whole of our response. Music generates emotion; in fact, a whole range of physiological responses which can be measured, including changes in pulse rate, blood pressure, rate of respiration, muscular energy. Any consideration of music which pays attention only to musical form, and which omits to take into account its emotional content, must be ruled out of court.<sup>27</sup>

Whether the process of musical composition involves sheer intuition, whether it entails architectural planning of an intellectual nature, or whether it involves a combination of the two, the listener is usually only interested in the music itself. In the light of the previous chapters, a general summary of these various methods now seems appropriate.

In the case of musical intuition, or an instinctive flair for spontaneous musical composition, one might describe it as an ability to use an existing and familiar musical language to formulate new ideas: an almost involuntary mental subjugation to music which is heard internally, within the inner ear, and which develops and propels itself to a conclusion almost of its own accord. This process (from a listener's point of view) has been beautifully captured in prose by Peter Høeg in his novel *Borderliners*:

It was not normal for Karin Ærø to speak. Normally she started people off on a song and then walked along the rows to hear who sang true and who sang out of tune, and in this way decide who was in the choir, who was out, and who was on the borderline. But while she listened, sometimes she also spoke, and what she said then was often very important . . . .

On one such occasion, she had said that the beginning of a piece of music, if it were an intelligent and precise piece, in very short order invariably determined the rest of its content and course.

Exactly as with Assembly. In shortened form it contained the rest of the day. All the way through school. Maybe for life.<sup>28</sup>

The idea that the listener (here clearly a musician) should in some way be able to predict the course of a musical work from its opening statement is hardly surprising, but at the

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<sup>27</sup> Storr, *Dynamics* 292.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Høeg, *Borderliners*. Trans. Barbara Haveland. (London: Harvill, 1995) 10 – 11.

same time it is a very astute description of the intuitive process experienced by some composers. Interesting, too, is the notional premise that listeners (and, by implication, performers) prefer music which is “intelligent and precise”, a concept which need not necessarily preclude length, but which inevitably demands substantial content. The same point is often made about literary works, poems or novels, where the development of ideas is prefigured in the opening words or paragraph. One of the most famous examples is found in Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*, which begins with what we might call an executive summary:

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered as the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.<sup>29</sup>

Similarly the first paragraph of E. Nesbit’s classic children’s novel *The Railway Children* is like an Abstract which sets the entire scene for the book, the television series and the feature film:

They were not railway children to begin with. I don’t suppose they had ever thought about railways except as a means of getting to Maskelyne and Cooke’s, the pantomime, the Zoological Gardens, and Madame Tussaud’s. They were just ordinary suburban children, and they lived with their father and mother in an ordinary red-brick-fronted villa, with coloured glass in the front door, a tiled passage that was called a hall, a bathroom with hot and cold water, electric bells, French windows, and a good deal of white paint, and ‘every modern convenience’, as the house-agents would say.<sup>30</sup>

As the story unfolds, we discover that not a word of the opening paragraph has been wasted. In much the same way, once a musical idea is conceived, whether it be the subject of a fugue, a simple melodic or rhythmic cell, or the contrasting themes of a larger work, a good composition will usually expand the material proportionately by plumbing its motivic or rhythmic depths and drawing it to a logical and timely conclusion. Guided by the subconscious memory of existing works which have made a lasting impression, the inner ear generates a spontaneous process which is, at the same time, both creative and editorial. Under the influence of a mysteriously subjective authority, and unaware (at the beginning) of its intentions or outcome, composers might well experience a trance-like

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<sup>29</sup> Jane Austen. *Pride and Prejudice*, (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, n.d.) 1.

<sup>30</sup> E. Nesbit. *The Railway Children*. (London: Folio Society, 1999) 1.

state which chains them to the desk until the work realises its final form, at which point any further analysis or corrective ‘tinkering’ might be regarded with suspicion, to be suffered only as a tedious necessity.

By contrast, many composers trained predominantly—or even exclusively—in the techniques of 20<sup>th</sup> century composition, and perhaps weighed down by the necessity to create ‘something new’, invent their own musical language, often by a process of elimination, or avoidance. The “architectural planning of a more intellectual nature” referred to above might mean, for example, that a limited number of pitches is selected, arranged and justified by some artificial, extra-musical means (including graphics), and that the piece is then constructed according to the composer’s self-imposed and pre-defined aural, verbal or visual criteria. Unfortunately, when there is little deviation from a prescribed but unidentifiable modal landscape, listeners sometimes struggle to find their bearings; moreover, unfamiliar with a particular musical dialect, they do not always understand the composer’s intentions—which might, in any case, be vague. With no real key centre, no clear melodic signposts or recognisable harmonic progression, with large intervallic leaps, relentless dissonance or deliberately convoluted rhythms, only the rarest intuitive musical compass will be of any assistance. Performers can experience a shut-down of internal navigation systems and search in vain for the muscle memory of musical gestures associated with great repertoire from the past. Scores overburdened with quirky or unrealistic instructions leave little scope for genuine interpretation, and those with minimal guidelines can seem open to unlimited abuse. Similarly the listener, paralysed by lack of aural comprehension, can feel either insulted, totally unmoved, or obliged to join a cult following where feigned acceptance and outspoken approval are the norm. While the compositional process might be acknowledged as one of ascetic intellectual creativity, the listener might be at a loss regarding the manufactured product, unable to perceive its emotional content, unaware (without a written explanation) of its internal structure, and incapable of remembering it in any detail. Musical engineering which relies solely on the complexities of mathematical formulae for pitch variation or rhythmic nuance, or in which formal design (rather than musical content) becomes the main protagonist, can produce works which are challenging, provocative, and interesting; but they are

sometimes less rewarding in the long term from a performer's or a listener's point of view. Storr has pointed to the limitations of serial music:

Serial music is difficult to remember because it abolishes the hierarchical structure of tonal music in which it is easy to recognize 'home' as consonance following dissonance. Some serial music is also difficult to remember because, unlike classical tonal music, it tends to avoid repetition. This is why so many listeners cannot make sense of serial music.<sup>31</sup>

While this might sound simplistic, it is interesting that Storr qualifies each statement by using the words "difficult" (rather than impossible), "some serial music" and "so many listeners" (rather than all). After all, the music of Webern, Berg and Schoenberg is now part of the standard repertoire; their music is today emotionally accessible, because one thinks of them as having expanded, rather than destroyed, the concept of tonality. One hears the resonance of 19<sup>th</sup> century musical conventions, despite a new and more mechanistic technique. However, when music is based too rigorously on the exclusion of certain pitches (and therefore pitch-combinations), or when there is deliberate avoidance of anything which might be identified as an "emotional gesture" by way of its harmonic association with the past, one suspects that the concept of tonality has been dealt a rather brutal blow, and that without it, emotional content is not always so easily reinstated.

On the other hand, when traditional concepts are worked out within contemporary structures (or *vice versa*, contemporary concepts within traditional structures), the music is clearly more accessible. Here, the composer might begin with a musical idea which springs (intuitively or otherwise) from mainstream tradition, but the chosen structure might reflect, either partially or completely, contemporary techniques. Ideas might be developed within a tonally static, atonal or harmonically ambiguous framework, but if they are audibly referenced to historical traditions, the listener is more likely to maintain a genuine interest in the musical events as they unfold. Conversely, when complex rhythmic ideas or harsh intervallic patterns are occasionally cushioned by tonal reference, or explored within the confines of a well-defined mode, the outcome is more easily accepted by that wider section of the community accustomed to the musical conventions of melodic invention, harmonic tension and release, phrase and cadence. Far from being compromised by associations with the past, it would appear that composers with access to

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<sup>31</sup> Storr, *Music and the Mind* 171.



all these compositional techniques stand the greatest chance of cultivating an individual voice, and of being understood by an attentive public while saying something entirely new. The following passage from David Cope's *New Directions in Music* is as relevant today as it was when the book was first published in 1971:

There is no progress in music (or art). That is, while certainly an individual composer may get better and better with time, "newer" music (with its complex new instruments for creating much more diverse sounds) is no better than older music (or any worse for that matter). No invention, or creation, can "outdate" Machaut's *Mass* (c. 1360) as a newer car can, for instance, outdate the horse and buggy. A composer, an artist, should try to be *different* (different here not necessarily implying better, just different). Who indeed would really want him the same as another?<sup>32</sup>

To be 'different' is one thing. To be 'heard' is another, although it is implied here in the word 'want'. To be 'listened to' is something much more serious, because it means that the audience understands the language in which the composer is speaking, whether the music be serious or light-hearted, satirical or simply entertaining. Irrespective of whether the composer's own explanation of his work is trivial, confusing, persuasive, or indeed entirely absent, it is the music itself which must have something to say. That being the case the listener will return on more than one occasion to absorb in greater detail and to appreciate in greater depth what the work has to offer. While long-term durability can never be guaranteed, nowadays it is probably true to say that the music most frequently performed will stand the greatest chance.

In much the same way as the English language (and not Esperanto) has achieved global domination by absorbing foreign words and adapting to new physical territories, so the language of music has grown to include a variety of new sounds and compositional techniques which have greatly enhanced its potential for communication with the listener. Those with access to such a rich language must include those who have listened to the most music; and of those many are likely to be performers who began their inquiries—and usually their training—at a very early age.

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<sup>32</sup> Cope 225.

## The Language of Music

At the mention of early childhood, Milan Kundera is another writer who immediately springs to mind.<sup>33</sup> A trained musician and the son of a professional concert pianist who had studied with Janáček, Kundera has produced some astonishingly perceptive and sensitive descriptions of the language of music in layman's terms. For example, Chapter 17 from Part Six of his novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* begins as follows:

This is what Papa told me when I was five years old: in music every key is a small royal court. The King (the first step of the scale) exercises power with the help of two princes (the fifth and fourth steps). Under their orders are four other dignitaries, each with his own special relation to the king and princes. The court also takes in five other tones, which are called chromatic. They of course occupy first-rank positions in other keys, but here they are only guests.

Because each of the twelve tones has its own position, title, and function, any piece of music we hear is more than just a mass of sound: it is an action developing before us. Sometimes the events are terribly tangled (as in Mahler or still more in Bartók or Stravinsky), with princes from several courts intervening and soon you no longer know which tone is serving which court or if it isn't serving several kings at once. But even then, the most naïve listener can still make a rough guess about what is going on. Even the most complex music is still speaking the *same language*.<sup>34</sup>

He then goes on to describe the introduction of the twelve-tone system, the abolition of "the hierarchy of tones", and finally their replacement by "a subtle, no doubt magnificent structure of noises" which in turn inaugurated "the history of something different based on different principles and a different language."<sup>35</sup> The continuation of this passage is so eloquent that it is difficult to refrain from quoting the entire chapter, but the point has already been made.

Elsewhere, in an essay on Janáček, Kundera writes about music in a more serious context. Here his style is clear and uncompromising, his ideas amplified by direct reference to literature:

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<sup>33</sup> Born in 1929, Kundera studied piano and composition, film and literature at the University in Prague. His first published works were anthologies of poetry, but in 1952 he joined the Film Faculty at the Prague Academy for Music and Dramatic Arts, where he eventually became a Professor and remained on staff until 1969. His first novel, *The Joke*, was published in the mid-60s.

<sup>34</sup> Milan Kundera. *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*. Trans. Aaron Asher, (London: Faber and Faber, 1996) 244ff.

<sup>35</sup> Kundera 246.

Janáček's expressionism is not an exaggerated extension of Romantic sentimentality. On the contrary, it is one historical option for moving out of Romanticism. An option very different from the one Stravinsky chose: unlike him, Janáček did not reproach the Romantics for having talked about feelings; he reproached them for having falsified them; for having substituted sentimental gesticulation . . . for the unmediated truth of the emotions. He has a passion for the passions, but still more for the precision he musters to express them. Stendahl, not Hugo. Which involves breaking away from Romantic music, from its spirit, from its hypertrophied sonorities (Janáček's economy of sound shocked everyone in his time), from its structure.<sup>36</sup>

What is expressed here reminds one also of Ravel, who had not only a passion for precision, but a tendency at times to contradict his own lyricism by imposing discretionary performance instructions. Referring to the middle section of *Le Gibet*, which Ravel specifies as "without expression", Vladimir Jankélévitch notes that:

Either Ravel is laughing at us or else, like Satie, he is merely pretending to be indifferent. The more deeply he feels, the more he affects a colourless and politely uniform tone.

Anti-romanticism with Ravel therefore was a reaction against the romantic that he might have become if his will had weakened.<sup>37</sup>

Such examples share the underlying assumption that music is a language with its own vocabulary and grammar, but that these will change over the course of time to reflect social propriety and current aesthetic criteria. They also imply that while good composers have something to say which is based in personal experience, their music also reflects the cultural environment in which they live; it contains legitimate emotional content which can be clearly conveyed to the performer (paradoxical instructions notwithstanding) and will therefore be understood by the listener. Edward Said makes the point that "the study of music can be more, and not less, interesting if we situate music as taking place, so to speak, in a social and cultural setting"<sup>38</sup>, and regrets "how little is actually done by fine scholars who, for example, in studying a composer's notebooks or the structure of classical form, fail to connect those things to ideology, or social space, or power, or to the formation of an individual (and by no means sovereign) ego."<sup>39</sup> He also points to the fact that "the most distinguished modern writing about music is . . . writing that self-consciously sees itself as a 'humanistic discipline'<sup>40</sup>, and ranks authors such as Charles

<sup>36</sup> Milan Kundera. *Testaments Betrayed*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1995) 184.

<sup>37</sup> Vladimir Jankélévitch. *Ravel*. Trans. Margaret Crosland. (London: John Calder, 1959) 148.

<sup>38</sup> Said xii.

<sup>39</sup> Said xiii.

<sup>40</sup> Said xi.

Rosen, Jankélévitch, Willfred Mellers, and Paul Griffiths among those who represent the best of critical scholarship on music, those who “are of interest both to the specialist and to the general culturally informed reader.”<sup>41</sup> It is only a short step from here to imagine that at some level, such humanistic interpretations not only of the great composers and their music, but also of performers and audiences might themselves influence future generations and help to redress the balance between music and interpretive theory, thus narrowing the gap between composition and performance and preventing further erosion of the musical environment in general.

### A Personal Voice

Many writers have alluded to Proust’s description of an author’s trademark in *Contre Saint-Beuve*:

. . . the melody (*air de la chanson*) which in each author is different from the ones to be found in all other authors and, while I was reading, without being aware of it, I found myself singing to myself, I rushed or slowed the words or I interrupted them completely, in the way that one often sings or listens in time to a tune, before actually articulating the last part of a word.<sup>42</sup>

Few, however, have gone as far as Said in extracting its full meaning. His analysis of this passage seems so central to this discussion that it is worth quoting at length:

These sentiments beautifully characterize the ultimately solitary intimacy by which the special music of an author impresses itself upon a receptive critical intelligence. . . . I think Proust means that he hears a writer’s unique sound not only as a distinctive imprint, something like a signature or stamp of particular possession, but also as a special theme, personal obsession, or recurrent motif in the work of an artist that gives all of his work its own recognizable identity. . . .

I have always thought of Proust’s comments as having application of a very rich kind to the musical experience. In speaking about the train of thoughts provoked by the Brahms Sextet variations I found myself coming to a sort of unstatable [sic] or inexpressible, aspect of his music, the music of his music, which I think anyone who listens to, plays, or thinks about music carries within oneself. To extend such a notion a bit further we could say that composers carry such a music within themselves too, although the case for an idea of that sort has been made only here or there in writing about music.<sup>43</sup>

It is interesting that Said is rather tentative when presenting the idea that a composer might carry within himself “the music of his music”, perhaps because it is a fragile notion,

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<sup>41</sup> Said xi.

<sup>42</sup> Marcel Proust. *Contre Saint-Beuve*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1971) 303.

<sup>43</sup> Said 93.

one which is well outside the boundaries of what he refers to elsewhere as “the technical requirements imposed by musical analysis (which) are so separate and severe”.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps it is a concept which belongs more to his own “often impressionistic theorizing”.<sup>45</sup> However, even on close inspection it is eminently logical, and seems to resonate closely with the ideas of Charles Rosen when he writes, in the opening paragraph of *The Romantic Generation*:

Inaudible music may seem an odd notion, even a foolishly Romantic one - . . . . Still, there are details of music which cannot be heard but only imagined, and even certain aspects of musical form which cannot be realized in sound even by the imagination. . . . .

Listening to music, like understanding language, is not a passive state but an everyday act of creative imagination so commonplace that its mechanism is taken for granted. We separate the music from the sound.<sup>46</sup>

Proust listens to authors; Said listens to Proust. Rosen understands that, beyond any shadow of a doubt, active listening (rather than passive hearing) is a reality, and one of the most crucial functions of the aural imagination. Proust’s reflection on the process of reading stands quite apart from his own individual voice as expressed in *À la recherche du temps perdu*, but one cannot help associating the one with the other, the process and the product are so inextricably intertwined. While Said investigates Beethoven, Bruckner and Mahler as “three unusual instances of composers who seem quite consciously to be trying to state, as it were, the music of their music in their last compositions”<sup>47</sup>, one might also argue that this is after the event, and that had they not reached maturity, all three might have been attempting to state this all along, at any earlier stage in their careers, when their judgements were perhaps less sound, their exposure to music (and art in general) more limited, their personal aesthetic less well-defined. Whatever the case, if great artists have always found ways of distilling their own essence so as to make a lasting impression on others, it seems likely that this very essence is greatly influenced by their exposure to other great works of art. Such an internalised language, to all intents and purposes invisible, and inaudible in all but the imagination, would seem to have little to do with scholarship, and more to do with personal choice, artistic intuition, subjective reasoning, conscious and subconscious memory. In the light of all this it is difficult not to agree with

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<sup>44</sup> Said xii.

<sup>45</sup> Said xii.

<sup>46</sup> Charles Rosen. *The Romantic Generation*. (London: Fontana Press, paperback edition, 1999) 1.

<sup>47</sup> Said 93.

Sir Thomas Beecham's definition of good music as it appeared in the *New York Times* on March 9, 1961: "that which penetrates the ear with facility and quits the memory with difficulty."

While much of the classical music of the second half of the 20th century was by nature experimental, it is worth noting that during the same period many talented musicians instinctively turned their attention to increasingly sophisticated forms of jazz and popular music, where creative freedom is the prerogative of the performer. While the cultural divisions between these styles have widened considerably since Gershwin found inspiration in the works of Liszt and Debussy, and Ravel explored the expressive gestures of jazz, there have been countless examples of significant cross-fertilization. For example, Terry Riley and La Monte Young were both saxophone players enamoured of the music of John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy. According to John Schaefer:

They experimented with melodies consisting of quick series of notes played in four- or five-second bursts over sustained drones. The sound of a rapid-fire sax was sure to remind listeners of contemporary jazz, but the music's modal quality also strongly suggested the music of India. "Playing with La Monte and the Theatre of Eternal Music, I felt I was doing the kind of music that is very similar to what Indian musicians do," says Riley. "There's something in the spirit of that music that is very mystical. It's not 'entertaining' music. It goes inside and gets deeply into the tones . . ." <sup>48</sup>

By now, composers have at their disposal an expanded form of standard musical notation encompassing new techniques, an enlarged musical alphabet, a thicker musical dictionary and a more flexible grammar: in short, a musical language enhanced by classical experimentalists and enriched by the exotic harmonies, modes and rhythms which exponents of jazz and 'world music' have taken to new expressive heights.

Finally, it seems appropriate to refer to the recent publication by Susan Tomes entitled *A Musicians's Alphabet*.<sup>49</sup> In a relaxed and discursive style she invites (and indeed persuades) her readers to speculate on a number of issues pertaining to musical performance and its place in today's society. Each letter of the alphabet triggers a miniature essay on a specific topic: "A is for Audience", "B is for Background Music" etc. In the chapter "F is for Formula", she begins by discussing the recent practice of using

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<sup>48</sup> John Schaefer. *New Sounds, The Virgin Guide to New Music*. (London: W.H.Allen, 1990) 72.

<sup>49</sup> Susan Tomes. *A Musician's Alphabet*. (London: Faber and Faber, 2006).

classical music as a social deterrent: Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was broadcast at Stoke-on-Trent in order to prevent 'undesirables' from loitering in the shopping centre, and 'troublemakers' were supposedly chased from a bus station in the north of England by being subjected to Vivaldi Concertos!<sup>50</sup> This leads to an explanation of the phenomenon of pop music and the idea that "you need only spend one evening listening to any pop radio station across the world to know that most songwriters in all countries now work to a formula."<sup>51</sup> Towards the end of the chapter she writes:

We need an equivalent of the delightful campaign begun in Italy to promote what they call 'Slow Food'; not just slow music, obviously, but real music. The Slow Food advocates want to bring back local variation, ancient expertise, garden herbs, individuality, conversation. Make people realise it's not an advance in society to be able to buy the same synthetic lunch in Algiers or Alaska . . . Don't get me wrong: a well-made hamburger with good ingredients can be a delicious meal. A cheap imitation full of E-numbered chemicals is an insult to the original dish. In the same way, a great popular song can be a joy forever. But a cynical, manipulative sham just leaves your ear hungry for the real thing. . . We don't need synthetic moods to be created by music; we want to hear music that expresses all the facets of human experience and feelings. Let that be in any musical genre—as long as it's not formulaic, but personal and genuine, as the popular music of the past used to be.<sup>52</sup>

Of course she is referring here to the difference between 'classical' and 'pop' music. Reading between the lines, however, one is reminded of some contemporary art music which might also be described as "a cynical, manipulative sham", one which "leaves your ear hungry for the real thing". Whether 'formulaic' art music will repel or attract hooligans is, of course, open to question, but Tomes is clearly expressing a preference for 'real music' and 'active listeners' when she asserts that "Good music, like good food, needs to taste of something, not just make you feel the same as every other consumer."<sup>53</sup> Her conclusion leaves very little to the imagination:

A piece like Beethoven's Ninth, which has lasted for generations, was not written to a formula, or to create one simple mood. It expresses a huge range of hopes and feelings, and was meant to be a treasury of them for years to come. That's why it can never be successfully used, as pop music is used, to make large numbers of people behave in the same way. It may make them dream, or go home in a thoughtful mood, or feel energetic and happy, and it may even draw them towards the city centre. But whatever effect it has, it won't be fast, cheap or predictable.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Tomes 34-35.

<sup>51</sup> Tomes 37

<sup>52</sup> Tomes 38.

<sup>53</sup> Tomes 38

<sup>54</sup> Tomes 38-39.

While such sentiments might seem somewhat naïve, I believe they are shared by numerous professional and amateur musicians, and a large percentage of contemporary audiences.

Clearly, the compositions in this portfolio emphasise the more traditional aspects of musical performance and have been approached from a performer's point of view. They do not exploit the wide variety of 20<sup>th</sup> century instrumental techniques, or indulge in serialism; rhythmic complexity, for its own sake, has been consciously avoided, and there is no use of avant-garde techniques which rely solely on schematic formulae. Instead, inspiration has been drawn from great musical literature of the past and present with the aim of discovering suitable forms for the delivery of valid emotional content. It is hoped that future exploration will lead to the emergence of a more sophisticated personal style, and that the gradual incorporation of more contemporary techniques will serve to heighten rather than destroy the links with past performance practice.

The theory of music is by nature derivative; in practice, rules and regulations are no sooner formulated than contravened, and most value judgements are eventually relegated to their resting place in an historical context. There are no rules for the composition of good music, nor for the preservation of any particular style or genre. While the works in this portfolio might be regarded as emerging from "behind the shelter of a mainstream door" (to borrow Cope's phrase), their purpose is to communicate, rather than to confront. They rely on musical intuition and are based on a conviction that the musical language should be clearly accessible to the performer. New ideas are not easily expressed in ways which will make a lasting impression, but they cannot be offered in a secret code; nor are they likely to be received in an entirely new language that is (either by default or by design) completely incomprehensible to active listeners. History has shown that, more often than not, they appear in a language which is to some extent already familiar: one which is robust enough to expand its vocabulary and flex its muscle without severing all meaningful ties with the past. In the end it is Ravel's advice which provides the best summary: "if you do have something to say, that something will never be more clearly seen than in your unwitting infidelity to the model."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Cited in Roger Nichols. *Ravel*. (London: J.M.Dent & Sons, 1977) 118.



# APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A

Excerpts from John Mitchell's *La Corona* Song Cycle

1

(637) 1

## "DEIGN AT MY HANDS..." (INTRODUCTION)

SLOWLY

Handwritten musical score for the introduction of the song "Deign at My Hands...". The score is written in a 4/4 time signature and consists of three systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment is written in a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The vocal line is written in a single staff with lyrics underneath. The tempo is marked "SLOWLY". The dynamics are marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The lyrics are: "DEIGN AT MY HANDS THIS CROWN OF PRAYER AND PRAISE, WEAVED IN MY LOW DE-YOUT ME-LAN-CHO-DY — THOU WHICH OF GOOD HAST, YEA ART TREASUR-Y, ALL CHANG-ING UN-CHANGED AN-CIENT OF DAYS, BUT DO NOT WITHA".

*mp* DEIGN AT MY HANDS THIS CROWN OF PRAYER AND PRAISE,

6 WEAVED IN MY LOW DE-YOUT ME-LAN-CHO-DY — THOU WHICH OF GOOD HAST, YEA ART TREASUR-Y,

10 ALL CHANG-ING UN-CHANGED AN-CIENT OF DAYS, *mf* BUT DO NOT WITHA

"SALVATION TO ALL..."  
(ANNUNCIATION)

MEDIUM

The musical score is written for a medium voice and piano. It consists of four systems of music. Each system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano accompaniment features a consistent rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and quarter notes in the left hand, often with arpeggiated chords. The vocal line is in a simple, melodic style with lyrics written below the notes. Dynamics markings include *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The lyrics are: "SAL-VA-TION TO ALL THAT WILL IS NIGH, THAT ALL, WHICH ALWAYS IS ALL EV-ERY-WHERE, WHICH CAN-NOT SIN, AND YET ALL SINS MUST BEAR, WHICH CAN-NOT DIE, YET".

*mf*  
SAL-VA-TION TO ALL THAT WILL IS

*mp*  
NIGH, THAT ALL, WHICH ALWAYS IS ALL EV-ERY-WHERE,

*mp*  
WHICH CAN-NOT SIN, AND YET ALL SINS MUST BEAR, WHICH CAN-NOT DIE, YET

3

(644)

# "IMMENSITY CLOISTERED..."

(NATIVITY)

MEDIUM SLOW

IM-MEN-SI-TY CLOIS-TERED IN TH

DEAR WOMB, NOW LEAVES HIS WELL BELOVED IM-PRI-SON-MENT,

SOMEWHAT FASTER  
THERE HE HATH MADE HIM-SELF TO HIS IN-TENT

4

|| WITH HIS KIND MOTHER... ||  
(TEMPLE)

MEDIUM

*mf* WITH HIS KIND MO-THER WHO PAR-TAKES THY WOE,

JOS-EPH TURN BACK; SEE WHERE YOUR CHILD BOTH SIT,

*mp* BLOW-ING, YEA BLOW-ING OUT THOSE SPARKS OF WIT, WHICH HIM-SELF ON THE

5

(652) 16

"BY MIRACLES EXCEEDING POWER OF MAN..."  
(CRUCIFYING)

MEDIUM FAST

mf By MIRA-CLES EX-  
-CEED-ING POW-ER OF MAN,  
mf HE FAITH IN SOME, EN-VEY IN

The musical score is written in 3/8 time and consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part features a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. The vocal line includes lyrics such as "By MIRA-CLES EXCEED-ING POW-ER OF MAN," and "mf HE FAITH IN SOME, EN-VEY IN". The score is marked "MEDIUM FAST" and includes dynamic markings like "mf" and "p".

"MOIST WITH ONE DROP OF THY BLOOD..."

MEDIUM

Moist with one drop of thy blood, my dry

Soul, shall (though she now be in extreme degree too stony

hard, and yet too fleshly, be freed by that drop, from being

**SALUTE THE LAST AND EVERLASTING DAY...**  
**(ASCENSION)**

FAST MEDIUM

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'FAST MEDIUM'. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains the first two lines of music, with the vocal line starting on the second line. The lyrics are: 'SA-LUTE THE LAST AND EV-ER-'. The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a more complex rhythmic pattern in the left hand. The second system contains the next three lines of music. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: '-LAST-ING DAY, Joy AT THE UP-RIS-ING OF THE SUN, AND SON,'. The piano accompaniment continues with similar patterns, including a 'SUBITO' marking in the left hand. The final line of the score shows the vocal line with the lyrics: 'YE WHOSE JUST TEARS OR TRI-BU-LA-TION'. The piano accompaniment concludes with a final cadence. Dynamics include *mf* and *mp*.



## APPENDIX B

### The Sun Rising: Annotated Lyrics

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,  
Why dost thou thus,  
Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?  
Must to thy motion lovers' seasons run?  
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide  
Late schoolboys, and sour prentices,  
Go tell court-huntsmen that the King will ride,  
Call country ants<sup>1</sup> to harvest offices;  
Love, all alike<sup>2</sup>, no season knows, nor clime,  
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time<sup>3</sup>.

Thy beams, so reverend and strong  
Why shouldst thou think?<sup>4</sup>  
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,  
But that I would not lose her sight so long:  
If her eyes have not blinded thine,  
Look, and tomorrow late, tell me  
Whether both the Indias of spice and mine<sup>5</sup>  
Be where thou leftst<sup>6</sup> them, or lie here with me.  
Ask for those Kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,  
And thou shalt hear: 'All here in one bed lay'.

She is all States, and all Princes I,<sup>7</sup>  
Nothing else is:  
Princes do but play us; compar'd to this,  
All honour's mimic, all wealth alchemy<sup>8</sup>.  
Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,  
In that the world's contracted thus;  
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be  
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.  
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere,<sup>9</sup>  
This bed thy centre is, these walls thy sphere.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> No doubt this simply refers to ordinary ants. The Shorter OED also lists it as an obsolete form of aunt.

<sup>2</sup> That is, love which is unchanging.

<sup>3</sup> The tattered clothing of time, and/or the torn up subdivisions of time.

<sup>4</sup> Inversion, meaning "Why shouldst thou think thy beams so reverend and strong?"

<sup>5</sup> The East Indies, which Donne referred to elsewhere as "the land of Perfumes and Spices", and the West Indies, which he called "the Land of Gold and of Mynes".

<sup>6</sup> Several verbs including this one have been set in their modern day version, to avoid complications.

<sup>7</sup> She is all the States there are and I am all the Princes there are.

<sup>8</sup> Alchemy here meaning counterfeit.

<sup>9</sup> This musical version takes the liberty of setting this as the last line instead of what follows, which is inserted previously.

<sup>10</sup> This bed is the centre of your orbit, these walls mark the orbit.

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*Edgard Varèse: A Portrait.* Dir. Mark Kidel. A Co-production Les Films D'Ici, ZDF/Arte, Casa Ricordi with The BBC. © Les Films D'Ici 1995.

*Elgar: Portrait of a Composer.* A Ken Russell Film. Produced by Humphrey Burton. BBC TV Monitor. N.d.

*Fly, Thought, On Golden Wings: Verdi's Life told by Thomas Hampson.* Produced & Directed by Felix Beisach. A Production of EuroArts Music International in Co-production with ORF, NHK. © 2001 EuroArts (Ovation Channel, 6/9/2005).

*Giacomo Puccini, 1858–1924.* Great Composers Series. Produced and Directed by Chris Hunt. A BBC/NVC ARTS/Thirteen/WNET Co-production in association with RAI Thematic Channels © BBC 1997.(Ovation Channel, 9/10/2004).

*Gustav Mahler.* Great Composers Series. Dir. Krišs Rusmanis. A BBC/NVC ARTS/Thirteen/WNET Co-production in association with RAI Thematic Channels. © BBC 1998. (Ovation Channel, 18/3/2005).

*György Ligeti.* A Film by Michel Follin. Conception Judit Kele, Michel Follin, Arnaud de Mezamat © Artline Films - Les Productions du Sablier, La Sept—Centre Georges Pompidou. MTV—RTBF 1993.

*Johann Sebastian Bach.* Great Composers Series. Directed by James Runcie. A BBC/NVC ARTS/Thirteen/WNET Co-production in association with RAI Thematic Channels. © BBC 1998 (Ovation Channel, 21/3/2005).

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*Krzysztof Penderecki.* A Film by Andreas Missler-Morell. A Spektrum TV Production in association with Telewizja Polska S.A. Oddzial W Krakowie for RM Associates and ZDF in cooperation with ARTE. © RM Associates 2000.

*La Lugubre Gondola. Liszt Revisited.* A Film by Elmer Schönberger, Reinbert de Leeuw, Hans Hulscher. Dir. Hans Hulscher. © NOS RM Arts 1982 (Ovation Channel, 16/10/2005).

*Ludwig van Beethoven.* Great Composers Series. Dir. Jill Marshall. A BBC/NVC ARTS/Thirteen/WNET Co-production in association with RAI Thematic Channels. © BBC 1997 (Ovation Channel, 22/3/2005).

*Moi, Hector Berlioz.* Screenplay & Direction Pierre Dupouey. Adapted from Hector Berlioz life story. API Productions with the participation of France 3 © API Productions/ARTE France/ 2003.



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