

COMPOSING WITH PLURAL APPROACHES TO
TONALITY, SOURCE, AND STYLE

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis consists of a portfolio of nine musical works composed during the period of 2015-2018, accompanied by a written dissertation and audio recordings. These compositions span a range of instrumental forces, from solo to orchestral, and reflect a trajectory of how my composing methods have been developed through practice-based research. Throughout the dissertation, I examine how my artistic practice is concerned with the conscious absorption of diverse materials as an approach to composition, and the aesthetic and technical considerations that arise during the process of approaching this. I begin with an overview of my use of the term 'plural' as a basis for this project, before moving on to discussions surrounding the use of plurality as a method of exploring approaches to: tonality; sources from inside music; sources from outside music; techniques of hybridity and layering; and the defining of musical characters and moods as a way of understanding my resulting stylistic voice. This study includes the analysis of my own creative process, as well as those of other composers, with the intention of situating my recent work within a wider field of current as well as historical compositional practices and perspectives.

For my family

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WORKS IN PORTFOLIO

1) **FLUX** – Orchestra – [4'30"]

First performed by the London Symphony Orchestra

2) **PIANO SUITE III** – Solo Piano – [23']

First performed by various: George Fu (I, II, IV, VI, VIII), Benjamin Powell (III), William Howard (VII), and Daniel Fardon (V)

3) **ALL THINGS** – String Quartet – [5'45"]

First performed by the Ligeti Quartet

4) **EARTHLY DELIGHTS** – Chamber Ensemble – [9'30"]

First performed by the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group

5) **TOAST!** – Soprano & Piano – [16']

First performed by Anna Shackleton (soprano)

6) **A DANCER READY TO DANCE, THE RIGHT FOOT FORWARD** – Sinfonietta – [4'15"]

First performed by the University of Birmingham's New Music Ensemble

7) **OCTOBER TUNE** – Chamber Ensemble – [5'30"]

First performed by the London Symphony Orchestra Chamber Ensemble

8) **FOR CELLO** – Solo Cello – [8']

9) **THREE MOVEMENTS** – Chamber Ensemble – [10']

First performed by the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group

TOTAL TIME: c. 86'

Introduction

The nine works comprising the accompanying portfolio to this dissertation reflect my research of a three-year period—from autumn 2015 to summer 2018—into the use of plural approaches to tonality, source, and style within musical works. The portfolio component includes nine acoustic works written for a range of forces, from solo to orchestral, with the aim of exploring how my concern towards using these approaches can be understood from a practice-based perspective. Alongside these compositional pursuits, the following written discussion supports my practice in combining to form my final thesis.

If I look back as far as my earliest works in composition, a preoccupation with contrast and plurality can be traced to my very first notated piece, which was written for solo piano and in AB form: I titled it ‘*Giocosso, Grave*’ (*cheerful, solemn, c.2002*). In the intervening years, this preoccupation has continued to gestate, and during my master’s degree studies in composition, I developed a conscious interest in combining diverse and often incongruous musical materials as a method of expressing my poetic intentions. One of my final pieces in my master’s portfolio, *Suite for Flute and Cello* (2015), pulled its inspirations from a wide array of cross-historical aesthetics, and was described by my examiner as ‘stylistically eclectic’, promoting me to question more deeply *why* and *how* I took this approach. Undertaking a PhD in musical composition therefore gave me the opportunity to formally examine and contextualise this artistic practice within an analytical environment, allowing me to look more deeply into the conscious use of plural approaches taken by other composers and the situation of my own works within this sphere.

Throughout my examination of this artistic practice, a broad collection of composers and their music will be drawn upon to introduce and supplement the topics explored in my portfolio, helping in the situation of my own approach(es) and the dialogues between them. This includes music from a wide historical and geographical net, which correlates with my conscious absorptions and infusions of diverse materials: with composers from Bach to Skempton, Chopin to Radiohead, to eclectic elements and fabrics. To name a handful here: the twelve-tone technique, the walking-bass, the romantic ‘Lied ohne Worte’, the innocuous nursery rhyme, the asymmetric rhythmic groupings of Bulgarian traditions, and so forth.

In Chapter 1, I begin my discussion with a brief overview of my use of the term ‘plural’, and how it relates to style and issues with its connection to the debate(s) around postmodernism in music. This is accompanied by an overview and analysis of my first PhD composition, *Flux* for orchestra, which illustrates my starting points into the topics that follow over the further chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the use of the term ‘tonality’, and how it can perhaps be understood in a more open and fluid way than is often customary—in regards to my music as well as the music of others—with my solo piano piece *Foil*, from *Piano Suite III* being put under the microscope. In Chapter 3, I turn my attention to the use of ‘source’ and in particular the use of sources from inside music (intertextuality), ranging from direct quotations from particular works to subtle allusions to wider stylistic fields; questioning how the level of ambiguity can be explored through the extent to which a source is metamorphosed. Portfolio works that form part of this discussion are *All Things* for string quartet, and a selection of movements from my *Piano Suite III*: *Polly*, *Saudade*, *Prelude: Morceau*, and *Little Steps*. Chapter 4 considers sources from outside the domain of music, encompassing art, poetry, literature, and nature, and looks at how the choice of certain sources has an effect of the conception of a work, extending to an examination of my *Earthly Delights* for chamber ensemble, *TOAST!* for soprano voice and piano, and *Passage*, from *Piano Suite III*. In Chapter 5, I combine my discussions of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ sources into an analysis of my techniques of creating hybrid languages, forming composites from the use of musical objects—both in formal layering methods and textural constructions. *A Dancer Ready to Dance*, *the Right Foot Forward* for sinfonietta, and *October Tune* for chamber ensemble are addressed in connection to this approach. Chapter 6 presents a culmination of my research by compounding my approaches into a consideration on the creation of my overall plural artistic awareness and style. This summation of my practice is aimed at defining my musical characters and moods as a way of understanding my resulting stylistic identities and their expressions. In this concluding chapter I look at my solo cello work *For Cello*, and the final two works composed during my PhD study: *Three Movements* for chamber ensemble, and *April Tune*, the closing movement of *Piano Suite III*.

Chapter 1 – Plural beginnings: *Flux*

In the context of this thesis, ‘plural approaches’ will here be defined as the use of heterogeneous engagements with material as a method of artistic praxis. In particular, I will be looking at the diverse employment of: tonalities; sources from inside music; sources from outside music; and styles—within acoustic compositions. ‘Pluralism’ can thus function as an open term that avoids the need for any unitary or limiting definition of a musical work, and which embraces an all-encompassing outlook. The use of the term within cultural studies by Diana L. Eck (director of Harvard University’s ‘Pluralism Project’), provides an interesting exposition of its main principles that helps to give a foundation to my approach, resonating with the use of it within my discussion and its starting points: pluralism is the ‘*energetic engagement with diversity*’; the ‘*active seeking of understanding across lines of difference*’; and is ‘*based on dialogue*’.¹

The more tangible terms of ‘tonality’ and ‘source’ are addressed later on in their respective chapters, but it is worth mentioning here that the term ‘style’ has a relationship to ‘plurality’, and will thus benefit from clarification at this point. In a 2016 paper by Loredana Viorica Iațescu, describing the complex process of style identification is ‘most often the result of syntheses, associations and overlays of historical, political, linguistic, psychological, philosophical, aesthetic, cultural and artistic influences. This enumeration of a plurality of features reveals the fact that the approach to musical stylistics is achieved by improving and applying knowledge acquired from various fields’.² What contributes to the formation of style is therefore manifold, and throughout this thesis, my use of the word ‘style’ will consequently have an open and adaptable definition, most often referring to the following classifications—both of which can be reiterated and subsumed in plural ways as a compositional technique in my work:

- The identification of a particular era, historical period, musical culture, or genre; *and/or*
- A composer’s particular characteristic, sound, language, or ethos

Plurality, style, and the consideration of such within musical works also has a long-time connection to the field of postmodernism, with the movement away from modernism into the somewhat enigmatic rise of postmodernist aesthetics in the art world and beyond. Along with this came the

¹ Eck, D. (2006).

² Iațescu, L.V. (2016) p. 95.

challenging and often ‘exasperating’³ discourse surrounding the concept of musical postmodernism and its definition, and by 2002, composer and music theorist Jonathan Kramer attempted to summarise the general characteristics that might be found within it, proposing that postmodernism:

- (1) is not simply a repudiation of modernism or its continuation, but has aspects of both a break and an extension;
- (2) is, on some level and in some way, ironic;
- (3) does not respect boundaries between sonorities and procedures of the past and of the present;
- (4) challenged barriers between “high” and “low” styles;
- (5) shows disdain for the often unquestioned value of structural unity;
- (6) questions the mutual exclusivity of elitist and populist values;
- (7) avoids totalizing forms (e.g., does not want entire pieces to be tonal or serial or cast in a prescribed formal mold);
- (8) considers music not as autonomous but as relevant to cultural, social, and political contexts;
- (9) includes quotations of or references to music of many traditions and cultures;
- (10) considers technology not only as a way to preserve and transmit music but also as deeply implicated in the production and essence of music;
- (11) embraces contradictions;
- (12) distrusts binary oppositions;
- (13) includes fragmentations and discontinuities;
- (14) encompasses pluralism and eclecticism;
- (15) presents multiple meanings and multiple temporalities;
- (16) locates meaning and even structure in listeners, more than in scores, performances, or composers.⁴

The complex and often contradictory considerations on postmodernism—a term now deemed by some as ‘showing distinct signs of ageing’⁵—took a while to properly reach musical analysis, but the wider cultural shift enabled artists to break down any lingering barriers with their stylistic approach(es). As described by Victor Burgin, postmodernism was understood as ‘a complex of heterogeneous but interrelated questions which will not be silenced by any spuriously unitary answer’⁶. Whilst many of the topics in the list above provide a good preliminary for supporting some of the themes that run through my own research⁷, and which will naturally seep into my own discussion, the postmodernism debate itself could arguably be unhelpful in its relevance to many of the perspectives and outlooks of today’s new music. With composers free to engage with and reject any schools of thought at will, and plucking from a multiplicity of them, I find it more

³ A word used by Hans Bertens to describe postmodernism in the introduction to his book: Bertens, H. (1995) *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History* p. 3.

⁴ Kramer, J.D. (2002) pp. 16-17.

⁵ Paddison, M. (2010) p. 2.

⁶ Burgin, V. (1986) pp. 163-4.

⁷ See in particular: (4), (7), (9), (11), (13), (14), and (15).

accommodating for myself as a composer to examine my works using more open and accessible (and accordingly less philosophical) frameworks. As a practice-based researcher, my approaches could be more likened to an idea of ‘embracement’: that is, not limiting my musical choices to any particular *-ism*⁸, but instead welcoming whatever I feel is appropriate to the work I am creating.

Throughout the following dissertation, a wide range of composers and periods will be found threaded into my discussion, and will be addressed as and when their relationship to my compositional process arises. The network between tonality, source, and style is at the nexus of this project, and my discussion will begin here by looking at the context and starting points for my first portfolio piece, *Flux* for orchestra, and with an analysis of some of the main ideas explored within the work.

***Flux*; for orchestra**

Flux was written as part of the London Symphony Orchestra’s *Panufnik Scheme*, in which a short work or orchestral experiment is created in order to develop one’s writing for such large forces in an open and creative environment. During this process, I was naturally interested in how others have approached writing for this medium, and in particular I became introduced to the work of composer Andrzej Panufnik, who the scheme is in memory of. I was attracted by his method of combining different stylistic worlds, synthesising dense and swaying atonal textures against steady tonal fixtures, such as in *Kołysanka* (‘Lullaby’, 1955), where we hear a measured and rather sweet lullaby within thickly stratified strings. The result is one of an almost haunting effect, hearing the familiar sounds of a simple and innocent melody but in a rather different context to which one would usually hear it, and by extension thus distancing it through obfuscation. The fluid textural and microtonal writing is in direct contrast to the diatonic simplicity alongside it:

⁸ For example, throughout this portfolio, aspects of both postmodernism *and* modernism can be found, as well as the use of baroque, classical, and romantic sources and models, and at different levels of explicitness. These ideas will be considered within the discussion of particular musical works from my portfolio as well as others I identify with.

Figure 1.1. (Andrzej Panufnik, *Kotysanka*, rehearsal mark 2: see diatonic lullaby in violin 1 & harp alongside irregular, textural, and microtonal surrounding strings)⁹

This combination of distinct materials greatly appealed to me, and laid an important foundation towards inspiring my own development with similar ideas. As my mentor on the project, composer Colin Matthews's rather dazzling and colourful orchestral textures also became newly apparent to me, as well as the orchestral writing of Julian Anderson, Mark-Anthony Turnage, and Thomas Adès. Other particular composers and pieces that sparked my imagination at this time will be touched upon within the following analysis of each section of the piece. I therefore used this experience as an attempt to paint with bold musical strokes, meshing different styles and characters, to create different expressions of musical identity within the same piece. The contrasting moods of the piece are defined expressively in the score, which aid in delineating the structure:

⁹ Panufnik, A (1956) *Lullaby* p. 5.

FORM

	A (b. 1-11)	B (b. 12-20)	C (bridge) (b. 21-44)
General Mood:	'GROWING'	'GENTLE'	'Slowly Emerging'—>'RELEASING'
Expressive Direction:	<i>Smooth, Interjecting, Intrusive</i>	<i>Smooth, Reflective, Interjecting</i>	<i>Effervescent, Interjecting, Lilting, Warm, Flourishing, Richly</i>

D (b. 45-53)	E (bridge) (b. 54-60)	A ¹ (b. 61-71)
'RHAPSODIC'	'DERANGED'	'INTERRUPTING'
<i>Lively, Exotic, Feverish, Climaxing</i>	<i>(All instruments)</i>	<i>Penetrating, Harsh, Growing</i>

The 'General Mood' row in the table above shows the main system directions for all players, and the 'Expressive Direction' row the various local directions for specific instruments and groups of them. This table shows the diversity of characters throughout the piece, and at only four and a half minutes in length, in hindsight my employment of perhaps a few too many different ideas can be seen here. Each of the above main sections contained a principal thematic element, and the stylistic plurality and array of such themes illustrates my intention of creating a piece quite heterogeneous in nature. Below are some excerpts of these moods, with a brief description of each, giving an overview of the motivic landscape of the piece:

A (b. 1-11) 'GROWING':

Figure 1.2. (B. 1-11 Strings opening texture):

[An unfolding web of notes expanding outwards from D into thick and chromatic chords]. The character here is mysterious and ambiguous, with the dense tapestry of sound having a reminiscence

of the styles found in Ligeti and Xenakis¹⁰, however a layered second motif is added, interjecting over the top, as seen in the figure below:



Figure 1.3. (B. 9 woodwind ‘interjecting’ figure):

[Cutting through over smooth and nebulous texture below it: angular and jagged in style and in contrast to the slow moving string and brass]. This motif comes back at numerous points during the piece, being layered above different changing backgrounds, before finally becoming part of the ‘Rhapsodic’ character later on.

B (b. 12-20) ‘GENTLE’:

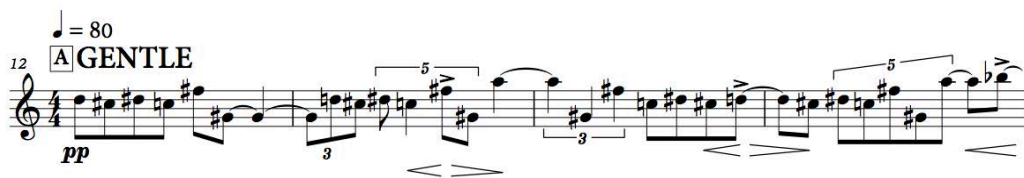


Figure 1.4. (B. 12-15 celesta):

[A restatement of opening string/brass texture and harmony from above, but now in a melodic form]. Other instruments join in to create polyphony, obsessing around the same notes (‘smooth’ & ‘reflective’) and the ‘interjecting’ figure is also heard at the end of this new section. This shows an early example of my ‘metamorphosis’ technique, which will be further discussed in later chapters, where musical material is reframed within different contexts.

¹⁰ For example, see: Ligeti’s *Lontano* (1967), and Xenakis’s *Metastaseis* (1954) which share some similarities with the opening sound-world of *Flux*.

C (bridge) (b. 21-44) ‘Slowly Emerging’—>‘RELEASING’:

B Slowly emerging

Figure 1.5. (Reduction: top to bottom: clarinet 2, marimba, violin 1, b. 21-24):

[Stacked in three linear layers each with a different character, creating a hybrid texture of smooth (violin 1s), oscillating (clarinet) and accented/effervescent (marimba) materials]. In contrast to sections A & B, the tonality is now modal and consonant, with a more static and slowly developing harmonic texture, which I had taken inspiration at the time from studying the orchestral writing of Colin Matthews¹¹. As this texture builds, the ‘interjecting’ figure once again tries to interrupt the flow, and the ‘effervescent’ layer grows into a lilting motif that juxtaposes the two characters within the same line, see below:

Figure 1.6. (B. 29-34 flute):

[‘Lilting’ character, which grows out of the ‘effervescent’ seen above, finally merging with the ‘interjecting’ trope; a cross-breed of linear themes and materials and modalities]. This passage grows towards the ‘RELEASING’ moment at bar 38, which I took inspiration from the bubbling orchestral textures found in the music of Julian Anderson¹², particularly in his *Fantasias for Orchestra* (2009)¹³.

¹¹ For example, see Matthews’s *Fourth Sonata for Orchestra* (1976), and in particular the final movement ‘*Sempre molto legato e pianissimo*’ in which slow and fast notes are layered together simultaneously, unfolding and intensifying in texture.

¹² Particular works I had been looking at of Anderson’s around this time included: *The Discovery of Heaven* (2011), *Eden* (2005), and *Symphony* (2003).

¹³ See: Anderson, J. (2009) *Fantasias* (England: Faber, 2016) movement 2 ‘Giovale’, bars 67-70, p. 20.

This flourishes out of the earlier separate layers into a gradual coming together, rushing onwards into the denouement: ‘RHAPSODIC’:

D (b. 45-53) ‘RHAPSODIC’—> E (b. 54-60; bridge) ‘DERANGED’:

The musical score for measures 47-49 is a reduction of the full orchestral texture. It features six staves: Woodwind (W.w.), Percussion 1 (Temp. Blocks), Violin 1 (Vln. 1), Horn/Violin 2 (Horns, Vln. 2), Horn/Viola (Horns, Vla.), and Low woodwind/low brass/Viola/Contrabass (Low w.w., low brass, Vc.). The bottom staff also includes a Contrabass (Cb.) part. The music is in 4/4 time and is characterized by a complex, rhythmic, and percussive texture. Dynamics range from *ff* (fortissimo) to *f* (forte). Articulations include *pizz.* (pizzicato) and *arco* (arco). The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, sixteenth notes, and slurs, indicating a highly rhythmic and complex passage.

Figure 1.7. (reduction of woodwind, brass, percussion, strings, b. 47-49 reduction):

[‘RHAPSODIC’ section, with various figures split up across instruments to create a composite sound-world taking motifs and ideas from earlier in the piece and weaving them into a rapturous and lively culmination]. The overall style here, with the harmony and rhythmic drive has a tone of jazz about it, with a walking-bass figure below exotic percussion gestures and punchy melodic lines. I was inspired here by similar approaches to this rhythmic and percussive drive, and lively, muscular textures from the music of Turnage and Adès, notably found in works such as *Frieze* (2012) and *Tevot* (2007) respectively. The ‘interjecting’ figure has become fully integrated into the music by this point and so no longer has an interruptive quality but a semi-united tutti force instead. This reaches a climax point at bar 52 that escalates into an explosive full orchestral chord that shatters away violently into the bridge passage at bar 54 marked ‘DERANGED’ where the brass shriek out fragments of the ‘interjecting’ figure, with discordant parallel harmonization and irregular contours. The style and textural character I wanted to achieve here came in part from being struck by similar energies that can be found in the music of Lutosławski, and his dramatic handling of brass:



Figure 1.8. (Lutosławski's *Livre pour orchestre* (1968) figure 446)¹⁴:

Along with his generally big orchestral textures, my 'DERANGED' passage (see Figure 1.9) has a likeness to the final section '*3me intermède et chapitre final*', where towards the end, a dazzling and aggressive brass texture, marked '*furioso, pavillons en l'air*' (holding the bells high) occurs.

Figure 1.9. (*Flux* b. 54-58 brass 'DERANGED' figure)

In *Flux*, slices of full orchestra interrupt at this point with the 'interjecting' motif; a forceful attempt to reconcile the themes into one aggregate, however at bar 61 a new and final interrupting power is introduced—the A section once again:

¹⁴ Lutosławski, W. (1969) *Livre pour orchestre* p. 71.

A1 (b. 61-71) 'INTERRUPTING':

The musical score is for a section titled 'INTERRUPTING' (b. 61-71). It is marked with a tempo of 69 A Tempo. The score is written for seven parts: Horns 1-4, Trumpets 1-3, and Percussion 1 (Tub. B.). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score begins with a measure marked '61'. The horns and trumpets play a series of notes, with the trumpets marked 'Penetrating' and 'ff'. The tubular bells play a series of notes, marked 'Harsh' and 'ff'. The score ends with a measure marked '71'.

Figure 1.10. (B. 61-63: horns, trumpets & tubular bells):

'Harsh' and intrusive tubular bells outline the original linear material from the beginning, underlined and sustained in the brass to hold the intensity. This return to the beginning material is now changed in temperament, with the rest of the orchestra joining in to grow the intensity further towards the final swelling chord of the piece.

Although *Flux* is a little overflowing with material in places, with there certainly being room for more expansion of the themes, as a somewhat brimming miniature for orchestra, it afforded me a great deal of insight and creative enlightenment. The fleeting nature of the passing motifs and themes, each in flux to the next, has an acquaintance with the overture form, and perhaps a secondary application of that term as the introductory piece to my whole portfolio. Within it, I explored and tested some ideas that became salient features throughout many of the other works that are discussed throughout this examination of my artistic practice. These features include: different tonalities both in juxtaposition and elision, the synthesis of different stylistic techniques, contrasting textures and layering processes (hybridization), different manipulations (metamorphoses) of source materials, and the identification of diverse characters and moods through expression. In *Flux*, I perhaps

attempted a little too much within the time constraint, and as a result its structure is not as sound as it could have been, with it resulting in some ways as more of a study piece rather than an autonomous work. However, this led me towards a process of defining and refining my materials over following pieces. Chapters 2-6 look at how I developed these various facets of my process in a more categorised way, splitting up my approaches in light of particular overarching themes: tonality, inside sources, outside sources, hybridity, and style.

Chapter 2 – Constructing Tonalities: *Foil*

‘I seem to be going through the history of tonality for myself. If, when I started composing tonally, my harmonic language had reached Schumann, say, then by now I’ve progressed through Strauss to late Mahler and am heading for early Schoenberg. It’s getting curiouiser and curiouiser (as Alice would say). Am I going to end up as I began - an atonal composer? But what do you do with a triad except dirty it up?’ (~Tredici)¹⁵

‘The C major scale is not obsolete nor is it effete.’ (p. 24) (~Lennon)¹⁶

‘Tonality, that highly developed musical speech of “classical” composers, did not suddenly die, as was widely proclaimed at the beginning of this century, nor was atonality, its self-proclaimed destroyer, the *bête noire* of music.’ (p. 246) (~Rochberg)¹⁷

The three statements above, all made by composers towards the end of the 20th century, kindle my enquiry into the topics and talking points in the following chapter, and indeed my wider discussion. These quotations underline some of the impressions that had arisen after the tumultuous and rapid developments of the previous hundred years, and offer a good context for how I situate my own artistic practice some years on from this today, with ‘tonality’ being a somewhat challenging term to define in relation to my compositional approach. Within the discussion of contemporary musical works, tonalities can often get segregated into antithetical camps—such as tonal vs atonal, diatonic vs dodecahonic, and so on—thus becoming over generalised to a certain extent. Varying definitions exist of the term ‘tonality’, creating different implications depending on what kind of musics are being discussed, and the rich historical umbrella that tonality functions and operates under further expands the complexities in defining its application.

This can also become problematic when attempting to examine contrasts and comparisons between works that consciously combine different stylistic aesthetics, and which adopt multifarious approaches ungoverned by typical systems. ‘Tonality’ can often be found being defined as using *a particular musical scale or key*, having *a tonic*, or being *major or minor*¹⁸, which does not often map well onto countless types of discrete compositional practices in Western music as well and the increasingly prevalent influences from traditions outside its domain. For me, this popular simplification provides an interesting starting point for further dialogue into how tonality is perhaps

¹⁵ Moravec, P. (1992) p. 21.

¹⁶ Lennon, J.A. (1992) p. 24.

¹⁷ Rochberg, G. (2004) p. 246.

¹⁸ Such definitions can be found in general dictionaries (Oxford, Cambridge), as well as in various well-known educational materials (e.g. GCSE and A Level syllabi materials; ABRSM theory; BBC Bitesize, etc.).

perceived on a wider scale, and more specifically, what role it plays in the hands of composers that employ variegated approaches to it. The Grove Dictionary of Music provides a somewhat more open definition, which at the very least, is perhaps a better preliminary for the discussion of such works, and indeed for my own exploration: tonality, ‘in the broadest possible sense, [...] refers to systematic arrangements of pitch phenomena and relations between them.’¹⁹

Since the ‘Crisis of Tonality’²⁰, and Joseph Marx’s coinage of the term ‘atonality’, composers have been expanding and adapting approaches to their individual tonal languages rapidly. There are a great range of distinctive systems and orientations that have been realised and advanced as a result, reimagining functional tonality in a way that greatly expanded the tonal tradition of the common-practice period. Numerous offshoots emerged, and tonality became pluralised in myriad ways: bitonality, polytonality, progressive tonality, expanded tonality, post-tonality, neo-tonality, (the list could go on); encouraging composers to further consider the relationships between *different* tonal centricities. With renewed linear melodic and harmonic sequences, and innovative techniques of layering independent materials in unfamiliar vertical arrangements, these increasing possibilities in tonality went hand-in-hand with an engagement and absorption of manifold potentials with style and fabric, and popular and classical arts were soon able to coalesce at will.

By the end of the 20th century, musical historicism had greatly widened, and any remaining rulebooks had been thrown out: Ives and Schnittke had used the juxtaposition of quotation as a compositional tool; Berio had arranged Beatles songs in the style of Handel²¹; and Glass had written symphonies based on Bowie²² within a context of minimalism. And from ‘minimalism’ to ‘maximalism’²³, the continuation of this diversity has resulted in composers today working across broad interdisciplinary dialogues and artistic networks, and, in 2018 a composer defining their music as ‘tonal’ or ‘atonal’ does not tell us much about their music. Instead, tonality can be a spectrum, not

¹⁹ Hyer, B. (2006) p. 726.

²⁰ For a good insight into this, see: Nadeau, R. (1979) *Debussy and the Crisis of Tonality*.

²¹ See Berio’s *Beatles Songs* (2003).

²² See Glass’s Bowie Symphonies (*Symphony No. 1*, 1992, & *Symphony No. 4*, 1996).

²³ ‘Maximalism’, described by composer David Jaffe as: ‘Rather than seeking a rarefied pure style free of outside references, I embrace heterogeneity, with all its contradictions, and view all outside influences as potential raw material from which something idiosyncratic and sharply-defined may be created’... ‘Because of the extreme diversity of the pool of potential raw material, such compositions tend to sound quite different from one another on the surface.’ (Jaffe, D.A. (1995) p. 11).

a binary opposition, and the degrees and positions between these poles are imperative factors in need of considering when reflecting on composers' and my own expressive techniques and resultant modes of musical language.

According to Tim Rutherford-Johnson (in his recent book *Music after the Fall*, 2017)²⁴, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, a lot of the tenets of post-1945 debate were 'no longer applicable by the start of the twenty-first-century', with Europe having 'rebuilt itself' as the European Union: 'Finally, the birth of the internet and the World Wide Web...as well as the widespread popularization of digital-technologies, transformed the production and consumption of culture in every sphere'²⁵. He goes on to suggest that:

'Every type of material has become equally available to every composer; triadic harmony on a regular pulse can be just as radical as the gestures of the historical avant garde. (And, conversely, noise and silence can be just as prosaic as an age-old chord sequence)...This guiding ethic is choice rather than innovation. No longer tasked with forging, in modernist fashion, a path toward a shared future, musicians are free to choose from the available possibilities, what best expresses their subjective tastes and desires, or perhaps what they believe best communicates their ideas to an audience.'²⁶

Johnson's book concludes by suggesting that 'we might therefore identify a common approach, what we might call a general poetics of "afterness"'²⁷, and for me, this idea and attitude chimes with my own thoughts and conceptions as a composer today. In the context of my discussion, 'afterness' could thus be a more open and appropriately less fixed way of also describing a climate after and beyond the debates of postmodernism. Moreover, an important component for analysing and interpreting such a climate is exploring the plural bonds between style and tonality; how the two can be put into various frameworks; and the extent to which these considerations relate to what is being expressed. How a particular approach to tonality is either in keeping with, remoulds, or is in someway derived from a particular stylistic association offers a way of contextualising one's aesthetics and artistic expressions. In my own music, I adopt and adapt materials on a piece-by-piece basis: all expressive potentials are, as Johnson suggests, 'available' and thus viable, and I find this to be a valuable way of manifesting whatever it is I might be trying to communicate—whether that be something melancholic, something merry, something humorous, or something meditative.

²⁴ Rutherford-Johnson, T. (2017) p. 6.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 55.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 262.

A composer of significance to me here who combines and remoulds elements of the past and present—crafting works of a highly individual and distilled voice—is Howard Skempton, whose characteristic process of reframing familiar practices provides a basis for unpredictable melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic developments. Skempton’s music has been described as ‘the emancipation of the consonance’²⁸, and the composer approaches his relationship to tonality in a distinctive way by manipulating recognisable structural tonal templates, which is a technique that can be found often throughout my portfolio and this dissertation. In his solo piano piece *Even Tenor* (1988), the familiarity of a sequence reveals itself in the same stylistic procedure as in a work such as Bach’s first prelude (BWV 846), whilst employing Skempton’s idiosyncratic handling of pitch:



Figure 2.1. (Opening of Bach’s Prelude No. 1 BWV 846, from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*)²⁹



Figure 2.2. (Opening of the second section of Skempton’s *Even Tenor*)³⁰

Skempton’s music often has a clear discourse with the Baroque legacy, and in this comparison, one can see the resemblance with Bach: chords unravel in a linear fashion, underpinned by a stable and simple rhythmic scheme. However, the ambiguity in Skempton’s tonality creates an opposing harmonic instability not found in Bach’s, with the subtle shifts evoking the elusory, and the floating nature of a suspended tonality, and this is something I take a similar approach to in my music in order to embrace past models whilst also taking them in different directions. This linear fashion is often referred to in tonality terminology as ‘linear harmony’; that is, the chords themselves contain contrapuntal lines that are as important in their linear characteristics as they are in their purely vertical sonorities, and one can find this type of harmonic movement at the nexus of multiple styles and periods. For example, in Chopin’s *Prelude in E minor, Op. 23 No. 4, 1886*, which over its first

²⁸ Müller, Hermann-Christoph. (1998) pp. 77–81.

²⁹ Bach, J.S. (1886) *Das wohltemperierte Klavier I*.

³⁰ Skempton, H. (1996) *Even Tenor* p. 12.

twelve measures uses chromatic voice leading from one chord to the next, moving away from the tonic, creates subtle changes that leave us guessing as to where we are going or where we might end up (see Figure 2.3). Fast-forwarding to 1997, we can see a striking similarity between Chopin's prelude and Radiohead's *Exit Music (For a Film)*, also adopting this harmonic technique—as well as the melodic contour (see Figure 2.3)—but instead within a stylistic context of an ambient/progressive-rock aesthetic. This linguistic interplay across periods can show how shared resources are always being continually refreshed and pluralised into different designs and impressions.

[CHOPIN] (Solo piano)
Largo
p
espress.

[RADIOHEAD]
Slow (Voice)
Wake from your sleep, the dry - ing of your tears, to - day we es - scape

(Guitar accomp.)
p

→ (semitone movement) →

Figure 2.3. (Chopin's *Prelude Op. 28 No. 4* [top]³¹ and Radiohead's *Exit Music* [bottom]³² comparison): See the striking similarity with the linear harmonic movement (in semitones), as well as the contour of the melody.

This technique of 'linear harmony', as seen in Chopin, Skempton, Radiohead and many others will often be found in my own approach to harmonic movement throughout my portfolio. For me, beginning with a single sonority, harmony, or chord and moving away from it in a linear fashion, without the need to necessarily return or progress in any traditional manner as found in the functional rules of tonality, is a salient part of my composition process. During this process, a route is formed, and it can meander, twist and turn, or change direction entirely, and within it I allow intuition to take the reins, with the tempering and honing coming out of this afterwards; tackling and re-sculpting from a more analytical perspective. This succeeding part of the process is where I ask myself questions in regards to the choices I have made, and perhaps the moment at which the critical side takes over. In a paper titled *The art of being ambiguous: From listening to composing* (1988),

³¹ Taken from: Chopin, F. (1839) No. 4 from 24 Preludes Op. 28, b. 1-5.

³² Transcription by Daniel Fardon from audio: Radiohead's *Exit Music (For a Film)* from *OK Computer*, 1997.

Japanese composer Jō Kondō describes a similar approach to this in his linear process, which I identify with:

‘My first step at present is to wait for a first sound to come to my mind, whereupon I proceed to concentrate on listening to it in order to find the second sound to be written. This second sound must have some recognizable relationship with the first and yet this relationship should not be too obviously established. Concentration on listening to these two sounds yields a third sound, and so on. There is no systematic method of composition involved. I start composing without a pre-determined formal design, or even a hint of how long the piece is going to last. The actual structure and duration of the piece just comes out as the final result of a process based on my ‘listening experience’. This process does not involve any kind of formalistic approach. It is thoroughly empirical.’³³

This consideration of the composer’s ‘listening experience’ resonates with my practice, and in terms of tonality, supports the fluid and plural attitude taken to it by myself as well as many others. Further to this, and returning briefly to the music of Skempton, Arnold Whittall describes Skempton’s craft as ‘using well-tried procedures in new ways: to turn the slogan towards jargon...and by showing how the opposing poles of classicism and modernism get along when they are encouraged to interact rather than mutually self-destruct’³⁴. His approach ‘can turn from simple triadic, consonant tonality in one piece to something still simple but not simply tonal in another. No less striking is how it can inhabit a world of clear-cut melodic motives just as comfortably as it can avoid melodic thematicism altogether’³⁵. The scope and handling of new vocabularies, and their corresponding methods of remoulding, feeds into the level of ambiguity that can often be so intrinsic to the resonance of new music. Various forms of metamorphosis and hybridity operates across a spectrum of composers, and so one can find: triadic tonal objects eliding with the dodecaphonic; intertextuality shaping new meanings; interpolation of historical materials reframing the recognisable; and the highbrow being dislocated from cultural hierarchies to highlight shared connections³⁶—or as Alfred Schnittke once put it, even overcoming ‘the gap between ‘E’ (Ernstmusik, serious music) and ‘U’ (Unterhaltung, music for entertainment), even if I break my neck in doing so!’³⁷

³³ Kondō Jō (1988) p. 19.

³⁴ Whittall, A. (2018) p. 12.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁶ For some examples of composers, see: Thomas Adès (*intertextuality/quotation*), Jennifer Walshe (*dislocation of cultural hierarchy*), David Del Tredici (*tonal elisions*), Mark-Anthony Turnage (*cultural hierarchy*), Michael Zev Gordon (*quotation/memory*), Cassandra Miller (*intertextuality/reframing recognisable*), John Zorn (*extreme culture & genre crossing*), Frank Zappa (*Ernstmusik/Unterhaltung*), Nico Muhly (*reframed tonal objects*), etc.

³⁷ Schnittke, A. (2002) xiv.

Chapters 3 to 6 will extend the above concerns into different compositional territories, but attention will now be focused here on some diverse examples of tonality being used in the music of some composers I draw influence from artistically, alongside an examination of an early portfolio work of mine, *Foil*, from my larger cycle *Piano Suite III* for solo piano.

Tredici; Macklay

Another composer I very much relate to in association to some of ideas mentioned so far surrounding the elision of different tonal materials is David Del Tredici, who uses a mixture of tonalities to create works with a dense tapestry of consonances, dissonances, and styles. His eclectic orientations help him to convey highly contrasted and theatrical moods, and this is achieved through his quirky way of combining contrary idioms. In *Final Alice* (1974-5) for soprano and orchestra, we experience a colourful story of a bizarre and unpredictable Wonderland, depicting love, terror, and humour over the course of its 65 minutes; a blending of extremes, with the tonal rubbing shoulders with the atonal. The work begins with the atonal growing into the tonal (in which a concealed dominant seventh hiding beneath a web of complex sound³⁸ becomes revealed), and later on the tonal grows back into the atonal (12-tone rows recur with increasing frequency, representing Alice's frightening growth), but then at the apotheosis, an outpouring of functional tonality (see Figure 2.4) engulfs us.

When the final aria *Acrostic Song* comes, the effect is, for me, one of catharsis—intensely moving and poignant—reflecting the heartfelt and human undertone of the poem. In the words of Del Tredici: 'my use of tonal harmony, as though atonality had never happened...recalls another time. The parallel recollections, as it were, became an inspiration, giving me courage to indulge tonality with utter abandon.'³⁹ I find this concept of using tonality as a way of referring to and emoting the past a very visceral one, and when situated within the larger body of Tredici's piece, it creates impact, with the tender melody setting the words from Lewis Carroll's haunting words:

*Still she haunts me, phantomwise,
Alice moving under skies
Never seen by waking eyes.*⁴⁰

³⁸ Described as 'general chaos' by Del Tredici in: Moravec, P. (1992) p. 14-15.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

⁴⁰ Carroll, L. (1903). 199.

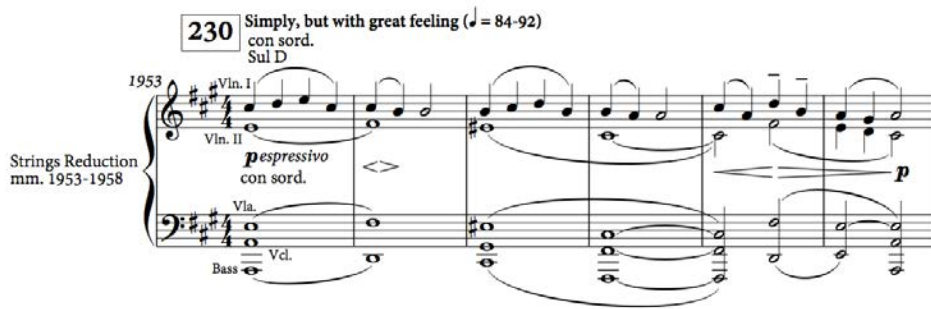


Figure 2.4. (David Del Tredici, *Apotheosis, Aria V: Acrostic Song*, string reduction, Figure 230 b.1953-1958⁴¹)

Sky Macklay is another composer who also adopts functional tonality in bold and often even humorous ways; exploring how well-established historical musical processes from the canon of Western classical music can be reframed into different and thus ambiguous surroundings. In her string quartet *Many Many Cadences* (2014), she uses the cadence as a sonic tool that stretches ‘the listeners’ perception of cadences by recontextualising these predictable chord progressions in very fast cells that are constantly changing key and register. These lonely, disjunct ends-of-phrases eventually congeal and transform into new kinds of phrases and sound objects⁴²:

frenzied, staccato notes
are non vibrato
about ♩ = 120

Many Many Cadences

Sky Macklay

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello

CV I Eb IV I A vii⁴ I Eb vii⁴ i G ii V I E vi IV I Db ii vii⁴ I bb iv V i D ii V

sempre f

Figure 2.5. (Opening of *Many Many Cadences*, by Sky Macklay)⁴³

⁴¹ Del Tredici, D. (1976) *Final Alice* p. 285.

⁴² Macklay, S. (n.d.) Composer Website: <https://www.skymacklay.com/#/many-many/>.

⁴³ Ibid.

This non-functional and capricious use of tonality creates a quality of curiosity, and the range of sonorities available when unrestricted from certain stylistic and historical parameters affords one a way of organically moving between idioms that can both exist in new and alien contexts as well as being objects in and of themselves. With the hierarchies of functional tonality being rethought in this way, and with the integration of different systems, expressive possibilities are widened and adopted. The bold yet differing approaches to tonality taken by Tredici and Macklay here are non-restrictive in their poetic nature, and create a dialogue with history whilst at the same time affording individual reactions to it. The following study of *Foil* from my *Piano Suite III* takes a look at how my tonality came out of various sources, and begins the discussion towards my own methods of using pre-existing music as well as the conscious integration of diverse stylistic forces. This will be expanded upon in more detail in Chapters 3-6.

Piano Suite III: *Foil*

‘Foil’ is a term used in literature to refer quite simply to a character that is in contrast to another character, often with the objective of trying to highlight certain qualities of that other character through their opposing qualities. It can also be used more generally as a word meaning to frustrate or thwart something from succeeding. This term formed an open starting point that enabled me to attempt a composition that really embraced contrasting tonalities and styles, and to use that as an impetus for attempting some of the concepts that would become more predominant in my later portfolio works. In *Foil*, I handled tonality in a way to allow my conceptualisation of the piece to materialise out of two pairs of opposing characters: *solidity vs pliancy*, and *the vertical vs the horizontal*. Another inspiration for this piece came from a readiness to embrace past musics, and at the heart of the piece there evolves a hallucination on Bach—which becomes more and more enveloped by a hostile force—encrusted with tonal incongruities. To offer a contextual basis for the evaluation of my starting points in tonality, source, and style (of which *Foil* explores all three), the analysis of the piece in sequence below provides a good situation of my methods and practice.

The piece opens with what I consider to be ‘building-block’ material, where simple contrasting triadic chords are stacked—the right hand against the left—resulting in a jarring character:



Figure 2.6. (Opening 4 bars of *Foil*: stacked triads)

Whilst this could potentially be seen as having a ‘bitonal’ flavour, neither part ever settles on its own respective tonal centre, and in this sense the sound-world is constructed out of the variation of familiar chords in their linear (horizontal) movement, alongside the less-familiar interplay between each individual (vertical) strike. The rhythmic drive is unceasing and in constant motion, with the gestures never relaxing. Although the component parts (or ‘building-blocks’) are just modest, staple triads, their construction here creates an unstable and charged atmosphere, which for me underlines how the use of recognisable objects can take on a range of expressions. The table below shows a reduction of the triads used, the top row being the right hand part, and the bottom the left, from the first four bars of Figure 2.6 above—^a, ^b, & ^c denoting the inversions.

A ^b ^c	Gm ^a	B ^c	A ^b ^c	Gm ^a	B ^c	A ^c	B ^b ^a	A ^c	B ^c	A ^b ^c	Gm ^a	E ^b m ^b	Dm ^b	Dm ^b	E ^a
E ^a	F [#] ^a	A ^b ^a	E ^a	F [#] ^a	A ^b ^a	Dm ^b	G ^a	Dm ^b	E ^a	E ^a	G ^b ^a	F ^a	G [#] m ^c	G [#] m ^c	D ^b

(Chords of right and left hand’s first four bars)

The method I took in choosing these particular combinations of triads and their inversions relates to the earlier quoted approach of Jö Kondö and his ‘listening experience’. I found groupings which to my ears best expressed the ‘Striking, Tangy’ indication, naturally leading to certain choices and pairings of chords with jarring and distant relationships. Towards the end of this opening section, the hands begin to dismantle, with the rhythmic unison becoming broken from bar 24, and the triads beginning to extend in structure. The range and space between the two hands also becomes extended, making grotesque⁴⁴ attempts to resolve and cadence. In the example below, the fundamental chordal and rhythmic device is still in play, but becomes elaborated in its density and contrapuntal nature,

⁴⁴ The idea of the ‘grotesque’ in my music will be looked at more deeply in Chapter 4.

attempting to haphazardly settle on a dominant 7th on A, over a distant chord of D \flat major (see the final chord of bar 29 in Figure 2.7 below), four octaves apart, before the music gets swept away again into an increasingly violent landscape.



Figure 2.7. (B. 26-29)

In relation to my earlier starting points around ‘foil’ as a term, this opening material represents something solid and unflinching, which in the next section gives way to an ‘opposing’ pliability, as well as a changing stylistic disposition. This begins with a slow and fragmented emergence of the fugue motif from Bach’s *Prelude and Fugue No. 23 in B major, BWV 868*, which in contrast to the aggressive prologue, now suddenly has a traditional and functional linear tonality, far more structured in its horizontal makeup. The choice of using material from Bach’s *Well-Tempered Clavier* came out of my initial comparison between the first prelude and Skempton’s *Even Tenor*, and I wanted to engage with this in order to build on my contextual research of tonality as a practice-based form.



Figure 2.8. (Opening of Bach’s ‘Fugue No. 23’ BWV 868 from *The Well-Tempered Clavier*)⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Bach, J.S. (1886) *Das wohltemperierte Klavier I*.

42 *ffz* *fffz* Tender, Wistful *ppp* slowly emerging; fragmented

48 *p* *sub. ffz* *sub. pp* Sustain (no pedal)

51 *tr* → Gradually reduce to light pedalling →

Figure 2.9. (B. 42-53: fragmented emergence of Bach fugue)

The Bach fugue begins to emerge in the left hand, with the right hand taking on a role of uncertainty, unsure whether it should be working together with the left hand, or continuing what it has been used to up to now by instead working in contradiction to the familiar and secure implied harmony. These materials are challenging one another, and this use of antagonisation and lack of togetherness furthers the volatile atmosphere of the piece. The rigorous tonal mastery of Bach's fugues provide a stark juxtaposition to the jarring and non-functional tonality of the opening, and this moment of calm is quite quickly damaged with a harsh and redolent interjection, seen in Figure 2.9 above on the first beat of bar 50. I found the fugue to work well as a basis for my kaleidoscopic treatment of its material, but also in its own way, it is unique compared with many of the other fugues; the harmonic background of the subject being difficult to determine as Bach harmonises it differently in almost every statement. This also added to the overarching concept of the piece in its attempt to blur the line between what I perceive as familiar/unfamiliar material, and how this relates to the plurality and

fluidity that can be available to a composer where ‘tonality’ is concerned. I conceive that in some ways the opening material of the piece can be seen almost like an alternative ‘prelude’ to the ‘fugue’, but rather than as is traditional, the prelude is grappling its way back in as something more important than just a precursor, and thus stealing (or foiling) the performer’s—and listener’s—attention. This interplay of the Bach fabric being retaliated against continues to unfold and contend, and I wanted to achieve a theatrical sense of extreme juxtaposition, with the pianist having to navigate sudden and abrupt changes both in the textural and dynamic qualities, as well as in the stylistic shifts: brutalist modernism one bar, and obscured baroque the next. This becomes particularly noticeable towards the latter half of the piece, where the two characters are in opposition, the opening material wedging itself between the now muddled Bach:



Figure 2.10. (B. 68-70: brutalist 9/16 bar cutting through fugue based material)

At the end of bar 70 in the above figure, one can see the two materials beginning to merge, forming a hybrid texture that becomes further layered and confused. By bar 84, I finally melt this texture down into what appears to be a defeat on both parts (see bar 82-64 in Figure 2.11 below), the two materials having almost lost their identity. The right hand triads are now no longer stacked on top of the left hand ones, and the left hand fugue has lost the strange counterpoint that was working above it. However, the brutalist manifests itself in an unrelenting and fierce final passage, which becomes wild and bullish (see bar 85-89 in Figure 2.11 below). The final nine bars of the piece return to the opening material, in exactly the same rhythm, however the triads are now completely muddled by many added notes, with some chords containing up to eleven notes across the two hands. The expressive marking in the score ‘Thrusting’ expounds this finishing emotion, causing dramatic and aggressive performative gestures in the physical actions of the pianist.



Figure 2.11. (B. 82-89)

In *Foil*, my intention was to combine some of the main categories and tropes of my project, and use them as starting points into the entire creation of the piece, with the overarching terms of ‘Tonality, Source, and Style’ all having a bearing on the direct choices I made. In terms of ‘tonality’, it contrasts, merges, and juxtaposes in both its vertical and horizontal arrangements, and the various ‘building-blocks’ form in different ways to create the resultant characters and their respective levels of perceptibility. With ‘source’, *Foil* employs from both inside and outside of music, with the use of a Bach fugue, as well as the title of the piece taking influence from literary techniques, these respective sources guiding the structural and narrative aspects of the music. My own ‘style’ extends out of these above facets—with the two characters’ stylistic identities and tendencies being exaggerated—and this creates the heightened and dramatic atmosphere, through use of such pluralities of tonality and textural contrasts. This work risks having potentially a little too much happening, all in a very compressed way, and in hindsight I would perhaps adapt certain choices in order to make the aforementioned considerations even more direct in their potential. For example, this could be by simplifying some of the Bach material to give it more clarity where it at times become a little too

dense in its construction (such as bars 63-64 etc.), or spending longer extending into the hybrid section (from bar 70-84) in order to give the piece's trajectory a little more architectural guidance. However, the territory explored here was invaluable to the expansion of my artistic practice, and many of the other pieces in the portfolio built off, and developed out of, these methods and ideas.

In the next chapter, my use of tonality, and the various stylistic and aesthetic extensions of it that I have been looking at so far will be furthered into a more in-depth examination of how the use of existing music—and specifically the intertextuality of it as a source—can be employed.

Chapter 3 – Inside Sources: *All Things, Piano Suite III*

In the previous two chapters, I introduced how the use of existing music, and an engagement with styles from throughout history, can be used as an impetus for composition within broad interdisciplinary dialogues. The focus of this chapter will deal with methods of intertextuality—and the metamorphosing of musical material on a more analytical level—whilst widening the enquiry to encompass reflections on the effects of these approaches. Examining how a kernel, musical source or object is consciously manipulated (and its level of explicitness), can help one to better interpret and understand a musical work's intentions, whether it be central to its meaning(s) or purely a submerged compositional starting point/generative process. What interests my artistic practice here is moreover the line between the recognisable and the unfamiliar; various levels of ambiguity; the allusive; and understanding the essence of what is ultimately being expressed.

I use the term 'intertextuality' due to its open definition when applied to music, encompassing many forms of artistic interconnectedness, including notably: allusion, quotation, recontextualization, stylistic fluidity, and the influence of anterior musics. The term was first developed within the literary theories of poststructuralism, coined by Bulgarian-French philosopher Julia Kristeva in the 1960s as an extension of Ferdinand de Saussure's work on semiotics, and Mikhail Bakhtin's theories of dialogism, polyphony (borrowed, interestingly, from music), and heteroglossia. In music, Michael Klein (in his book *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*) talks about musical texts 'speaking among themselves'⁴⁶, and describes intertextuality in three ways:

'We may concern ourselves with just those texts that an author brought to her writing and study a *poietic* intertextuality. We may concern ourselves with the texts that a society brings to its reading and study an *esthetic* intertextuality. We may confine the text to its own time and study a *historical* intertextuality, or we may open the text to all time and study a *transhistorical* intertextuality. The intertexts we make may be within a *style* or within a *canon*.⁴⁷

The infusion and passing of one music (or style of music) into another is no new thing, having existed throughout musical history: from the oral/aural traditions of the ancient, folk, and blues; to

⁴⁶ Klein, M. L. (2005) p. 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 12.

theme and variation form; to electronic remixes found in urban contemporary music and beyond.⁴⁸ In Western classical practices, the remodeling, variation, and quotation of earlier sources can be easily found across periods, such as, for example, the popular anonymous pastoral melody of *Ah! vous dirai-je, Maman* (known in the English-speaking world as *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*) affording innumerable adaptations in various forms, for example in the likes of Mozart, Liszt, Saint-Saëns, and Louis Armstrong.⁴⁹ In his 1971 essay *Polystylistic Tendencies in Modern Music*, which is part of a collection of essays that went unpublished until 2002⁵⁰, Schnittke (an avid proponent of the use of stylistic allusion and quotation), progressed the written debate with his idea of ‘polystylism’—being ‘not merely the “collage wave” in contemporary music, but also more subtle ways of using elements of another’s style’⁵¹. Although often used as a broad categorization to describe any music that is stylistically polyphonic, Schnittke—and many later composers—used such techniques and processes as a way of creating certain subtexts in their music, expressing Schnittke’s ‘philosophical idea’ of highlighting the ‘links between the ages’.⁵² One of the most notorious and well-covered intertextual works from this period is Berio’s kaleidoscopic *Sinfonia* (1969) for eight amplified voices and orchestra, which includes quotations from literature alongside a battery of musical references and allusions. Within it he comments on the symphonic tradition; or more precisely, the etymological root of the symphony, as ‘harmony of sounds’, or ‘sounding together’, and the constantly changing landscape provides an interplay of musical characters with varying degrees of intelligibility.

Some interesting parallels could be drawn between the ideas as found in Berio’s intertextuality, and prominent writings of the same time in the literary philosophy of Barthes and Foucault on the position and significance of an author in relationship to a text, or indeed a musical work. In Roland Barthes’ essay *Death of The Author* (1967), a text can be hypothesised as not having a ‘single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a

⁴⁸ Interestingly, in recent years approaches to the electronic remix have traversed into the contemporary classical sphere; see composer, DJ, and producer Gabriel Prokofiev, who in 2011 remixed fellow composer Tansy Davies’s chamber work *Neon* (2004).

⁴⁹ See: Mozart’s *Twelve Variations on “Ah! vous dirai-je, Maman”*; Liszt’s *Album Leaf S.163b*; Saint-Saëns’ *Carnival of the Animals*—movement XII ‘Fossiles’; Louis Armstrong’s *Wonderful World*.

⁵⁰ Schnittke A., *A Schnittke Reader*, trans. John Goodliffe, ed. Alexander Ivashkin (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002).

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 87.

⁵² Ibid., p. 90.

variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture'.⁵³ This notion of a multidimensional space can be experienced in the multiplicity of derivations heard in Berio's *Sinfonia*, and the nature of an individual listener perceiving the whole (as a sum of its parts) bears resemblance to a later discussion by Barthes into the 'plurality of meaning'⁵⁴ of a text, and the ambiguity of its contents. In his lecture *What is an Author* (1969), Michel Foucault considers a concept of the non-universal and thus fluid social position of an author—termed the 'author-function'⁵⁵—having different identities and levels of anonymity depending on the text. For example, by comparing the perception of writers of ancient folk-tales with those of well-known modern novels, or the writers of scientific texts with those of epic poetry.

The anonymous composer of the *Ah! vous dirai-je, Maman* melody can therefore take on multiple social, stylistic, and historical identities, depending on the type of intertextuality at hand, and later in this chapter I will discuss the use of what I label as 'innocent material' in my own work, and how I approached this. Before this, I will now briefly bring into focus three quite distinctive string quartets that all engage with past musics in different ways, leading to a discussion of my own string quartet, *All Things*.

Three String Quartets: Schnittke; Adès; Miller

Alfred Schnittke's *String Quartet No. 3* (1983), is perhaps one of the more overt examples of historical materials being used as a method of constructing entire musical works, and in particular here, the notion of Schnittke's 'links between the ages'. Being delineated and labeled within the published score itself right from the beginning, the composer leaves no doubt towards his choices in source material:

⁵³ Barthes, R. (1977) p. 146.

⁵⁴ See: Barthes, R. (1989) pp. 56-64.

⁵⁵ See: Foucault, M. (1977) pp. 113-38.

The image displays the opening of Schnittke's String Quartet No. 3, featuring four staves: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked 'Andante'. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp*, *p*, *mp*, *mf*, *f*, *pizz.*, *arco*, *rall.*, and *a tempo*. The first system is labeled 'Orlando di Lasso - Stabat mater'. The second system is labeled 'Ludwig v. Beethoven - Quartett N. 16' and 'D S C H'. The third system is labeled 'I' and 'rall. a tempo'. The fourth system is labeled 'p' and 'pp sub.'.

Figure 3.1. (Opening of Schnittke's *String Quartet No. 3*)⁵⁶

Within only the first eight bars, three different broken quotations have been introduced, taken from: Orlando di Lasso's *Stabat Mater* (1585), Beethoven's *Große Fuge Op. 133* (1825), and Shostakovich's famous D-S-C-H (D-E \flat -C-B) musical cryptogram. Spanning four hundred years and from distinct traditions, these three choices on paper may not seem immediately obvious as musical companions, but over the course of the work's following twenty minutes, Schnittke intertwines and synthesises the motivic material through a series of variations, indeed revealing the 'links' he mentions. For example, one can see that by placing the D-S-C-H motif after to the Beethoven, the four notes of the Shostakovich have the same intervallic relationship as the first four notes of the Beethoven, transposed up a major third: [B \flat -B \natural -A \flat -G] becomes [D-E \flat -C-B]. The Lasso throughout provides a more diatonic opposition to the Beethoven and the D-S-C-H, and by the third movement, the three become metamorphosed into a resultant chromatic language, with the respective motivic materials

⁵⁶ Schnittke, A. (1984) *String Quartet No. 3*, p. 1.

becoming integrated and unified whilst also at the same time somehow retaining aspects of their distinct characters. The poetic world of this string quartet is full of contrasts and estrangement, from the dark and despairing, to the hyper and hysterical, and for me, constitutes a remarkable example of how pre-existing musical fabrics can both be in a dialogue with one another as well as coalescing to form dramatic statements and an evocative resultant language.

In composer Thomas Adès's string quartet *Arcadiana*, written just over ten years later in 1994, he also explores connections between different musical periods and aesthetics through an allusive language, drawing on the likes of Mozart, Schubert, Elgar, and Debussy. Whilst being framed within a setting that is contemporary in its approach to string quartet writing—with the use of advanced extended techniques and rhythmic complexity—the global feel of the work is that of an engagement with history and its tensions between tradition and modernism. Adès's free and fantasmic style is often stressed through his technique of remoulding historical tonal ideas, allowing these elements to form a natural dialogue with one other in a similar way to Schnittke.

One of the more palpable examples of this comes in movement VI ('*O Albion*') that, towards the very end of the work—and after some rather brutal earlier movements, including a brash 'tango mortale' (see Figure 3.2)—conjures a sensation of wistfulness. With an invocation of Edward Elgar's *Nimrod*, it includes a repeating sighing motif that intensifies this impression, aptly marked 'Devotissimo' in the score by the composer (see Figure 3.3). What attracts my own attention as a listener so distinctly in this movement is how it is contextualised, and how this contextualisation magnifies the material and thus its emotive power. One can draw a link here between the placement of *O Albion* and that of Tredici's *Acrostic Song* mentioned back in Chapter 2; the catharsis coming after material highly charged in nature and thus creating antithesis.

IV. Et... (tango mortale)

♩ = 60 Strascicato ma molto ritmico*

Figure 3.2. (Adès, *Arcadiana*—Opening of Movement IV: ‘Et... ‘tango mortale’)⁵⁷

VI. O Albion

♩ = 56 Devotissimo

Figure 3.3. (Opening of Movement VI: ‘O Albion’)⁵⁸

Through the kaleidoscopic movements of *Arcadiana* we hear stark contrasts, which heighten our sense of listening: at times brash and complex in rhythm and tone, other times extremely subtle, tantalising, and meditative—the terrifying and the idyllic being pitted against each other. This music is therefore demanding us to listen in different ways: there are the moment-to-moment sensations of the sounds, and their almost autonomous affections, one moment textural, another melodic, and then there are the follow-on connections we hear between these moments. This level of contrast is something I aim to be constantly exploring in my own work.

⁵⁷ Adès, T. (1999) *Arcadiana*, p. 13.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 24.

Some interesting more recent (and burgeoning) approaches to the use of found musical materials can be found in the works of composer Cassandra Miller, which often focus on how she can make certain pre-existing objects that she personally relates to her own, translating musicality into a different experience outside of its original intentions, as well as somehow ‘echoing’ it. Miller notes that: ‘the difference between this echo and its origin is interesting to me. And I think maybe that’s an interesting topic for us all at the moment. [...] I think we might all struggle with it in different ways. Perhaps that plurality of ways expresses what’s interesting about our times’.⁵⁹ In her work *About Bach* (2015) for string quartet, Miller takes an excerpt from Bach’s *Chaconne* from *Partita No.2 BWV 1004*, and in particular a software transcription of a live performance of it by violist Pemi Paull in 2009, and captures his exact rhythmic musicality, which then goes through a process whereby it takes on a continuously moving—whilst at the same time stable—texture, but without any audible development.

The three string quartets mentioned here spanning the last thirty years—and their respective approaches—all formed a prelude to some of the approaches taken in my *All Things*, also for string quartet. In the Schnittke, I was struck by the overt use and manipulation of pre-existing material; in the Adès, the way he creates heightened contrasts and dialogues; and in the Miller, her ideas around translating the musicality from one experience into another. I was also drawn to some of these approaches in particular due to their implementation within string quartet writing itself, which has such a rich standing in its practice and stylistic development throughout history. I find the close-knit timbres of the string quartet (with their vocal and almost human qualities) very appealing, and this helped in forming the starting points for my *All Things*. The work was first performed as part of Birmingham University’s multi-genre *CrossCurrents* festival by the Ligeti Quartet, who interestingly also performed the Schnittke quartet during their residency there, allowing me to further situate my own aesthetic within the same setting as those who have inspired me.

***All Things*; for String Quartet**

In *All Things*, I took material from William Henry Monk's setting of the famous Anglican hymn *All Things Bright and Beautiful* (words by Cecil Frances Alexander). I decided to take the familiar and

⁵⁹ Miller, quoted from: Weeks, J. (2014) p. 62.

jovial chorale and manipulate, obfuscate, and reframe the material in order to play with the line between the recognisable and the unfamiliar. The length of the piece parallels the length of the hymn, and in addition, the use of the string quartet makeup parallels the S.A.T.B. (four-part) nature of it. However, the rather innocent source material itself is used in a somewhat more incongruous way, being asymmetric, unpredictable, and disoriented. Some moments are more allusive than others, with various aspects of the original fabric of the hymn undertaking several forms of metamorphosis—including reharmonisation, chromatic melodic alterations, rhythmic manipulations, and elements of stylistic reframing—all to varying degrees, and thus levels of ambiguity. To illustrate how I did this in the score, below is an analysis of how the whole piece was recontextualised from the original Monk setting (see Figure 3.4). To differentiate between my references to points in the original Monk material and to the *All Things* score, I will use the term ‘measure’ for the former, and ‘bar’ for the latter.

The image shows a musical score for a four-part setting (S.A.T.B.) of the hymn 'All Things Bright and Beautiful'. The score is divided into three systems. The first system, labeled 'Refrain', contains measures 1 through 6. The second system, labeled 'Fine' and 'Verse', contains measures 7 through 12. The third system, labeled 'D.C.', contains measures 13 through 16. The score is written for four voices: Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass (S.A.T.B.).

Figure 3.4. (W.H. Monk setting of *All Things Bright and Beautiful*)⁶⁰

First 6 bars – a fragmentary opening:

In bar 1, the chord that opens *All Things* is the dominant seventh chord taken from the final beat of measure 13 (E-B-D-G[#]) in the Monk, inserted as an out-of-context object further obscured by the use of harmonics, the *sul ponticello* string technique (marked **pp**), and the almost contradictorily long

⁶⁰ This very popular setting can be found in the public domain and throughout many published hymn books of the last hundred years, for example, in: The Church Hymnary Trust (2006) *Church Hymnary Fourth Edition*, p. 137.

length of the note. This somewhat expressionless, ghostly opening sonority is remote and cold, and instead of naturally leading to A minor as in the original, it is displaced in bar 2 with another unconnected object: the third and fourth beats from measure 14 of the Monk (Em-C). The offering of two chords here instead of one perhaps gives a listener more to work with, but due to the lack of context, and following the previous unrelated chord in bar 1, it functions almost autonomously as a iii-I, and I chose to use *pizzicato* here to segregate it texturally from the preceding opening sonority. Continuing in this vein, in bar 3 another arbitrary object is extracted from the Monk, this time the chord on the first quaver of measure 15 (D-A-E-F#), again with a different textural nature (wide vibrato). Bars 4-5 take the third and fourth beat of measure 12, and the first beat of measure 13 in the Monk, however now chromatically altered up one semitone with some subtle re-voicing in the cello. Bar 6 (the final bar of the opening), contains another dislocated dominant seventh chord, this time from the fourth measure of bar 7 (G-F-B-D), although now taking on a more functional purpose instead; that of the dominant in the home key of C major, inciting the more official launch of the piece in bar 8. These fragmentary first six bars therefore act as an opening preface, displaying six ‘objects’ that together avoid any tangible tonal or stylistic center. All of these introductory bars have been rhythmically manipulated, and the isolated nature of each amounts to what seems almost like rearranged pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. These introductory fragments echo the opening of Schnittke’s string quartet, offering a glimpse into the material that will form the larger work, with the main difference here being that my objects are all taken from the same source, and are already somewhat obscured to begin with:

♩ = c.58-63
Free time: spacious

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Violoncello

Figure 3.5. (First 6 bars of *All Things*)

Bars 8-31:

In contrast to the opening, the following twenty-eight bars of the piece focus instead on a distortion of the melody in its original order from measures 1-8 (the refrain) of the Monk (divided into three irregular phrases; 7 bars/4 bars/9 bars) by way of chromatic alterations and rhythmic manipulations with different levels of protraction. Each statement begins with a grandiose triadic chord, attempting, but failing, to establish any solid harmonic ground:

- Bars 8-14 (7 bars) beginning on **C major**: taken from measures 1-2 (*of Monk's refrain melody*)
- Bars 15-19 (4 bars) beginning on **A minor**: taken from measures 3-4
- Bars 20-28 (9 bars) beginning on **C minor**: taken from measures 5-8

The cantus is passed around the quartet in a manner akin to Schoenberg's 'Klangfarbenmelodie' technique, and the chromatic alterations and rhythmic manipulations veil the underlying material. By retaining enough of the original melodic shape, and only modifying certain notes by a semitone, the overall contour is relatively detectable. Furthermore, by beginning each statement with a triadic chord played in a manner analogous to classical and romantic string quartet writing⁶¹, there is a suggestion of a relationship to the tonal canon, though the progression between C major, A minor, and C minor somewhat challenges this sound-world. The rigidity and unrelenting tension of the lines that depart from the chords feels dissociated from the aesthetic of the hymn, and in order to heighten the level of ambiguity, a contradictory answering phrase in bar 29 offers stylistic juxtaposition (see Figure 3.6). Here, I took the S.A.T.B. writing of measure 12 in the Monk, transposed it down a tone, and scored it more traditionally for the quartet; marked '*rich, sonorous*'. The purpose of this contrasting responding texture is to question the stylistic territory, and create strangeness by uncovering ephemeral snippets of the source in a more lucid way—now becoming more revealing than in the opening bars:

⁶¹ The style of richly arpeggiated double stopped chords (for example in bar 8, 15, and 20) can be found throughout historical string quartet writing. For some examples, see the openings of: Haydn's Op. 76 No. 1, Beethoven's Op. 133 (*Große Fuge*), Grieg's Op. 27 No. 1; or the final chords in Debussy's Op. 10.



Figure 3.6. (B. 25-29: stylistic juxtaposition between b. 25-28 & b. 29)

Bars 32-end

Between bars 32-53 the music undergoes a similar treatment to bars 8-28, with the continuation of the manipulated cantus, this time from the verse (measures 9-17 of Monk). In bars 52-53, the opening of the piece is revisited by (in b. 52) taking the final G dominant seventh chord from the end of the verse and altering it down a semitone in *pizzicato*, and (in b. 53), taking the third and fourth beats of measure 14 in the Monk (exactly as done in bar 2 of the opening), but this time in harmonics (as in bar 1). At bar 55 a new element is introduced with the mixture of both homophonic and polyphonic textures, and through to bar 77 the full S.A.T.B. material from measures 1-12 has been traversed—being reharmonised to varying extents in a similar way to earlier. The contrast between textures of varying transparencies shows my affinity to the Adès, and the use of both extended string techniques and complex rhythmic textures help in obfuscating the original material.

Bars 79 to the end comprise a culmination of the above ideas, reaching a fervent and inexorable state. Beginning with a kind of false ‘recapitulation’ in the dominant (see ‘*brillante*’ at bar 79), the texture suddenly becomes layered in two parts, with the violins taking rhythmically protracted material (with octave displacements) from the refrain in tritones whilst the viola and cello simultaneously begin the verse, compacted down at a faster rate into equal semiquavers. These roles partly swap round in bar 84 with the second violin and viola taking on the ‘compacted material’ (this time the refrain), and the first violin continuing the protracted material now alongside the cello. At bar 89 we reach a ‘coming together’, and the verse is heard for the final time in rhythmic homophony (with octave displacements) with discordant/atonal harmonizations (see Figure 3.7). A final—and deceptive—dominant seventh chord at bar 91 (the chord found in the very first bar in the piece; taken from the final beat of measure 13 in the Monk) is now scored in full intensity across the full range of the

quartet, much like in the opening, and leads to a final homophonic cellular texture that reduces in groupings by a semiquaver each time: (5♩s)–(4♩s)–(3♩s)–(2♩s).



Figure 3.7. (B. 89-90: reduction of rhythmic homophony in discordant harmonizations)

My intention with *All Things* was to construct a piece derived wholly from pre-existing material transformed in numerous ways—and to different extents—to experiment with the overall perceivability of what is quite a popular and memorable hymn. At some moments in the music, the original features of the Monk are quite easy to detect, such as in the ‘rich, sonorous’ and generally homophonic instants, and at other moments, rather difficult: for example, in the chromatically and rhythmically altered ‘Klangfarbenmelodie’ passages. Whilst this perceivability is of course subjective in relation to the apprehension of the individual listener, and perhaps furthermore the ‘plurality of meaning’ that the origin of my found material inevitably has, the poetic outcome is one of contrasts as well as interconnectedness. In this sense, the innateness of the hymnal genre in itself creates a connotative environment, which I found was interesting to explore in particular when approaching the similitude of the string quartet’s formation as being a potential extension of it. In summary, *All Things* is less about literal ‘quotation’ but more about the recontextualization and ‘metamorphosis’ of thematic, and perhaps even relatively limited material; in some ways not so dissimilar to the way Mozart does in his *Twelve Variations* on the simple “Ah! vous dirai-je, Maman” theme. Technically, the piece allowed me to further consider methods of reframing harmony, rhythm, and, as can be seen in the later sections of the piece, the ways in which they can be combined and layered (hybridised); something which will be revisited in more detail in Chapter 5. On a more expressive level, my aim here was to also experiment with changing the musical experience (school hymn—>contemporary music festival; school hall—>classical recital room⁶²) as also explored by Cassandra Miller in her string quartet, to see how the shifting of context might impact interpretation and awareness. Upon

⁶² *All Things* was performed in the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, which for me has a very different atmosphere to the modest primary school hall in which I used to sing Monk’s hymn most mornings. I feel this change in location further added to the expressive distance between the chosen source and the final work.

further reflection, this distancing between the two objects (the hymn—>my piece) could potentially be even wider, for example through spatial considerations, theatrical elements, or different performance locations, to push and develop this idea in a more extreme way.

All Things presents us with a case wherein practically every note of the piece is derived in one way or another entirely from the hymn, and this gives one the opportunity to play with the extent to which aspects of existing musical data can be mutated, even to a point beyond recognition. In this instance, I found that the ubiquitous nature of chorale-style material, and its archetypal anatomy, to be a felicitous choice for subjecting it to this kind of treatment as it contains prominent extractable ingredients that can be utilised, chiefly in its melodic and harmonic content. The relative lack of rhythmic diversity found in this form was of benefit to me, as it provided an open foundation for a range of possibilities. In the following pieces for solo piano, that also engage with intertextuality, I sought to incorporate and allude to different forms of pre-existing sources within the same overall work: *Piano Suite III*.

Piano Suite III: *Polly*; *Saudade*

In my very short *Polly*, which is movement VI from my *Piano Suite III*, I took the popular nursery rhyme *Polly Put the Kettle On* (Round Folk Song Index: 7899) and as in *All Things* used it to form the whole piece. I kept the length of the original rhyme completely intact (unlike in *All Things*), and the melody can be heard throughout the movement, choosing this particular source for a number of reasons. On a personal level, it was a staple visitor within my childhood and family environment—being etched into my mind—and so to osmose this into my composition practice some twenty years later felt symbolic in alliance to my artistic interests in using historical materials. Not only is *Polly Put the Kettle On* historical due to having been in existence as far back as the 18th century, but it also has a different, more recent historical significance in the sense of it holding a strong feeling of distance on an emotive level between my recollections of singing it as a child, and using it now within a very different praxis. Another motive comes from the light-hearted, humorous character of the words, often explained as having an inner meaning to do with crafty young girls setting up a deceptive tea party in order to horrify the boys into evacuating the play-area, and leaving them to play in peace; which I wanted to encapsulate in the piece's mischievous character. Finally, the simplicity of the linear and rhythmic shape of the original melody was well suited for my method of reworking it,

making it a fitting foundation for the manipulation of material in order to create dramatic gestures. This provision of well-known innocent material also relates to other works of mine that use collectively nostalgic sources⁶³. The two figures below show the full source material of the *Polly Put the Kettle On* nursery rhyme, and my *Polly* in its entirety:



Figure 3.8. (*Polly Put the Kettle On*, Round Folk Song Index: 7899)⁶⁴

⁶³ As well as the use of popular hymn in *All Things*, my piece *Saudade*, which is also from *Piano Suite III*, contains 'Oranges and Lemons' hidden within its texture, discussed below.

⁶⁴ Image from the public domain, found in: Crane, W. (1878) *The Baby's Bouquet: A fresh bunch of old rhymes & tunes*, p. 9.



Figure 3.9. (Polly)

In terms of tonality, I would describe this piece as having simultaneous elements of both traditional ‘tonality’ and ‘atonicity’, and my intention is that the several components I used in constructing the piece, when put together and as a whole, blur certain lines between familiarities, further exploring my idea of metamorphosis. The pooling of plural styles gives the piece a characteristic of its own, in this case, the ever so slightly absurd. The right hand begins by simply holding the original melody, and becomes more embellished towards the latter half, whilst the left hand takes the shape of a waltz accompaniment. This ‘waltz’ idea however is misaligned in its time-signature (3/4 against 4/4), and unlike the right hand, has no tonal centre. In fact, over the course of its $10\frac{2}{3}$ bars, there are never two root notes the same, comprising 11 out of the 12 semitones⁶⁵—almost a 12-tone row. This binary texture forms part of my technique of layering (and hybridizing) materials, which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5. Along with the kaleidoscopic nature of the left hand chords, built from triads, yet non-functional, the result is that of a strange humour. The original melody has been situated in a remote surrounding, now refashioned into a style of a different poetic nature and spirit, and this aberration expands the territory of its origin. This chimes with the relatable views of composer and musicologist Lawrence Kramer:

⁶⁵ D \flat , G, E, B, F \sharp , D, A \flat , A, C, E \flat , B \flat .



Figure 3.11. (Opening of *Saudade*: ‘Oranges & Lemons’ melody shown in red)

This work also forms part of pianist William Howard’s on-going *Love Songs* project, aimed at exploring 21st century responses to the universal genre of the ‘love song’ as a piano form. I chose *Oranges and Lemons* again due to my personal connection to the material, but unlike in *Polly*, the original material is not obviously discernable, and without any prior knowledge of it being there, hidden to an extent. The notes of the melody have been kept in their original form, however the disguise comes from the irregular rhythmic protraction of it, with the rest of the musical material working outwards from this central line. The wider poetic nature of this movement relates to its title and the term ‘Saudade’, which is a word used often in music and poetry to describe a deep emotional state of nostalgic or profound melancholic longing for an absent person that one loves. It is the recollection of feelings, experiences, places, or events that once brought excitement, pleasure, and well-being, and is a word in Portuguese and Galician (from which it entered Spanish) that has no direct translation in English. The opening section of the piece is split across three piano staves working simultaneously: the bottom (bass) providing a warm and romantic undertone; the middle communicating contemplative melodic material; and the top (treble) expressing the sounds of something distant. The music grows in intensity until it gives way to an extended coda that takes the form of a retrospective ‘Lied ohne Worte’ (song without words). In this piece, one could perhaps therefore identify two different forms of intertextuality: the first being the use of nursery rhyme, and the second being the allusion to the historical genre of the ‘songs without words’ style—and in this particular section—the character of the music is in direct contrast with the opening. The precise and irregular rhythmic devices are supplanted with spatial notation in the right hand, and the left hand now takes on the shape of a more allusive and classically recognisable accompaniment (see Figure 3.12), as might be found in a lyric piano piece by Mendelssohn, for example. By pitting these

aesthetics against each other, the intention is to combine ambiguous moments alongside those that are in contrast more reminiscent, perhaps even nostalgic.



Figure 3.12. (Spatial notation in Lied ohne Worte section of *Saudade*)

With *Polly* and *Saudade* using what I have termed ‘innocent’ or ‘childlike’ materials as a source, albeit in differing expressive ways, the opening movement of the piano suite, *Prelude: Morceau* deals with what I would consider a material perhaps closer in aesthetic and ontology to familiar traditional solo piano repertoire—in this case, Rachmaninoff. Further to this, I was also interested in engaging with Schnittke’s comments on closing the gap between ‘serious music’ and ‘music for entertainment’, often referred to by many as the ‘high’ and ‘low’ art form divide, which has become a prevalent preoccupation within the contemporary music scene⁶⁷. Interpolating historical sources that some might consider as infantile, or even crude (e.g. *Polly Put the Kettle On*), within the same suite as those more often associated with more intellectual standings (e.g. Rachmaninoff) interested me. Seeing how they can interact and cast light upon one another also inspired the expressive potential in approaching the composition, and in *Prelude: Morceau* that is manifested in its quite stern and aggressive nature. Three movements after *Prelude: Morceau*, a quite different world taken from jazz comes to the fore—with *Little Steps*—and the various movements of my piano suite combine together to form a whole made from quite eclectic parts. The following section looks at *Prelude: Morceau* and *Little Steps* side-by-side, from the angle of combining plural sources and styles.

Piano Suite III: *Prelude: Morceau; Little Steps*

In *Prelude: Morceau*, the use of borrowing again formed a central aspect to the construction of the piece and its expressive potential, but in a different way to my previous examples. I incorporated little fragments (morsels) from Rachmaninoff’s *Prelude in C# Minor Op. 3, No. 2* for three reasons. Firstly, *Prelude: Morceau* was first premiered in a concert explicitly aimed at mixing old and new music,

⁶⁷ For example, see Zoë Martlew’s *Broad St. Burlesque* (2016), a cabaret-esque piece written for BCMG and evoking the environs of the CBSO Centre’s close proximity to the nightlife of Birmingham’s Broad Street.

from classical repertoire to electronic folk, and the pianist performing my music also performed works by Rachmaninoff in the same evening. I therefore wanted to draw a connection between the ‘old’ music and the ‘new’. Secondly, it was the first prelude Rachmaninoff wrote—originally part of his *Morceaux de fantaisie* (1892)—and with my piece also being the first ‘prelude’ I have ever written, I wanted to form a thread between the two, and felt this further built on the old/new connection. Thirdly, the ‘morceaux’⁶⁸ idea appealed to me both in terms of being related to the well-known short compositional form (as in the Rachmaninoff), and also translating from French to also mean ‘morsel/fragment’, which is how the short quotations function in my piece; that is, as little morsels unaltered and self-contained. The two figures below show my use of the Rachmaninoff ‘morsels’ as outlined in red, which become part of the same cloth as my own composed material, weaved throughout in a way to synthesise with it:

The image displays two musical staves for the opening of 'Prelude: Morceau'. The top staff is for Piano, with a tempo marking of 'Lento' (quarter note = 40) and a dynamic range of 'c.66-72 Aggressive'. A red box highlights the first few measures, which are marked 'ff' and 'vigoroso'. The bottom staff is for Pedal, marked 'ad lib' and '8vb'. It also features a red box around the first few measures, which are marked 'sub. ppp dolente' and 'sub. fff vigoroso'. Both staves show complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings.

Figure 3.13. (Opening of *Prelude: Morceau*)

⁶⁸ A short literary or musical composition: used by composers including Tchaikovsky, Satie, Debussy, Boulanger, et al.



Figure 3.14. (Opening of Rachmaninoff's *Prélude in C-sharp minor*)⁶⁹

I crafted my notes here both emerging out of and in respect of the fragments—taking on a spontaneous character—sometimes in juxtaposition, other times in reflection, with the piece's global tonality being made up of different shades, objects, and degrees of dissonance⁷⁰. The point of this is, in the words of David Metzger, to intensify 'the engagement between old and new, as we can hear how easily or reluctantly the borrowing settles into its new locale. Once inside, it continually points outside, as the prominence of the borrowing prods us to look back to its origins'.⁷¹ Whilst writing this prelude, I kept being reminded of the fact that Rachmaninoff himself grew very tired of having to play his very popular first prelude⁷², and so the aggressive nature of my piece perhaps semi-consciously echoes this mood.

In *Little Steps* (the fourth movement), I engage with music of an altogether different nature, alluding in my title to John Coltrane's famous *Giant Steps* (1960), but in my piece instead using chords that only shift by small steps each time (see Figure 3.15), creating a chordal movement that is not concerned with the overall 'progression' but rather the contrapuntal connections between one chord's sonority and the next. To play with this further, the piece has continually fluctuating time-signatures (both regular and irregular) that frequently reframe the motivic material, which has a conscious rhythmic accord with Dave Brubeck's *Blue Rondo à la Turk* (1959)—see Figure 3.16.

⁶⁹ Rachmaninoff (1910) *Morceaux de fantaisie*, Op. 3, b. 1-4.

⁷⁰ See for example the contrasting gestures at the end of the first system: a fizzy D Major arpeggio is followed by an aggressive rupture of highly dissonant and cross-rhythmic chords, which subside into the 'sorrowful' romantic chromaticism of the second Rachmaninoff fragment.

⁷¹ Metzger, D. (2003) p. 6.

⁷² For an interesting article on this, see: Hickok, L.A. (1921) '*Rachmaninoff sorry he wrote prelude*'.



Figure 3.15. (Opening of *Little Steps*: small tonal shifts)

Figure 3.16. (Opening of Brubeck's *Blue Rondo à la Turk*)⁷³

The other movements from *Piano Suite III* do not contain quotations, instead containing various allusions and interplays of aesthetics, also heightening the contrasting energies between them as the movements already discussed do. The second movement, *Roots*, employs a similar technique of having a non-functional root sequence as seen in *Polly*, but uses the linear harmonic technique with its chordal movement (see aforementioned 'linear harmony' in Chapter 2) atop a meditative and slowly pulsing rhythm. This also has stylistic ties to the progressive ambience of Radiohead's *Exit Music (For a Film)*, as well as also engaging with an extended tonal harmony, and, to contrast with the energetic and rhythmically driven movements either side of it, restricts its material to this meditative aesthetic. The fifth movement, *Passage*, uses an extra-musical literary source as its main stimulus, and therefore will be discussed in the following chapter on outside sources. Finally, the eighth movement, *April Tune*, holds a connection to another work in my portfolio, *October Tune*,

⁷³ Brubeck, D. (1962) *Time Out & Time Further Out*, p. 3.

and will be addressed in Chapter 6 at the end of this dissertation, and after my reflections on *October Tune* in Chapter 5.

My compositional approaches in *Piano Suite III* have an evident kinship with the music of Ives, and I am fascinated with the skill in which he selected and used his topics, as described by Peter Burkholder⁷⁴, with the sense of stylistic juxtaposition being ‘heightened because of his mixture of tonal and post-tonal styles’⁷⁵. In his 2012 paper *Stylistic Heterogeneity and Topics in the Music of Charles Ives*, Burkholder observes that:

When we hear something familiar in a piece of music—in this case, a musical style we recognize, or perhaps one or more elements characteristic of that style—it will remind us of other music we have heard in that style, and thus of things we associate with that other music, such as the types of situations in which we have encountered it. Typically, the piece we are hearing will manipulate those familiar elements, place them in a new context, or juxtapose them with other elements in a new way. As we listen, we interpret the meaning of the music by drawing both on the associations aroused by the familiar elements and on how those elements are changed in context.⁷⁶

This notion of association, and of rewiring the recognisable, plays with a listener’s awareness of change, and the formula in which a composer varies the degree of mutation shapes part of the significance of it in our independent perceptions. Everyone has a different connection to a source of reference, and thus personal meaning and expressive interpretation is fluid, continuing to be in a constant state of flux as time passes. Our individual sensibilities and impressions form the music’s lifeblood, and even sometimes its nemesis—there for all to interpret. Part of my own attraction to this mode of expression arises out of the unpredictability of audience reception—their affinities and observations to material—and how the pull between craft and intuition creates outcome.

As touched upon at the beginning of this chapter, and particularly with the approach of Cassandra Miller, the sense of shifting the original intentions of a found source, or identifying some form of

⁷⁴ Described by Burkholder as: ‘a great variety of styles drawn from all four of the broad musical traditions with which he was familiar as listener, performer, and composer: American popular music (including band music, fiddle tunes, minstrel songs, parlor songs, and popular songs), Protestant church music (including hymns, sacred choral music, and Anglican chant), European classical music (including Baroque counterpoint, fugue, chorale, and trio sonata textures; Beethovenian piano and symphonic gestures; and Romantic Lied, nocturne, virtuoso piano music, opera, operetta, and symphonic styles), and experimental music (including post-tonal harmonies and polytonality).’—Burkholder, J.P. (2012) p. 176.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 199.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 175.

primary change in the way one *experiences* it in the new piece, perhaps goes beyond the purview of the purely intertextual. The expressive and poetic potential of moving the experience of a work into a different province offers new meaning, and this can also work as a two-way flow where, in the words of David Metzger, ‘proximity with the present would give the past new stylistic dimensions and increase listeners’ appreciation of earlier works by pushing those works out of the familiar and into new contexts’.⁷⁷

Chapter 4 turns its attention to a different form of compositional source, those from outside of music, and furthers the discussion of this chapter but from a different conceptual starting point.

⁷⁷ Metzger, D. (2003) p. 117.

Chapter 4 – Outside Sources: *Earthly Delights*, *TOAST!*, *Passage*

In his *Fundamentals of Musical Composition* (1967), Schoenberg comments on an idea of one having an unlimited capacity for forming mental and emotional connections to music. He remarked that ‘every ordinary object can provoke musical associations, and, conversely, music can evoke associations with extramusical objects.’⁷⁸ Visual arts, literature, nature, culture, and so on, have long been infused into music, adding an auxiliary component to its expressivity, and as Schoenberg went on to say, ‘many composers have composed under the urge to express emotional associations’⁷⁹. Within this idea, there exists a wide scope of what can be constituted as ‘extramusical’ in a work, from an initial passing impulse or influence through to concretely programmatic pieces that delineate narratives. The way that a source itself can have a potential bearing on how a work might be understood, and the counter arguments surrounding ‘absolute music’, is an interesting debate, though beyond the bounds of my discussion here. But, examining the points of view of the composers themselves can provide interesting ways of getting under the skin of the music in ways other than via pure analysis of the dots on a page. One does not have look far to draw up a list of musical works, across history, that attempt to depict or connect with sources of inspiration outside of the purely absolute/abstract domain, and for some diverse and patent examples, see:

- Natural phenomena: Vivaldi’s *The Four Seasons*; Holst’s *The Planets*; Saint-Saëns’ *Le Carnaval des Animaux*; Mayerl’s *Autumn Crocus*; Debussy’s *La mer*
- Painting: Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*; Turnage’s *Frieze*, and *Three Screaming Popes*
- Literature: Sibelius’s *Swan of Tuonela*; Rochberg’s *Music for the Magic Theater*
- Battle scenes: Byrd’s *The Battell*; Beethoven’s *Wellington’s Victory*
- Geography: Maxwell Davies’s *An Orkney Wedding*; Skempton’s *Leamington Spa*
- Philosophy: Strauss’s *Also sprach Zarathustra*
- Human beings: Elgar’s *Enigma Variations*

In Mark-Anthony Turnage’s *Three Screaming Popes* (1992) for orchestra, inspired by the pope painting of Francis Bacon (*Study after Velázquez’s Portrait of Pope Innocent X*, 1953), we hear an example of how a work can be directly conceptualised from a non-musical source, and the expressive nature of the piece as a result indeed echoes this. The emotional and colouristic immediacy of Bacon’s paintings are present in the music, including a distorted set of Spanish dances aimed at

⁷⁸ Schoenberg, A. (1970) p. 93.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 93.

paralleling the distortion of the original Velázquez⁸⁰, which become submerged akin to the figures in the visual artwork. The approach taken here by Turnage is quite tangible, and hearing the connection between the paintings and the music is not difficult, even to those with only a basic knowledge of Bacon's style. Another similar example of this use of source (and secondary extensions⁸¹ of them) in Turnage can be found in his later work *Frieze* (2012), also for orchestra, which responds to the mythical figures in Gustav Klimt's *Beethoven Frieze* (1901), and in addition makes allusions to Beethoven's 9th Symphony in various ways.

In George Rochberg's *Music for the Magic Theater* (1965) however, the outside source is much less immediately apparent to a general listener. It draws its poetic inspiration from Hermann Hesse's 1927 novel *Steppenwolf*, and a particular aspect of the plot that is to do with a 'Magic Theater'—a form of distinctive inner human state—described by Joan DeVee Dixon as a place where 'reality and fantasy, where past and future, where real history and imagined history confront each other'.⁸² In the final section of the book, the main character (Harry Haller) comes face to face in a strange hyperreality with Mozart, and Rochberg portrays this in *Act II*, which begins with a transcription of the Adagio from Mozart's *Divertimento*, K. 287 (see Figure 4.1). Clearly the subtext of this extramusical source is running much deeper than in the Turnage, as without knowing the novel, it may be challenging to fully appreciate Rochberg's intentions. However, the imagery of Hesse's work quite evidently incentivised the creation of musical material and the treatment of it, which is striking as a result; creating an effectively surreal atmosphere. This perhaps demonstrates how a particular outside source can trigger an individual compositional response, and in the case of Rochberg, also relates to multiple forms of intertextuality⁸³ both from inside *and* outside of music, as well as playing with the line between recognisable and ambiguous allusions:

'The world of this music is surreal more than it is abstract. In its combinations of the past and present, seemingly accidental, unrelated aural images whose placement in time obeys no conventional logic, it attempts to create a musical soundscape which is strangely and oddly familiar.' (~Rochberg)⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Bacon's *Study after Velázquez's Portrait of Pope Innocent X* (1953) is a distortion of Spanish painter Velázquez's original *Portrait of Innocent X* (1650), which in turn formed part of Turnage's own approach of distorting; a secondary artistic extension of the already abstracted artwork.

⁸¹ See preceding footnote.

⁸² Dixon, J.D. (1992) p. 95.

⁸³ For example, that of the intertext of Hesse's writing on one level, and the Mozart reference on the other.

⁸⁴ Rochberg, G. (1972) *Music for the Magic Theater*, p. 4.

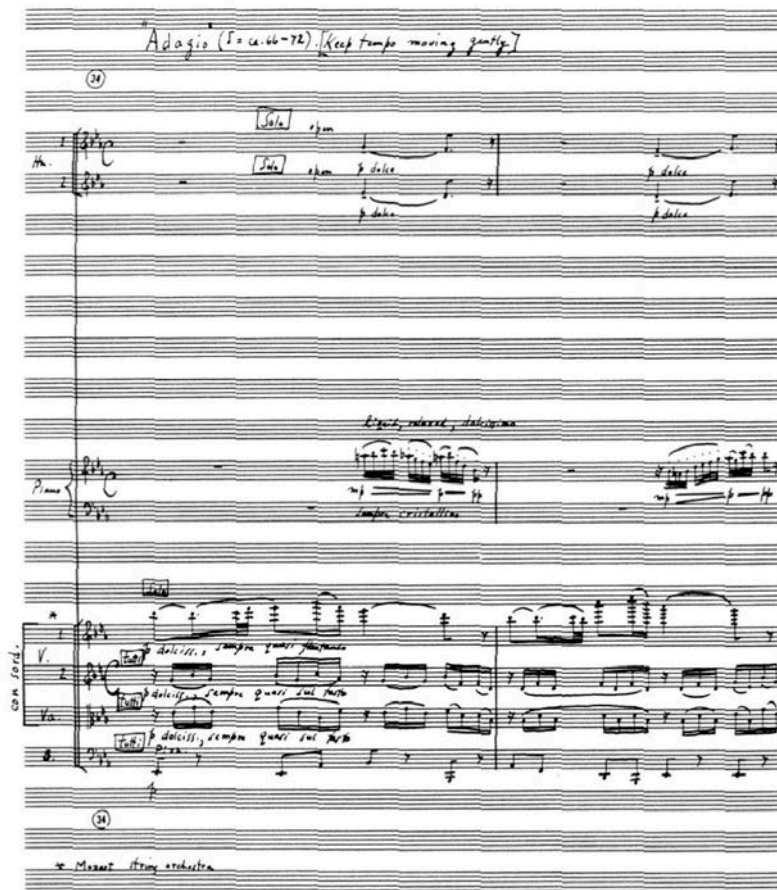


Figure 4.1. (Rochberg 'Act II: Adagio' from *Music for the Magic Theater*)⁸⁵

As well as considering how outside sources and influences can be considered when approaching the act of composition, and using such methods as a way of trying to get closer to a work's intended influence and expression, I have also been concerned with reflecting on the interactions and dialogues between art forms and a wider concept of their influence in general. In addition to this, it is interesting to note the range of composers who, without necessarily making explicit references to any external bodies of work in a piece itself, look deeply into to the world outside of music as a way of intellectualising their own crafts. For some examples: Morton Feldman and painting; Iannis Xenakis and architecture; Jonathan Harvey and Buddhist Spirituality; Jennifer Walshe and popular culture; Joe Cutler and sport; and Philip Venables and sexuality. Many composers as we already know have also looked at exploring and questioning the functions of the composing act itself. For instance, by crossing the artistic boundaries with graphic scores that even function like visual artworks in and of themselves (see Earle Brown's *December 1952*), or scores consisting purely of text (see Pauline

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 43.

Oliveros's *Sonic Meditations*, 1974), or even pieces constructed out of games (see John Zorn's *Cobra*, 1987).

In her book *Musical Ekphrasis: Composers Responding to Poetry and Painting*⁸⁶, Siglind Bruhn discusses the various ways in which art forms can connect to one another in fruitful ways, and examines the extent to which artists engaging with outside sources are happy for their work to be appreciated autonomously, or whether a meaningful understanding of their reflection can only be fully recognised in light of knowing what is being depicted. With regard towards musical responses to literature and painting—which I will be looking at in respect of my own pieces in this chapter—what do we consider when creating a representation of a representation? Paintings, poems, and the like, are already in themselves primary illustrations of something external, so interesting potentials are raised when conditioning these within sound-based works. Bruhn frames her own discussion within a context of the artistic form of 'ekphrasis', most popularly used to refer to literary descriptions of a visual or pictorial artworks, and puts it within a framework of music as a development away from the more general and catch-all term of 'program music':

'In this light, the genre of ekphrasis—whether taken in the original, narrower sense or defined more broadly and thus encompassing musical as well as choreographic ekphrasis—constitutes a special case of the classical approach to artistic expression. Composers, rather than writing so-called absolute music or program music on the basis of scenarios determined by their own imagination, take the content they set out to express and shape from a pre-existing source.'⁸⁷

A noteworthy link to the use of outside sources, and the discussion on ekphrastic approaches to composition touched upon here, can be seen with points I discussed in Chapter 3 on intertextuality, and will feed into my later studies in Chapters 5 and 6. That is (as Bruhn puts it) that 'composers using musical tropes to represent non-musical objects and concepts employ a great variety of mimetic, descriptive, suggestive, allusive, and symbolic means'⁸⁸. It may add 'allusive reference, and allow for modifications of context, medium, or tonal environment that successfully express defamiliarization or irony.'⁸⁹ Interestingly, in 1996, Berio went as far as actually titling one of his works *Ekphrasis (continuo II)*, and it is a commentary on an earlier work of his own, *Continuo*

⁸⁶ Bruhn, S. (2000) *Musical Ekphrasis: Composers Responding to Poetry and Painting*.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 584.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 18-19.

(1990). In regards to reflecting on extra-musical considerations in perhaps a more abstract way (in this case a musical metaphor of architecture), Berio remarks:

‘The music processes within the fabric of *Continuo* do indeed have similarities to architectural principles, in abstract form if not in static shape. The musical patterns result in a completely impractical building with no door and pathways. Its expressive attraction, nonetheless, lies in the contradiction of being thus uninhabitable yet open at any one time for alternative extensions by added new wings, rooms and windows.’⁹⁰

Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will be considering my own methods of taking and depicting extra-musical forms and elements within three different compositional approaches. *Earthy Delights* deals with the visual (the grotesque), *TOAST!* with poetry (and its cross-historical considerations on drinking), and *Passage* with the literary (an excerpt from Virginia Woolf’s *The Waves*).

***Earthy Delights*; for chamber ensemble**

Inspired by grotesque artworks—and in particular, paintings—*Earthy Delights* attempts to evoke and describe musically the dramatic, poetic, and symbolic nature of such artworks and their collective impressions on me. I was interested here in the strange; the ugly; the fantastic; the incongruous; the distorted; and the pathos, displayed in the works of (to name a few) Bosch, Dalí, Goya, and Bacon. I was not solely motivated by artworks that are categorised as ‘grotesques’ per se, but more widely the grotesque elements one can experience in the works of these painters—a style I am drawn to as a gallery visitor, therefore naturally appealing as a topic and stimulus for exploration. As touched upon with Turnage’s approach earlier, I am concerned with echoing, in musical sound, the emotional and colouristic immediacy found in such styles of art, and allowing this to develop the poetic and technical aspects of my compositional approach. Within the grotesque style, aspects of artistic visualisations that invoke both a feeling of the unfamiliar and bizarre, as well as an underlying sympathy and pity at the same time, particularly interest me.

Philip Thomson’s *The Grotesque* (1972)⁹¹ provided me with a rounded introduction to its understanding within art and literature, and enhanced my thoughts during the embryonic stage of the piece’s formation. Throughout his book, he outlines some of the main tropes often found in grotesque forms, and the following selection of terms informed part of my perspective in writing

⁹⁰ Quoting Berio in: Albright, D. (2014) p. 278.

⁹¹ Thomson, P. (1972) *The Grotesque*.

Earthly Delights: ‘disharmony’, ‘the comic and the terrifying’, ‘exaggeration’, ‘the playful’, ‘the absurd’, ‘the bizarre’, ‘the macabre’, and ‘tension and unresolvability’.⁹² Within music, there have been some compelling writings around the grotesque, most notably in the music of Bartók⁹³, Shostakovich⁹⁴, and Berlioz⁹⁵, though as a musical term in general, it is far from commonplace. To extend a wider background for the following discussion, particular paintings I held close in mind when approaching the piece included:

- Bosch *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (c.1510)
- Goya *Black Paintings* (1819-1823)
- Dalí *Autumnal Cannibalism* (1936)
- Bacon *Three Studies for Figures at the Base of a Crucifixion* (1944)
- Wyatt Mills *Memory of a Moment* (2016)

I took my title, *Earthly Delights*, from the Bosch painting as I felt the words had resonance with how my piece turned out. However, this title came after finishing the composition, as during the process of writing it I did not want to feel constrained to one particular painting or artist, but instead to draw with an integrated outlook from the breadth of multiple artworks depicting grotesque elements. *Earthly Delights* was written for a workshop and performance by the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group.

The piece opens with a muscular gesture that jolts the listener into an immediate sense of unease, further intensified by an abrupt cutback to a slowly moving and ethereal landscape: clarinet timbral-trills and delicate harp sonorities entwine over a backdrop of cold and linear string harmonics. This seemingly timeless setting contrasts with the opening declaration, intending to illustrate the idea of the ‘incongruous’ right from the beginning. The main compositional force I have at work in order to achieve this is the contraction and expansion of both pitch and rhythm. The first bar contains ten different pitches [E-F-F#-G-A-B-C-C#-D-D#] compressed into the space of five quavers, and the following eight bars contain just seven pitches in the form of a mode [F-G-A-B-C-D-E♭] over the space of thirty two crotchets, arranged in the sequence seen in Figure 4.2 below. This mode then goes

⁹² Ibid., (taken from subheadings throughout the book).

⁹³ See: Brown, J. (2007) *Bartók and the Grotesque: Studies in Modernity, the Body and Contradiction in Music*

⁹⁴ See: Sheinberg, E. (2000) *Irony, Satire, Parody and the Grotesque in the Music of Shostakovich: A Theory of Musical Incongruities*.

⁹⁵ See: Berlioz, H. (2005) *The Musical Madhouse (Les Grotesques de la musique)*.

on to evolve slowly, one note at a time, over the subsequent thirteen bars until a reiteration of the opening gesture (only this time one semitone higher) disrupts and pushes the modal material onwards, before resettling on a tonal centre of D \flat at bar 27. By shifting both the metric and harmonic mechanisms in the opening, my intentions here are to address ‘the distorted’ in order to establish a push-and-pull between the inharmonious elements in a manner related to Thomson’s ‘disharmony’ trope. My expressive markings in the score help to outline this juxtaposition: ‘Muscular’ and ‘Unearthly’.



Figure 4.2. (Modal material in the form of a melody that is interwoven throughout many parts in opening sections, and will additionally also be significant later on in the piece)

The ‘muscular’ character feeds back into the piece at later points, and to contrast with this, the more amorphic and ‘unearthly’ textures are achieved through polyphonic and polyrhythmic webs of flowing sound. Whilst writing these, and in relation to my treatment of texture and using expansive harmonic landscapes in general, I attempted to form a blending of simple linear material layered in different metric rates as found in Witold Lutosławski’s works using a similar technique. For example, in the opening of his *Symphony No.3* (1983), he creates an ethereal and slowly moving texture against a backcloth of continuous strings, which influenced the approach to creating what I describe below as my ‘fleshy’ material. This technique is used extensively throughout the piece, and I find it to be an effective way of giving certain moments a timeless quality wherein anything can suddenly emerge from its surface:



Figure 4.3. (Witold Lutosławski's *Symphony No. 3*, p. 3: polyphonic textural web)⁹⁶

Having established some of the general subject matter(s) of my piece in this opening, the sections which follow deal with some of the symbolism I encountered in the paintings, and my own musical reflections and evocations of the 'strange' and the 'fantastic'; blurring between warm consonant sounds and more menacing dissonant ones. Bar 42 introduces a thinning of texture and harmony, and allows for a moment of contemplation, with a muted horn solo tenderly coloured by the other instruments, whilst the piccolo interjects with cautionary fragments of something yet to come (see Figure 4.4). The vibraphone continues the sentiments of earlier here, with an oscillation between tension and release (or dissonance and consonance; 'disharmony'—see Figure 4.5).

⁹⁶ Lutosławski, W. (1984) *Symphony No. 3*, p. 3.

D Sonorous;
Slowly growing

42 Fl. *Piccolo*
f interjecting *pp*

Hn. With Mute (Straight)
sognando p *mp*

Hp. *bisbigl.*
p *mp*

Vln. *p* *mp*

Vla. *p* *mp*

Figure 4.4. (Letter D, b. 42-48: reduction of piccolo, horn, harp, violin, and viola texture)

D Sonorous;
Slowly growing
delicatiss.

40 Vibraphone
p l.v. *mp*

Figure 4.5. (Letter D, b. 40-46 vibraphone: undulating oscillation between diatonic and diminished)

With the ensemble split into layers, this section has a split atmosphere (dreamlike and fluid against angular and interjecting), and I imagined these characters throughout the piece as being ‘fleshy’ and ‘bony’ in correspondence; a response to the creatural representations in grotesque art—particularly in Bacon Dalí, and Mills’s works. My intention throughout this passage is to create a feeling of vagueness and ambiguity as to where one is being taken, and this ties in with the overall character of meshing individual and motivic fragments (‘pathos’ in the brass, ‘playful’ in the piccolo) within an unsettled atmosphere. The reservation of the bass entry during this section alienates the music from any clear tonal axis, and so when it does emerge at bar 54, provides a way of urging the music onwards towards an ensuing course of expansion, beginning at letter E. The poetic idea I am exploring here has been aptly described by Skempton, who whilst rarely dealing with the grotesque in his own works, characterises the realisation of strangeness within a work in a way that resonates with my own approach:

‘It is not strangeness alone, however, that offers us the possibility of transcendence, but the juxtaposition, or meshing, of the strange and the familiar. That sense of something which is precisely right, beautifully natural and awesomely strange is rare.’ (~Skempton)⁹⁷

At letter E, a developing intensification takes place, pulling the rug away from underneath the ebb and flow of the preceding section and surging away from it. During this section, we begin to approach a more rhythmic territory, with sequences of lines—still modal but of a different character—pulsing and rising in wave-like formations to create a gathering of momentum, the feeling of something perhaps trying to emerge. Expanding semiquavers enriched into quintuplets and then successively into sextuplets (like wave peaks) assist in this process of intensification, and the undulating tom-tom figures accompany this. Crashing ‘gong-effect’ declarations in the harp exaggerate the rising temper, and the visual and somewhat *un-harp-like* nature of the palm aggressively striking the strings emits suggestions of ‘the ugly’. The rather hostile brass interjections that enter shortly afterwards are harsh and brutal (see Figure 4.6), aiming at augmenting this developing grotesque atmosphere, leading to a consummation at letter G, which recapitulates the opening modal sequence (from earlier Figure 4.2) in plain sight; no longer soft and lilting, but metamorphosed and exclamatory.

The image shows a musical score reduction for measures 71-73. The score is written for six parts: Piccolo (Picc.), Horn (Hn.), Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (Perc.), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabass (Cb.). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The Piccolo part features a series of ascending and descending eighth-note patterns, with some measures containing quintuplets and sextuplets. The Horn and Trombone parts enter with a series of chords and single notes, marked with dynamics like *mp*, *f*, and *ff*. The Percussion part features a series of eighth-note patterns, with some measures containing quintuplets and sextuplets. The Violoncello and Contrabass parts feature a series of eighth-note patterns, with some measures containing quintuplets and sextuplets. The score is marked with a '71' at the beginning and a '17' at the end.

Figure 4.6. (B. 71-73 reduction: brass interjections cutting through the swelling texture of the woodwind, percussion (tom-toms), and strings)

⁹⁷ Skempton, H. (2014) pp. 51-53.

As already mentioned, one of the features of the grotesque as an art form that I wanted to explore in this piece was the ‘incongruous’, and what follows on from this passage of emerging intensity is a formal diversion into what feels like the establishment of almost a new movement. From here, the material becomes more motivic and tactile in its rhythmic and melodic construction, less textural, and more clear-cut in character. This more animated environment puts forward elicitations of a different kind of strangeness (more ‘exaggerated’; see Thomson tropes), heightened by the angular, groove-like aesthetic—being curiously playful (see Figure 4.7). By juxtaposing and introducing new styles here, with a ‘walking-bass’ underpinning the above polyphonic melodic writing, this ‘bony’ medium contrasts with what has come before it to invoke ‘bizarreness’, and to experiment with using binary oppositions in texture as a method of creating certain extra-musical connotations. On reaching letter J, one is once again pulled away (as at letter E), however this time backwards, to the more ‘fleshy’ language from earlier on in the piece—whilst including some of the newer elements interwoven into this texture (a hybrid), with the intention here to somewhat lull the listener into a sense of false accord. A chorale-like expansion across all parts at bar 113 suggests a coming together, with the woodwind, brass and strings taking on a smooth ‘fleshy’ character for one last time, before the final and rather rampant section is heard.



Figure 4.7. (B. 100-103 strings: ‘walking-bass’ beneath the angular polyphony of thematic elements)

In the final section (at letter K; see Figure 4.8), a grotesque musical monster is unleashed, manifesting itself in full force at bar 122, marked ‘muscular’ in the score (as in the first bar of the piece), and consenting the return of what is now a more embellished angular groove, pushing forwards the muscular and anatomical temperament I hinted at earlier in the piece in full glory—‘playful’, ‘macabre’, and ‘bizarre’—all at the same time. I used a layering of elements to achieve this effect, consisting of the bony thematic material flourishing above the relentless bass, amplified by the

[illegible]

63

In *Earthly Delights*, I looked at exploring how the use of mode, rhythm, expression, and texture can be framed in various ways to characterise musically certain tropes found in the vivid nature of grotesque artworks. I expressed these ideas musically through the manipulation of consonant and ethereal fabrics pitted against, and intertwined with, more hostile and obscured ones that become recognisable at some moments, and unfamiliar at others. Through the temporal expansion and contraction of modal and melodic sequences, contrasts and distortions are made apparent, whilst being in compositional play through diverse characters, moods, and idioms. I was interested in exploring the gulf between warm, rich, and meandering (referred to as ‘fleshy’) textural spaces, and more exposed, metric, and direct (‘bony’) expressions of retaliation. The creation of my tonal language and style in this piece was driven by an interest in translating ideas from other artistic practices into music, whilst also being fluid in allowing the material to develop organically and grow in different directions. The subsequent discussion will put into focus some other concepts of mine when using ‘outside sources’ that share similarities with this language as well as exploring alternative approaches in consideration to different mediums of stimuli.

TOAST!; for soprano and piano

At the beginning of my discussion on *Earthly Delights*, I remarked on how having an integrated outlook when choosing my source material provided a helpful way of creating an unconstrained approach. In *TOAST!*, I also drew on a breadth of found material, and in this case, it was formed out of a selection of four poetic texts concerned with expressions on ‘drinking’ throughout history. I set these texts for soprano voice and piano, originally written for soprano Anna Shackleton, and whilst each song is separate in its own right, should preferably be performed in sequence and as one whole unit, similar to in the ‘song cycle’ tradition. One of the main reasons for this is due to the four texts sharing the common topic of drinking, and I organised them in chronological order:

1. *I Care Not for the Idle State* ~ Anacreon (c.582-c.485 BC)
2. *Drinking Alone by Moonlight* ~ Li Bai (701-762 AD)
3. *Drink Today, and Drown All Sorrow* ~ John Fletcher (1579-1625)
4. *To Me* ~ Sean Jacks (b.1990)

Each text addresses the subject matter in a different way, and I found it interesting to collate source materials spanning two and a half millennia, with the final poem in the set (*To Me*) being written

specially for this work. I also felt this cross-historical selection of texts corresponded well with my overarching compositional interest of using past musics and styles within the same work. A central feature of these four songs as a group concerns their formal expressive pathway, with each becoming progressively darker in emotion, and I will address each song and its content in respect of this.

The first song, *I Care Not for the Idle State*, uses a text by Greek lyric poet Anacreon, who was known for his odes to drinking, and begins the set with a flowing and almost celestial tone, marked ‘elysian’ in the score. I chose this atmosphere due to the stylistic nature of the text, and to bring out the pastoral nature of the imagery within it. The lyrical melody in the voice alongside rich undulating harmony in the piano’s ostinato-like figure is reminiscent of romantic German lieder, where the piano part would often be reflective of the poem’s general mood. The harmonic writing during the opening is consonant and honeyed in character, and thus begins the set of songs in what might be described as a poised and agreeable manner. By beginning with this quite traditional song aesthetic, I therefore had room to develop, add contrast, and exaggerate the musical narrative in places where the text becomes more eccentric—for example with such statements as ‘Today I’ll haste to quaff my wine, as if tomorrow ne’er should shine’ (see Figure 4.9). Here, I juxtaposed the steadily moving opening style with a more exuberant one in a semi free rhythmic time, and the use of allusive theatrical jazz/musical theatre harmony and phrasing creates an optimistic, ‘resplendent’ humour:

The musical score for Figure 4.9 consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a 'FREE TIME' section, marked 'p (hesitant/growing)', and then moves to a steady 3/4 time. The piano accompaniment features a complex harmonic structure with various chords and intervals, including a 'sub' (suboctave) section. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'p', 'mf', 'f (resplendent)', and 'mp', as well as phrasing like 'Suddenly Melancholic'. The lyrics are: 'To-day I'll haste to quaff my wine, As if to-mor-row'.

Figure 4.9. (*Idle State* b. 30: exaggeration on ‘quaff my wine’ followed by a melancholic response on ‘as if tomorrow never should shine’)

Later on, when the word ‘wine’ comes back, I create the opposite expressive effect, by creating an opposing context of tonality. In the above example, the music resolves onto F major, marked ‘resplendent’, but when the poem begins to take a darker turn, ‘wine’ becomes a 12-tone row atop a much more dissonant harmony, also built on F:

The musical score for Figure 4.10 consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is marked *mf disquieting* and features a 12-tone row. The piano accompaniment is marked *f* and features a dissonant harmony. The lyrics are: "And shed from eve - ry bowl of wine The rich - est drop on Bac - chus". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Figure 4.10. (*Idle State* b. 51: tone-row atop dissonant harmony)

This more unsettled and changing atmosphere adds a foreshadowing nature, and aids in the conveyance of the changing humour of the latter half of the text, which goes into a more disquieting territory: ‘For Death may come with brow unpleasant, [...] and grimly bid us-drink no more!’ At this point, a return to the shapes and style of the opening material is heard, however the shapes have been altered rhythmically, and harmonically, into a further troubled territory, marked in the score as ‘somewhat despairing’. The piano accompaniment becomes more irregular and fragmentary, with dissonant bass notes below a more searching vocal line that as a result now feels disconnected and two-sided in identity; familiar melodic and motivic patterns from earlier are put into a different context and language. Anacreon’s text has a binary nature to it, with parts of the language being bright and festive at some moments, and others gloomier, and this led its musical potential when setting the text, particularly when using different kinds of tonality within the same work. Further to this, it sets up the nature of the overall cycle in a fitting way, with the following three of my settings also exploring various characters that aim to draw out different complexions in connection with my interpretation and rendering of the sources.

In the second song, *Drinking Alone by Moonlight*, the dreamlike and ethereal character of the Chinese text shaped a more mystical and flowing musical trajectory. The poem details a lonely drinker, with only his own shadow and the moon as company, toasting sorrowfully to the end of

spring. However, his companions sadly cannot join him in drinking, and the overall tone is less declamatory than in the *Anacreon*. The intimate and meandering nature is reflected in the twisting and constantly changing musical language, and this less stable harmonic and rhythmic environment further moves away from the more placid opening of the first song. I wanted the piano part to have an improvisatory and spontaneous quality to it, to mirror the inward expression of the poem, and similarly for the vocal line to exhibit this in the way it floats above it. If the first song has elements of romantic lieder writing, *Drinking Alone* is of a more nebulous and abstract world, hinting at the French traditions of Ravel and Messiaen; the mysticism of Scriabin; and the nocturnes of Chopin. The 12-tone row seen in Figure 4.10 above (used on the word ‘wine’ in the first song), becomes interwoven into the second song at various points in the piano part, sometimes even harmonised with simple triads to create poetic contrast. This also continues my familiar/unfamiliar meshing of fabrics, which I feel works well here as a way of heightening the kaleidoscopic and dreamlike nature of the poem’s drunken subject (see Figures 4.11a & 4.11b). By having subtle, non-explicit references across the songs, a musical glue is formed between them that helps to tie my ideas together, whilst at the same time reframing them stylistically to acknowledge each text’s own unique characteristics. Another example of this in *Drinking Alone* is the infusion of the main piano ‘ostinato-like’ idea from *I Care Not for the Idle State*, forming little echoing fragments that hint and glint in a passing fashion (see Figure 4.12).

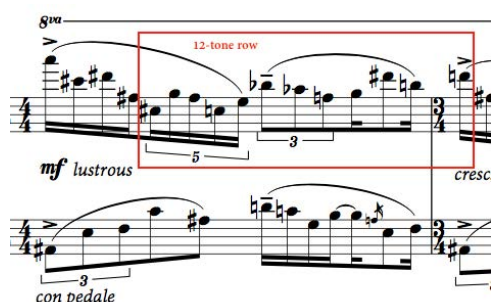


Figure 4.11a. (*Drinking Alone* b. 1: 12-tone row)

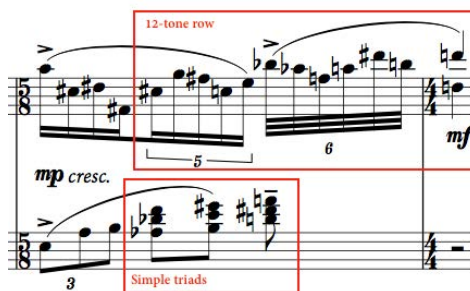


Figure 4.11b. (*Drinking Alone* b. 13: 12-tone row & simple triads)



Figure 4.12. (*Drinking Alone* b. 9-11: Echoing fragments from *Idle state* opening)

Drinking Alone by Moonlight ends with a feverish climax, after the subject's companions begin to lose him due to intoxication, and the final line 'And meet at last on the Cloudy River of the sky', signifies an almost metaphorical death of loneliness. I chose to use a sequence of major harmonies underneath this, to add a grotesquely incongruous framing of the text, as it makes the futile and impossible optimism of the soliloquy even more hopeless: the consonant harmony is now functioning in the reverse way to in the first song. The regular repeating quavers heard at this point will come back in the fourth and final song, after a short and intense snippet of the *Drinking Song* from John Fletcher's play *The Bloody Brother* (1639).

This third song, *Drink Today, and Drown All Sorrow*, acts as an interlude—being shorter in length to the other songs—and follows on from the Li Bai text with an increasingly despondent nature, now with a more literal reference to sorrow and death. By this point in the set of songs, the language around drinking has become devoid of good humour, and my compositional setting here is restricted and concentrated to a few main components. After the more fantasmic style of the Li Bai, the music here is skeletal and linear, and is moving back towards a more regular rhythmic pulse found in the first song, emerging out of the repeating quavers at the end of *Drinking Alone*. Although remaining in a shifting and meandering harmonic fashion, I wanted to use a textural style reminiscent of the late renaissance here, with the piano part acting like blown-out lute figurations, and the melismatic vocal line also echoing that tradition, albeit in a very different way. I found the combination of the quite rigid rhythmic movement with the wide and twisting pitch range in both the voice and piano gave the text a severe quality, and holds the tension throughout the entire song. The use of triplet and

quintuplet melodic contours continue the shapes found in the first two songs, and are also found in the final song too, which combines various elements from all that comes before it into a hybrid style.

Following the ‘formal expressive pathway’ I mentioned in the introduction to *TOAST!*, the progressive darkening throughout the songs reaches an emotional nadir in *To Me*, and the atmosphere I aimed at creating in this culmination responds to this. Marked in the score as ‘cold’ and ‘anxious’, the tone and impression here is dark and despairing in mood, and its narrative follows a talented young singer (Amy Winehouse) becoming lost to alcoholism. The use of rhythmic repetition in the accompaniment, and the less capricious harmonic movement provides a return to the Anacreon setting, but rather than being exclamatory and poised, is quite the opposite. This simple accompaniment allows the vocal line to cut through, and wavers between different brief tonalities and modes, never settling, but having a folk-like, nostalgic profile. Within the song, numerous references and allusions to the first three songs can be found, with some notable examples being:

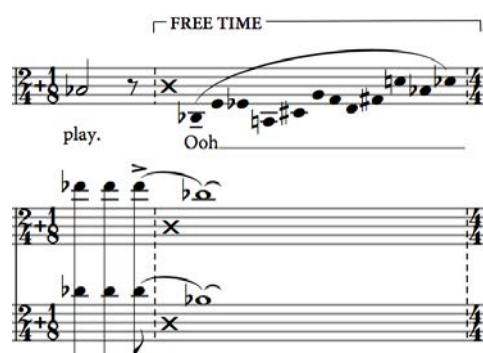


Figure 4.13. *To Me* b. 18-19: the 12-tone row again (but starting on B \flat), and also alongside the use of ‘free time’ element.

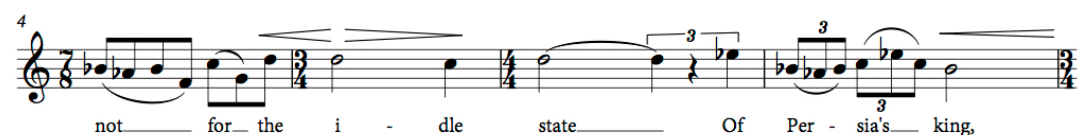


Figure 4.14. Before-heard vocal melodies recontextualised and on particular salient phrases: [B. 4-7 from the first line in *Idle State* above, becomes]:



Figure 4.15. [B. 39-41 in *To Me*; note the same notes being used in melody]



Figure 4.16. *To Me* b. 26: allusions to ‘echoing fragments’ as seen above in Figure 4.12.

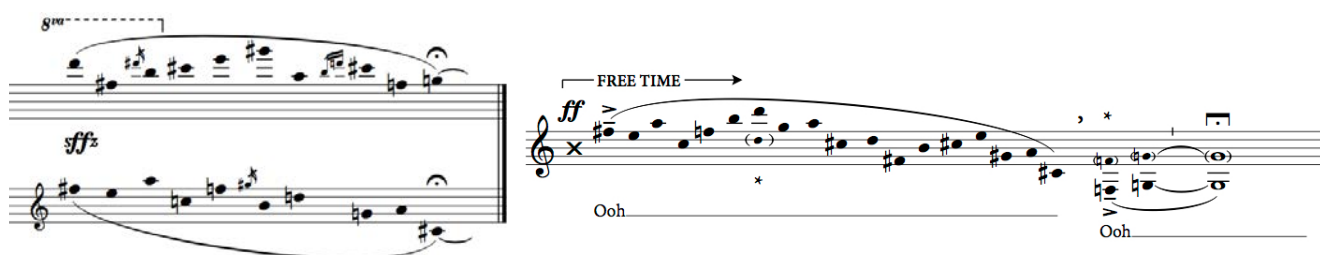


Figure 4.17. [Final bar of *Idle State* (left); final bar of *To Me* (right)]: Ending the final song with notes in the vocal line taken from the ending of first song in the piano (left hand, then right hand), creating a cyclic element to overall set of songs.

Throughout the four songs in *TOAST!*, I wanted to explore a somewhat more traditional method of using ‘outside sources’—that is through conventional text-setting—as a way of addressing a surrounding (and rather less traditional) topic of ‘drinking’, across a wide literary history. Whilst the source material itself is indeed ‘outside’ the realm of music per se, the inextricable bond between words and music has been a facet of music making throughout history, and as such is often less concerned with the long running debates around the purely instrumental ‘absolute’ and ‘ekphrastic’ music mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Instead, when setting words to music, an audience is aware of the content through the voice, thus Schubert’s lied *Im Frühling* (*‘In Spring’*) is quite different in its extra-musical intentions to Vivaldi’s *La Primavera* (*‘Spring’*) from *The Four Seasons*⁹⁸. In *TOAST!*, the songs combine to act as four soliloquies, moving through time, and from light to dark, dealing with particular themes and emotions—such as increasing loneliness, sorrow, and fear of death. As in the other works in my portfolio, by using a plurality of styles, tonalities, and allusions, my intention was to use the push-and-pull between different materials and sound-worlds as a way of expressing my artistic response to the poetic material.

⁹⁸ Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons*, whilst purely instrumental, have descriptive sonnets that preface the music and are broken into sections corresponding to the movements in the concerti. An audience however does not hear the texts of these sonnets during performance.

The final work being looked at in this chapter, *Passage* (the fifth movement from *Piano Suite III*), shares a lot of common ground with the other works already discussed so far, but offers an interesting point of comparison due to it being a) in contrast to *Earthly Delights* and *TOAST!*, conceptualised from only a single outside source, and b) in contrast to *TOAST!*, using a text to inspire a work that is purely instrumental: solo piano.

Piano Suite III: *Passage*; after Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*

Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* was published in 1931, and is considered the most experimental of all her novels. The structure of the work encompasses nine interrelated soliloquies (in the form of chapters) following the minds and tracing the life spans of the six main characters of the text: Bernard, Jinny, Louis, Neville, Rhoda, and Susan. The chapters are interspersed with nine short 'passages' in the form of depersonalised interludes, describing the shifting stages of a seascape, passing from dawn to dusk. The whole work has the impression of one long prose poem that is internalising aspects of the outer world—rather than acts of communication—and conveys the complexities of human experiences.

After having read this remarkable novel numerous times over a number of years, I have always been struck by it in a musical way, and artistically it was always in the back of my mind as a work I wished to personally respond to. With its rich poetic language, querying of the relationship between the past and present, and containing contrasting characters that at the same time show their shared connections, the attentions of my research provided a fitting opportunity to engage with it. Jane Goldman, a prominent Woolf scholar, writes about how during its composition, the author 'drew on poetical, musical and painterly analogies', and quotes from a diary entry of Woolf's that claims she was 'writing *The Waves* to a rhythm not to a plot', a rhythm that 'is in harmony with the painters'.⁹⁹ This of course chimes very well with the interdisciplinary approaches discussed in this chapter, and Woolf's use of allusion and poetic citation has a clear correlation with my own artistic concerns. In *Passage*, I decided to respond to one of the nine pastoral interludes for two main reasons. Firstly, in contrast to the songs just discussed, I wanted to respond instead to a depersonalised text that deals with scenery and landscape, being something I had not attempted before, and felt that the human

⁹⁹ Goldman, J. (2010) p. 65.

emotions explored in *TOAST!* were better suited to using the voice than the purely instrumental. Secondly, writings and analyses of *The Waves* naturally tend to concern themselves with the human characters (and thus the main chapters of the text), and in line with my attempt at responding to scenery and landscape, I wanted to shift the focus here to the pastoral; giving more attention to the vivid interludes in general. In my piece *October Tune*, which is covered in Chapter 5, I also had a loose inspiration of the natural world (autumn), but more as an open starting point to composition rather than as a direct response as in *Passage*. The Woolf passage I chose to address was the second interlude of the novel:

The sun rose higher. Blue waves, green waves swept a quick fan over the beach, circling the spike of sea-holly and leaving shallow pools of light here and there on the sand. A faint black rim was left behind them. The rocks which had been misty and so hardened and were marked with red clefts.

Sharp stripes of shadow lay on the grass, and the dew dancing on the tips of the flowers and leaves made the garden like a mosaic of single sparks not yet formed into one whole. The birds, whose breasts were specked canary and rose, now sang a strain or two together, wildly, like skaters rollicking arm-in-arm, and were suddenly silent, breaking asunder.

The sun laid broader blades upon the house. The light touched something green in the window corner and made it a lump of emerald, a cave of pure green like stoneless fruit. It sharpened the edges of chairs and tables and stitched white table-cloths with fine gold wires. As the light increased a bud here and there split asunder and shook out flowers, green veined and quivering, as if the effort of opening had set them rocking, and pealing a faint carillon as they beat their frail clappers against their white walls. Everything became so softly amorphous, as if the china of the plate flowed and the steel of the knife were liquid. Meanwhile the concussion of the waves breaking fell with muffled thuds, like logs falling, on the shore.¹⁰⁰

I approached the piece by absorbing the poetic nature of the text and letting it guide my own free improvisations of the imagery on the piano. I recorded myself creating various gestures in response to words and sentences in the text, and allowed myself to expand larger musical ideas out of these initial fragments. It seemed that my personal relationship to the book garnered an abundance of material in an organic way, and provided me with an effective route into the composing process. Tonality, source, and style were freely interacting at this point, and this tactile interpretation seemed instinctive and fluid—something that I think owed well to this medium. The second process in composing the piece took the form of expanding and refining, and at this point I found it best not to allow the text to take over, or to dictate what I did musically, but instead to let it hint, suggest, and kindle my creativity where fitting. This took me in different musical directions, and how I translated and developed different ideas and imageries became a prominent part of the piece's formation. The

¹⁰⁰ Woolf, V. (2000) *The Waves*, p. 20.

following examples illustrate some of the ways in which I did this, showing how I came to certain musical renderings.

One of the leading aspects of the passage for me is its expression of light, and the way Woolf allows it to affect everything in different ways. This scene of a rising sun—hardening the rocks and casting light on shallow pools—aroused my opening gestures, marked ‘*intensely bright*’, before melting into calmness only to resurge again each time:



Figure 4.18. (Opening of *Passage*)

These bright arpeggiated chords, made up of a mixture of intervallic hues and lack of collective tonal centre, swell upwards into high and pronounced melodies like shards of light. The calmer non-arpeggiated answering phrases add warmth to these statements, and this dialogue sets up a nature of opposing forces that are at play throughout the piece: the sharp and bright against the broad and softly amorphous. Particular words from the text become expressive directions throughout the score, forming motifs that keep coming back in different lights, almost like waves themselves, and the evolving pastoral scene of Woolf’s passage informed and shaped the narrative structure of the music. As marked in the beginning of the score, the overall landscape of the piece is ‘flexible; fluid; with ebb and flow’, and the following figures illustrate some examples of my discourse with the language of the text:

'Sharp stripes of shadow lay on the grass, and the dew dancing on the tips of the flowers and leaves made the garden like a mosaic of single sparks not yet formed into one whole. The birds, whose breasts were specked canary and rose, now sang a strain or two together, wildly, like skaters rollicking arm-in-arm, and were suddenly silent, breaking asunder.'

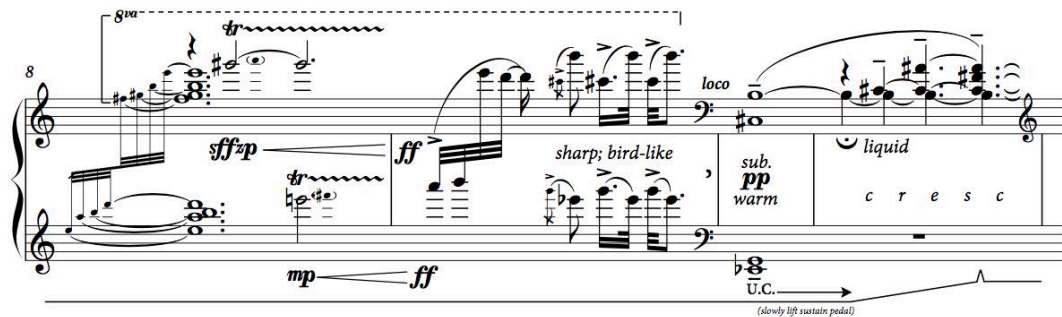


Figure 4.19. (B. 8-11: high, sharp, dancing figurations achieved through layered trills and fast sparks of demisemiquavers, which collapse away into a soft and darker texture)

'As the light increased a bud here and there split asunder and shook out flowers, green veined and quivering'

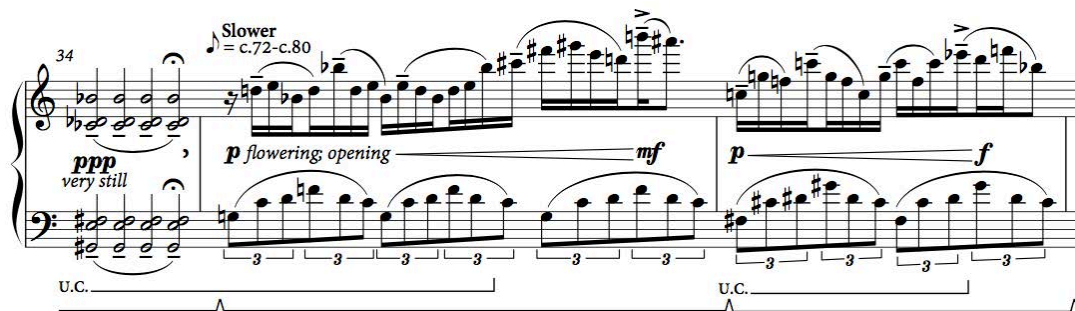


Figure 4.20. (B. 34-6: long opening phrases coming out of stillness; flowering gestures; taking the chords and melodies from the opening, reframed into a different style and character)

Figures 4.21. (a), 4.22. (b), & 4.23. (c)

(a) *'as if the effort of opening had set them rocking'*

(b) *'Everything became so softly amorphous, as if the china of the plate flowed and the steel of the knife were liquid.'*

(c) *'The sun laid broader blades upon the house' [...] 'the waves breaking fell with muffled thuds, like logs falling, on the shore.'*



Figure 4.21. (a) (B. 18: rocking figure)

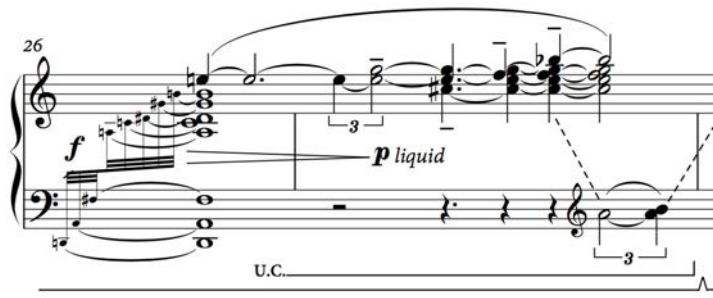


Figure 4.22. (b) (B. 26-7: rich arpeggiated figure melting into an amorphous and liquid material with held down pedal blurring the colours, also ‘softened’ more with use of una corda pedal on piano)

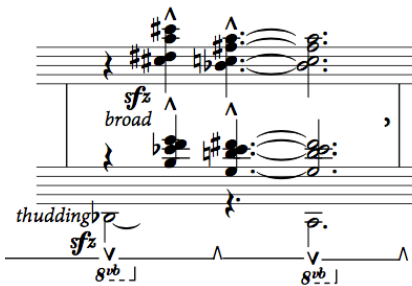


Figure 4.23. (c) (B. 33: large broad accented chords, with the thuds becoming muffled below them at the bottom of the piano)

In *Passage*, I allowed the source material to stimulate my creativity, and responded to the natural sounds and ideas that came out of this, before incorporating them into a piece that has its own identity and integrity both away from the text as well as in dialogue with it. By inserting the text at the beginning of the score, my intention is for Woolf’s passage to provide extra-musical imagery that might give a performer and/or listener additional material to perhaps enhance their experience of my ‘passage’, without necessarily being strictly tied to it in any overly didactic way. I was also inspired here by Ravel, who in his piano suite *Gaspard de la nuit*—in which each movement is based on a poem by Aloysius Bertrand’s collection of the same name—also prints the texts on the pages before each piece. In Siglind Bruhn’s book *Musical Ekphrasis*, introduced at the beginning of this chapter, the author makes note of this in a way that accords with my intentions: ‘While Ravel’s music is no doubt beautiful and self-sufficient when appreciated without knowledge of the literary source (as is usually the case in today’s concert practice), the listeners’ insight into the depth of the musical message increases dramatically once the music is comprehended in light of the poem.’¹⁰¹

The result of my endeavours here yields some interesting conclusions towards my use of sources outside of music as a way of triggering and fashioning musical material. Two planes of this practice became apparent during the composing process: a primary consideration of the text itself and its

¹⁰¹ Bruhn, S. (2000) xv.

literary tone and shape, and then a secondary consequence of the creation of musical material concerned with the depiction of natural phenomena. Further to this, I found it interesting to recognise that a text itself moves and unfolds as it is read or heard, just as in time-based art forms such as music; the landscape changing, evolving, and being surveyed from different angles. This differs from in painting for example, where duration is a less obvious dimension, but instead the visual pulling of concrete colour perhaps is. In my piece, I chose to deal with this sense of movement by reorienting the syntax to let the musical structure inform its own narrative.

These choices in source, and my treatment of them, informs how I go about constructing my own resultant plural style(s), and this approach can be seen as a constant thread throughout my portfolio. With attention to this, Chapter 5 will look in closer detail at how stimuli and ideas create works with multi-aesthetic and layered materials, and considerations on crafting composites through use of musical languages and hybrids of them. The two works discussed in this next chapter, *A Dancer Ready to Dance*, *the Right Foot Forward*, and *October Tune*, combine aspects of both inside and outside sources with relation to tonality and historical contexts as examined thus far.

Chapter 5 – Hybridity & Layering: *A Dancer Ready to Dance*, *October Tune*

‘At critical moments in the historical development of the language of music, salvation always came from outside. The attempt to strengthen a rotting tree by grafting on shoots from its wild relatives is nothing new. Examples of such hybridization fill the history of music, the crossbreeding of what has grown old with what has been long forgotten, to make the tree of music fruitful again. One of the most recent examples is Webern, who “crossbred” the homophonic-harmonic forms of nineteenth- and twentieth-century music with the polyphonic formal processes of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century music.’ (~Alfred Schnittke)¹⁰²

With composers of our century having such easy access to a wide range of diverse music from a rich historical gamut, it is not surprising that many artists across genres find ways of crossing-currents and adopting heterogeneous approaches. The crafting of composite works that combine distinct materials has become bountiful in the contemporary classical sphere with synthesis, juxtaposition, and interpolation leading to a hybridised culture whereby the use of such materials has created what Pascal Decroupet has described as being ‘omnivorous’.¹⁰³ Composers can therefore delve into sundry musical languages and traditions for endless different reasons, and the modes by which this is achieved are as equally profuse. As in the Schnittke quotation above, the combining of historical and stylistic languages culminates in new and striking hybrids that are specific to the poetics of each individual work, presenting us with dramatic and expressive shapes, motions, and textures. The focus of this chapter will be on techniques of hybridity and layering, beginning with a look at some approaches taken by composers with salience to my approach—George Crumb, and Oliver Knussen—before analyses of my portfolio works *A Dancer Ready to Dance*, *the Right Foot Forward*, and *October Tune*.

Crumb; Knussen

In George Crumb’s works, the composer’s inventive and mystic approach to timbre, style, quotation, and theatre, is often achieved through a technique of combining sonorities of contrasting aesthetics, thus allowing them to coexist. A vivid example of this can be heard in his 1970 work *Ancient Voices of Children* for soli and chamber ensemble, which includes a distinctive fusion of curio and exoticism, described by the composer as being: ‘conscious of an urge to fuse various unrelated stylistic elements. I was intrigued with the idea of juxtaposing the seemingly incongruous: a suggestion of Flamenco with Baroque quotation [...] or a reminiscence of Mahler with a breath of the

¹⁰² Schnittke, A. (2002) pp. 223-4.

¹⁰³ See: Decroupet, P. (2010) *Heterogeneity: Or, On the Choice of Being Omnivorous* pp. 99-116.

Orient'¹⁰⁴. The styles and quotations integrated by Crumb include melodies from the final song of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* ('*Der Abschied*'), and the Aria '*Bist du bei mir*' from Bach's *Notebook for Anna Magdalena Bach*—the latter interestingly an arrangement of another aria by German baroque composer Gottfried Heinrich Stölzel. Alongside Crumb's use of miscellaneous sound effects,¹⁰⁵ he creates a haunting entwinement between reality and fantasy. Crumb takes a comparable approach to this in another work of his from the same year—*Black Angels* (1970)—where one can hear the polarity of good vs evil being represented through the use of highly distinct objects and fabrics being juxtaposed and analogised. Again, this also includes the use of quotation, as well as numerous tonal allusions. These incorporate, to name a selection: 1) the use of Schubert's '*Death and the Maiden*' (*String Quartet No. 14 in D minor*—see Figure 5.1) executed in a renaissance style 'like a consort of viols' below electric insect obbligato sounds; 2) an original distant Sarabande 'de la Muerte Oscura' (of the dark death); 3) a B Major infused 'God-music' (see Figure 5.2); and 4) several references to the medieval *Dies Irae* sequence. The outcome is almost one of surrealism, and the way that Crumb recontextualises his chosen materials educes the symbolic and evocative nature of the work, with Nils Holger Petersen noting that: 'The musical—including the intermedial—historical references in *Black Angels* are framed with striking modernistic sounds exploring instrumental possibilities far beyond the traditional, thus creating a framework of extreme contrasts.'¹⁰⁶

Figure 5.1. (Opening of ‘*Pavana Lachrymae*’ from Crumb’s *Black Angels*: using Schubert in a renaissance style)¹⁰⁷

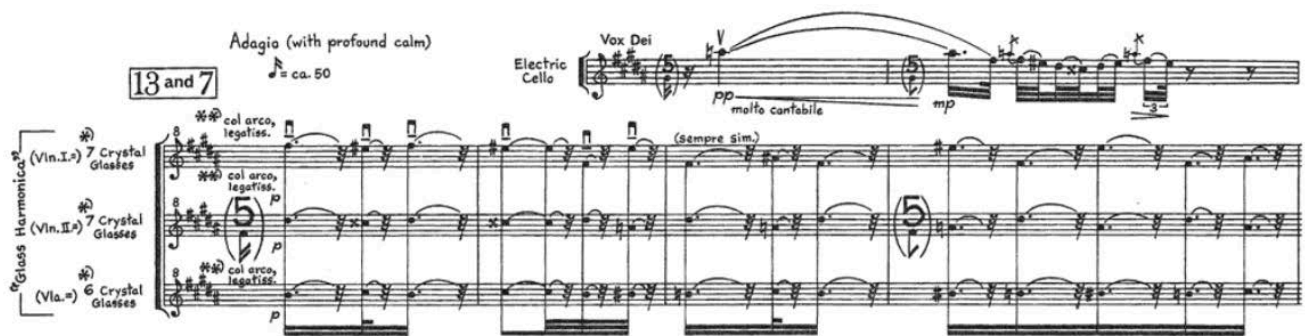


Figure 5.2. (Opening of ‘God-music’ from *Black Angels*: B Major infused tonality)¹⁰⁸

Another composer who often finds interesting ways of embracing and conjoining cross-historical and multi-aesthetic materials as a method of forming his own unique hybrids is Oliver Knussen, who as well as taking on various models and templates of past musics, also absorbs them into his textural landscapes. Many of his works in someway pay homage to other composers: examples can be found in the *Ophelia Dances* (1975) with material derived from Schumann’s *Carnival* and Debussy’s *La boîte à joujoux* and *Gigues*; his Stravinskian *Flourish with Fireworks* (1993); or the Purcell-induced distorted fantasia *...upon one note* (1995). The compositional processes that operate in Knussen’s works can be seen in some of my own approaches, particularly in relation to defined materials and different ways of layering them horizontally to form a surface.

In his *Two Organa* (1994/5) for large chamber ensemble, Knussen implements the medieval organum method of having a cantus firmus in the plainsong style by responding to it in two different ways, with the work being split into two short pieces. In the first piece, *Notre Dame des Jouets*, the 12th-century organa of the Notre Dame School (after Pérotin) is applied, and consists only of white notes.¹⁰⁹ The cantus firmus moves slowly, whilst dancing and decorative melismata are layered in canons at different intervals, creating lines working in different rhythmic motions. In the second piece, simply entitled *Organum*, he uses (in contrast to the first) total chromaticism within complex polyrhythmic layers—taking the medieval stimulus into a more astringent and modernist territory. There is multi-layering here, that is more elaborate in nature—from the very slow, to the flourishing

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., ‘God Music’.

¹⁰⁹ Being originally conceived and written for a 2.5-octave Dutch music box.

and capricious—with the addition of improvisatory-sounding solos with specific musical identities (see Figure 5.3). In regards to Knussen’s technique here, composer Julian Anderson comments that:

‘Composition in layers has been a commonplace of modern music since Ives. Solving the problem of relating simultaneous layers of musical activity coherently to each other whilst maintaining their audible independence is one of the chief tasks composers are faced with in contemporary music, whatever their aesthetic or style. It touches areas of the work of such otherwise diverse composers as Messiaen, Carter, Ligeti, Birtwistle, Grisey, Benjamin, Lindberg and Wolfgang Rihm. Knussen’s *Second Organum* is one of the finest recent examples, moving with such fluency and naturalness that the listener is scarcely aware of the problem being solved.’¹¹⁰

These approaches to creating texture through layering, as well as the above-mentioned use of heterogeneous approaches and their languages and allusions are of interest to my own practice, and for the remainder of this chapter I will discuss two chamber works that each recruit multiple elements as a way of creating a whole (or a hybrid):

- *A Dancer Ready to Dance, the Right Foot Forward* for sinfonietta
- *October Tune* for chamber ensemble

As explored in Chapters 3 and 4, both of these works also take various inspirations from ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ sources, and how these starting points informed my choices in tonality, rhythm, shape, texture, and style, forms the foundation of the following discussion.

¹¹⁰ Anderson, J. (2003) pp. 30-31.

Figure 5.3 shows a page from Knussen's *Organum*, page 16. The score is for a large orchestra and includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet in A (C. A.), Clarinet in Bb (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Horn (Hn.), Trumpet (Tr.), Trombone (Tbn.), Percussion (Perc.), Harp (Harp.), and Violin/Viola/Double Bass (Vln. I, Vln. II, Va., Vlc., Db.). The score is in 3/4 time and features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes. Dynamics range from piano (p) to fortissimo (f). The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 19. A box labeled 'B' is present in the first system, and another box labeled 'B' is at the end of the second system. The percussion part includes Glockenspiel and Tam-tam. The harp part includes chords: Gb Ab Db and A# D#.

Figure 5.3. (Page 16 from Knussen's *Organum*—see distinct layers)¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Knussen, O. (1996) *Two Organa* Op. 27, p. 16.

A Dancer Ready to Dance, the Right Foot Forward; for sinfonietta

A Dancer Ready to Dance, the Right Foot Forward takes its name from one of more than thirty study sculptures that French artist Edgar Degas made of ballerinas. The clay or wax models supplemented the numerous drawings that the artist also made, and became known to the public only after the artist's death in 1917, when they were cast in bronze for sale. At the ballet, Degas found a world that excited both his taste for classical beauty, and his eye for modern realism. He haunted the wings and classrooms of the magnificent Palais Garnier—home of the Paris Opéra and its Ballet—where some of the city's poorest young girls struggled to become the fairies, nymphs, and queens of the stage. The lowly state of the ballet at the time enabled Degas to capture the reality, in contrast to the artifice, of a dancer's working life; above all the blood, sweat, and tears that permeated the rehearsal rooms. There was an undertone of cruelty in Degas' somewhat voyeuristic obsession, and he occasionally obliged the dancers who modelled for him in the studio to pose for hours on end—arms held high overhead, legs extended or bent—in unbearable discomfort, even for the dancers habituated to pain.

My piece for Sinfonietta responds to the duality of beauty and tension, and of stillness and movement exhibited in Degas' ballet works, and particularly the mystical way he understood and manifested this in his intimate and emblematic studio pieces. Being part of a larger cycle of works¹¹², it is a kind of musical 'miniature' in the same manner that the sculpture sits within the gallery room, and attempts to capture and interpret the drama of the subject's outer/inner character through the lens of the artist. The discussion into 'outside sources' in Chapter 4 can clearly be applied to the conceptual foundation and design of this piece, however in *A Dancer*, some wider musical 'inside' sources—such as dance and 20th century French music—are hybridised to provide my 'way into' composition.

Due to the nature of the commission, and the challenge of being restricted to the Barber Institute's collection, when initially approaching the piece, I decided to spend some time researching the environment of the Palais Garnier during Degas' period. I was attracted to the split between the external view of it by the public, and the inner workings of the life and labour of the dancers

¹¹² *A Dancer Ready to Dance* was performed as part of the University of Birmingham's contemporary music festival *CrossCurrents*, and formed a movement as part of a large cycle of short pieces drawing inspiration from the artworks on display in the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham, UK; a modern day take on Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* (1874).

themselves, and in particular the *petits rats de l'opéra*¹¹³. This led me to an interest in the artist's taste for naturalistic realism: evocative depictions of everyday subjects of modern life. The result of my exploration here provided me with four main stimuli for commencing composition:

- **Naïveté**: delicate and dreamlike charm of the young dancers
- **Dance and style**: arabesque; waltz; ornamentation; groove
- **Objective/subjective**: physicality against allegory
- **Rhythmic rates**: suggestive harmonies; lyrical melodic lines

The following analysis follows the formal contour of the piece, and a helpful way of illustrating the overall work can be seen in the form table below, which shows the main sections (row 1), their poetic ideas (row 2), and the accompanying expressive markings in the score (row 3):

FORM

A (b. 1-16)		B (b. 17-33)		C (b. 34-48)		A ¹ (b. 49-54)
'Clockwork Ballerina'		'Binary texture'		'Culmination; waltz'		'Clockwork Ballerina'
'Delicate; Rubato': <i>Espressivo, Elegant, Poised, Ritmico</i>		'Dynamic': <i>Giocoso, Sonoro, Appassionato</i>		'Imposing; extravagant': <i>Maestoso, (leading to): 'Intensifying & determined'</i>		'Delicate; morendo': <i>Like a wind-up clockwork ballerina</i>

A (b. 1-16)

The piece opens with a musical personification of the delicate nature of the aforementioned young ballet dancers, and similarly the elegant impression of the sculpture itself—unimposing within the gallery room—petite and lustrous. For me, the sculpture evokes a reminiscence of the wind-up clockwork figurines that might adorn the bedrooms of these young dancers: still, yet rotating, ornamental, and poised, and I characterised this musically in three layers. The top layer is made up of arabesque shapes in the woodwind, which are smooth and flowing, entwining akin to sylph-like pointe work. Below this, the harp, contrabass, and percussion provide a rhythmic counterpoint, expressing a dancing quality that is pushing the music forwards, and creating a combined direction between the instruments. The third layer adds a revolving textural dressing (piano, violin, and viola), and embodies the 'clockwork ballerina' idea and its gentle mechanics. Taking this idea further, I conceived the choice of percussion¹¹⁴, and the contour of its line, as an additional allusion to the sculptures metallic structure:

¹¹³ Selected young girls subjected to highly demanding schooling and discipline as part of the *corps de ballet*, forming the lowest rank in the company.

¹¹⁴ Light snare, cymbal, tambourine, jam block, and cowbell strikes in an improvised-like contour, to give off a metallic character, and to echo the physical sculpture in sound.



Figure 5.4. (*A Dancer Ready to Dance*, percussion, b. 8-10)

In regards to tonality, I composed this section in a semi-formulaic way, and within this the ‘suggestive harmonies’ mentioned above as part of my four main stimuli come in the form of a reminiscence of a familiar French aesthetic, which ties into my initial concept of the environment of Degas’ ballet. To achieve this, I took dominant ninth chords, and moved them around in parallel, which evokes an archetypal sound-world evocative of late 19th and early 20th century French music, such as heard in the likes of Debussy and Ravel (see Figure 5.5). The formulaic aspect here comes from the system I used to structure the music from b. 5 (after the 4 bar introduction) up to b. 16, with the chords grouped in bars of 3-2-1-2-3, shown in the table below:

b. 5-7	b. 8-9	b. 10	b. 11-12	b. 13-15
3 bars	2 bars	1 bar	2 bars	3 bars
B \flat Dom ⁹	B \natural Dom ⁹	A \flat Dom ⁹	D Dom ⁹	C Dom ⁹

(Dominant ninth chords built on the root, moving in parallel motion)

Figure 5.5. (Debussy’s ‘II. Fêtes’, from *Nocturnes* (1899) b. 12-14: String of dominant ninth chords, moving in parallel motion, on: D \flat , B \flat , D \flat , G \flat , D \flat , E \flat)¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Debussy, C. (1899) *Nocturnes*, p. 18.

The combination of the above components creates a setting in which familiar and celestial harmonies rub shoulders with more pressing rhythmic manoeuvre, both distinct, but also in dialogue with one another, forming a whole. I am interested here in how this can construct a feeling of infinity—always in motion, and always present—nostalgic in one part, yet expectant in another.

As well as creating a stylistic and historical echo through my use of chordal harmony, the mixolydian mode can be generated from the dominant ninth chord (see Figure 5.6), and I chose to use this as a basis for the linear melodic writing in the opening section—which is especially apparent in the woodwind lines—to create a coherent musical texture. To my ears, this mode has an ethereal, alluring quality to it, and my intention is for the harmonic and melodic relationship to exude the inner ‘dreamlike’ atmosphere derived on experiencing the sculpture. Combined with the jaunty, dancing rhythmic push—achieved through splintered cells and fluctuating intervals—the affective energy of this introduction characterises the subject’s ‘naïveté’ motif, being tender-aged and hopeful.



Figure 5.6. (Mixolydian mode formed from the dominant 9th chords)

The 5/4 bar at bar 16 delineates the beginning of the B section, and indicates a coming together by way of an anacrusis, in much the same vein as often heard in ballet waltz scenes to command the dancers to attention, and provide metre. Here, the ‘right foot’ really is ‘forward’, and ‘ready to dance’—an objective response to the visual cue of Degas’ piece, and the physical juncture between stillness and movement.

B (b. 17-33)

Referred to in the ‘FORM’ table above as a ‘Binary texture’, this section is constructed of two respective horizontal parts:

- a) Parallel major triads: rigid; driven; dynamic (*upper woodwind, percussion, piano*)
- b) Sweeping chords: flowing; rich; sonorous (*bassoon, brass, strings*)

These two parts represent a sense of duality taken from my abstraction of ‘beauty vs tension’ in the works of Degas. After the collective anacrusis at bar 16, the music becomes more thematic, and I wanted to tug the listener into a more palpable world that plays with familiar musical vocabulary, whilst being obscured in its conflicting nature. The parallel triadic material (a) has a dance-like, angular character, leaping around in the manner of young ballerinas in rehearsal. The roots of the parallel chords however move around in an atonal fashion, having been built off every note in the chromatic scale at least once by the second beat in the third bar of the material, as illustrated below:

The image shows a musical score for three instruments: Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), and Clarinet (Cl.). The score is for measures 17-19 of a piece. The tempo is marked as 69, and the dynamic is 'f giocoso'. The music features parallel major triad chords in each instrument. Red notes indicate the roots of these chords, which are based on all 12 chromatic notes. The roots are labeled as follows: E, C#, G#, B, D, A#, D#, C, F, G, A, and F#.

Figure 5.7. (*A Dancer Ready to Dance*, b. 17-19: parallel major triad chords in flute, oboe, and clarinet—red notes show chords based of all 12 chromatic notes)

I chose to use major triads in their simple root form to contrast with the use of dominant ninths in the first section of the piece, and to create a new harmonic flavour whilst retaining an overarching system of the chords, which are still moving in a parallel, linear arrangement. However, this parallel movement is working at a much faster rate than before, with many different chords per bar, instead of them being spread over numerous measures as in the opening. This clean triadic movement cuts through over a density that is at work below it (b), and additionally takes on a percussive role that mirrors and relates to the ‘jaunty’ contours of the harp, contrabass, and percussion heard in section A. The dancing nature of this material, and its ‘familiar’ yet ‘obscured’ triadic movement shares some similarities with the aesthetics of Stravinsky, and in particular his own approach to ballet music (see Figure 5.8 from *The Firebird*), the texture of which I had in mind when writing the B section of my piece.



Figure 5.8. (Stravinsky's 'The Princesses' Game with the Golden Apples': Scherzo, from *The Firebird* (1910), rehearsal mark 59: dancing/angular writing in the woodwind)¹¹⁶

In this section of *A Dancer*, the rich, sweeping chords have a slightly romantic undertone in their construction, and flow below the disparate dancing figures, my intention here being to consider different ballet movements and forms. Groove and precision are layered *against* the sonorous and the pliable, with such an antithesis allowing each to enhance and illuminate one another in the process. This method of layering is a good example of my approach to hybrid textures taking on a stylistic idiom of their own autonomy from the initial stimulus (or 'outside source')—a composite of different musical vocabularies—and parallels could be drawn with my texture here and those often found in the music of Ives (see Figure 5.9 below). The sweeping chords, whilst more complex in anatomy in this section, still retain a partially French aesthetic (of extended triads), that is now instead becoming more dissonant, and telling, in order to create a feeling of disquiet or an air of anxiety. An infusion of harmonic dissonance here seeks to intensify this characterisation, and the resultant binary texture—both polytonal and polyrhythmic—portrays a friction between my duality of beauty and tension. At bar 25, I expand this atmosphere further with the addition of a deep-felt melodic line marked '*appassionato*' in the trumpet and violins that functions almost like a vocal line communicating the expressive yearn of the young dancer. This lyrical development impels the music onwards over the following eight bars, and leads us through to section C of the piece.

¹¹⁶ Stravinsky, I. (1987) *The Firebird*, p. 62.



Figure 5.9. (Ives's *Central Park in the Dark* (1906), Figure 70: layering of distinct materials in a similar way to the binary texture in *A Dancer*)¹¹⁷

C (b. 34-48)

Although marked in the form table as a distinct section in its own right, this was to help provide a way into discussing the prominent structural areas of the piece in detail. Musically, however, I conceived this passage more as a continuation and culmination of section B, taking earlier ideas and framing them as an off-kilter¹¹⁸ waltz, with the instrumental groups coming together in force, marked in the score 'Imposing; extravagant'. My aim in this culmination was to magnify the dramatic elements discussed thus far, and to mirror the majestic nature of a ballet climax in an almost affected and hyped-up manner. As earlier, the harmonic and rhythmic treatment continues in a similar style, however the underpinning 'waltz' has a more familiar contour—adding motion and counter-movement below the lyrical melodic line, of which has now extended high-up into the flute alongside the trumpet and violins (see Figure 5.10 for a reduction of this 'off-kilter waltz'). I wanted to achieve a sense of intensity over this remaining passage, evoking the inexorable determination of the *petits rats de l'opéra*: perceptibly marvellous and rigorous, but tinged with aching muscle and hidden emotion by way of discord. This whirl of activity, reinforced by the idiomatically redolent snare

¹¹⁷ Ives, C. (1973) *Central Park in the Dark*, p. 12.

¹¹⁸ 'Off-kilter' in the sense that the waltz accompaniment is detectable in its general shape, but metrically contorted by the use of irregular time signatures, with 'maestoso' melodic line stretching above it (see Figure 5.10 below).

drum, surges forwards towards its peak at bar 48 where it cuts away abruptly into the concluding section of the work. For me, the off-kilter waltz material also offers in addition allusions to the culture of dance and ballet/theatre music in general, from Tchaikovsky to Sondheim, and so on.



Figure 5.10. (*A Dancer Ready to Dance*, reduction of b. 34-37: ‘off-kilter waltz’ idea)

A¹ (b. 49-54)

Almost as if waking from a dream, here we return to the opening material: ‘naïveté’. The clockwork ballerina continues to perpetually revolve, as if it were there in the background all along, perhaps signifying a perennial undercurrent of hope and delicacy. The use of independent tempi here gives the effect of this inner world dissipating gently into the ether, or perhaps suggesting the piece almost starting again akin to the cyclic nature of ballet life. This also relates to the physical object of the sculpture as imagined by myself as a wind-up figurine; slowly coming to a halt and waiting to be wound up for the n^{th} time—relentless, unending, unrelieved.



Figure 5.11. (*A Dancer Ready to Dance*, b. 49-51: ‘Independent tempi’)

In *A Dancer Ready to Dance, the Right Foot Forward*, my initial intention was to explore how my own reaction to the artwork in the gallery could provide a way into composing, and to take the different stimuli mentioned earlier as a springboard for the piece’s creative possibilities. Whilst the use of stylistic, tonal, allusive, rhythmic, and textural contrasts were my principal methods of communicating this, I ultimately intend for the piece to cohere as a whole, and this aspect of the composition became distinct from the preliminary inspirations behind it. In this sense, the incentives provided by the Degas sculpture—whilst undoubtedly very important—are perhaps not crucial for understanding or perceiving the music’s concept. Rather, the sound-world I have delved into and

explored is a product of the composition process itself, and the subsidiary ability for this to be in a dialogue with other forms of art, for me, adds expressive substance to the work, and the particular environment in which this piece was performed also created an interesting additional dialogic element.

Aesthetically, this piece allowed me to further experiment with distinct materials, and how I define their individual characters and relationships with each other. As already mentioned, the thematic starting point of this work set forth the stimuli for composition, and I found that having this clarified in mind from the beginning to be of great benefit; allowing me to pull together various ideas relating to the sound-world in quite a natural way. These various considerations chimed well with my compositional interests in using multifarious elements to invent musical characters (which will be explored again in more detail in Chapter 6), and to enquire into how certain elements can work together in different ways. Conflicting tonalities coalesce, rhythms work at different rates simultaneously, and familiar ideas from diverse sources become enmeshed and trapped, and in differing gradations of perceptibility. The piece forming the second half of this chapter's discussion, *October Tune*, also assumes many of these elements, but was conceived through a lens that has its focus on different forms of shape, and how objects combine to form layers and hybrid textures.

***October Tune*; for chamber ensemble**

October Tune is based on a melody that I sketched on an autumnal morning in October, and the material of the whole piece is derived and expanded from it. Being stirred by the changing nature and atmosphere around the month of October, the piece never properly settles, and my intention here was to evoke some of the sensations of the vibrant and crisp nature of the season. In this piece, I was thinking more carefully about shape, and how my approach to pitch and rhythm affects my choices in this regard. In this piece, I found it fruitful to consider the idea of 'shape' on both micro and macro levels, and within that, the geometric properties of shapes in relation to my wider abstractions of the piece. Thinking about how small fragments and cells associate with the global structure of the piece and its trajectory focused my study towards the combining of musical objects to form its language, style, and identity.

Due to my emerging concern with objects and shapes, I began my approach to constructing the piece by drawing out the opening section purely as shapes in layers (see Figure 5.12), having already sketched out the ‘tune’ in a manuscript notepad separately (see Figure 5.13).

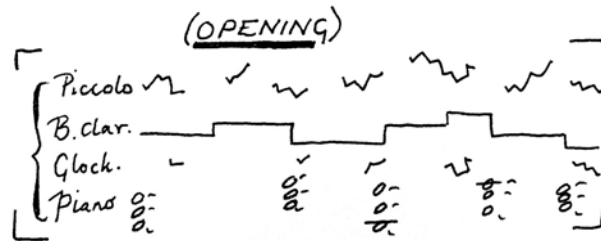


Figure 5.12. (Fragmentation of melody in piccolo with occasional reinforcement from glockenspiel, above a slowly moving bass clarinet and bell-like piano chords)



Figure 5.13. (*Initial melody behind the piece taken from manuscript book*): beginning with a hint of D major, before quickly moving through to a suggestion of E major, before again being drawn onwards through subtle tonal shifts that never settle—by the fourth bar with the A#, we have heard all twelve notes of the chromatic scale. By grouping individual fragments in diatonic blocks, there is an initial sense of familiarity, but the fluctuating nature on the linear and rootless movement creates a tonally playful environment.

These starting points provided me with the foundation to begin combining the two ‘sketches’ (one of shapes, one of notes), resulting in a layered texture that opens the piece. This texture is moving slowly through various tonal areas, with the violin entering at first in an inversion of the opening fragments, followed by the cello back in the original form of the beginning. I wanted to achieve a feeling of gradual intensification throughout this opening section, and with the cumulative addition of instruments in layers, alongside condensing piano chords, the music begins to dilate towards letter C. With this layering technique, I wanted to arouse a feeling of multiple elements fluttering around each other, moving in different ways and being whisked up into an autumnal bluster—tempestuous and surging.

The ensuing section follows on in the same way that October weather often does, with a resultant juxtaposed calm across the ensemble. Here, the music is divergent from the opening temperament, however it is mostly derived from the same material, instead stretched in a different temporal dimension (see Figure 5.14), and in turn changing the perception of melodic material. Snippets from the tune enter, embedded within a now much more static texture, with the linear elements free to rise and fall outside of the rhythmic rigidity heard in the opening. If the opening material could be described as angular and wedged in ‘shape’, the retracted passage from bars 21-48 is nebulous in its response.



Figure 5.14. (B. 37-39 flute & clarinet): See Flute line from the E on the last beat of b. 37, taken from opening two bars of melody shown in **Figure 5.13**, but beginning a tone higher—warped and devoid of a recognisable downbeat, and entwined within a textural landscape—achieved in part by the combination of a 5/4 time signature and mixture of irregular rhythmic groupings.

After moving through this web-like transition, we reach a declaration point at letter F: the ‘tune’ is heard for the first time in its entirety, transmuted stylistically into a climate that reframes the context of it, almost as if finally being revealed in its veritable form. My idea here was to situate the tune in an idiom that evokes an air of familiarity in its upbeat *jazz-esque* character, set over a driven, punchy bass, with a largely metric and pulsating push (see Figure 5.15). I was attracted to changing these various stylistic components in this more rhythmic manner to look at how such components can interact and react to each other in different ways over the course of the piece. For example, which mechanisms are detectable to a listener, how does the ‘accompaniment’ affect the ‘tune’ in its various semblances, and how do these considerations tie together structurally? I conceived the structure here as a kind of backwards theme and variations, with the fundamental material being slowly uncovered throughout the piece, and also by varying the thematic properties in shape and texture. After hearing the piece for the first time, and with subsequent hearings, the intention is for one to pick up different

morsels of information and for the level of identification and recognition to be different on each hearing.

F Assertive, direct (beat all /8 bars in quavers)

53 *ff* lively!

B. Cl. *ff* muscular

Vib. *To Glock.*
(dampen as soon as possible)

Pno. *ff* lively!
Λ light pedalling

F Assertive, direct (beat all /8 bars in quavers)

Vln. *ff* muscular

Vc. *ff* muscular

Figure 5.15. (B. 53-56: fully formed melody, marked ‘Assertive, direct’—
a coming together of earlier materials)

I am also interested in the outcome of this piece in correspondence to my wider reflections on tonality, and the extent to which the use of rhythm and metre has an effect on a listener’s perception of the hierarchy of consonant and dissonant materials. I imagine many listeners would potentially label *October Tune* as ‘tonal’; however, there lacks any single obvious tonal centre throughout the whole piece, but instead has many centres that do not last long enough to establish any principal centricity. Various component parts of the piece do (on a micro level) often deal with consonant materials, for example with familiar melodic shapes and recurring intervallic elements, however the vertical sonorities are in a constant state of unrest. The melodic aspects of the piece might indeed be quirky, upbeat, and even ‘humable’ at times, but this (on a macro level) does not necessarily extend to what many might describe as ‘tonal’. The ‘October tune’ itself, for example, is constantly being transposed, inverted, and altered rhythmically, and it is unclear as to whether listeners would be able to identify an underlying tonic if asked to name one. Perhaps then, ‘tonal sounding’ might be a more

apt description, or perhaps more formally: having diatonic qualities without operating within the principles of functional tonality. This, in consideration to my aesthetic, is strongly highlighted at the very end of the work, where the glockenspiel plays the melody as a solo, but beginning on the note B (for the first time in the entire piece; see bar 71), which might sound something like a ‘home’ key to many in its finality—almost as if returning, and thus approaching a ‘cadential’ point. This meshing of ‘tonal’ objects eliding within ‘atonal’ arrangements creates a composite and plural language, and negotiating these intersections has become an increasingly salient aspect of my aesthetic approach.

In *October Tune*, with melody and shape being my starting point, I wanted to question how engaging with linear material in different fashions could offer ways into composing that I do not always immediately consider. Being quite aware of a more habitual entry point of mine often stemming from harmonic behaviour, I benefitted from the experience here of instead allowing the harmony grow out of the melody: developing chords, sonorities, and textures from the intervals and melodic shapes. There were also many rhythmic elements to expand on right from the beginning due to my initial melody being written in the way it was—and in parallel with my approach to harmonic growth—which also encouraged the metric elements to develop in the form of counter rhythms and processes, composite time signatures, and the changing stylistic forms of accompaniment. I see the results of these ideas as growing out of, and informing, each other: for example, the final driving force (marked in the score as ‘lively!’ and ‘muscular’) being a metamorphosis of the unravelling opening (marked ‘fragmented’, ‘calm’, and ‘bell-like’). Or, the nebulous flow of material in the ‘Retracted’ section (marked ‘emerging’, ‘glassy, still’, and ‘glistening’) providing a moment of repose in juxtaposition to the ‘autumnal’ bluster preceding it. This feeling of transition and change is reminiscent of the kind of natural phenomena I was inspired by when beginning the piece, and in a similar way to in *Passage* discussed in Chapter 4, is reflected in these hybrid approaches to forming my musical language. Perhaps in *October Tune*, these elements could be pushed even further still, with there potentially being room for a larger expansion between the middle and final section, differentiating the shapes on a larger scale and in a more explicit way.

On a textural level, my approach to the use of shape and line in *October Tune* bears some similitude to some of the styles of Messiaen. For example, in his *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* (1940), there are stark contrasts between each movement, and the respective use of shape within each one—whilst

being derived from similar primary components—creates vibrant resultant textures. In terms of the foreground and background working in different simultaneous layers of temporal rates (hybrids), the texture in *October Tune* below...

The musical score for Figure 5.16 shows measures 18-19. The instruments are Piccolo, Bass Clarinet, Glockenspiel, Piano, Violin, and Cello. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 5/4. The score features complex rhythmic patterns with various groupings (trios, quintos) and different temporal rates across the instruments, creating a layered texture.

Figure 5.16. (B. 18-19: different layered temporal rates)

...is in some way inspired by the techniques and devices in the Messiaen, and parallels can be seen between this texture and the opening atmosphere in the first movement of the Messiaen, '*Liturgie de cristal*', which incidentally is also inspired by the atmosphere of nature¹¹⁹. Here, Messiaen achieves his texture by the parts being separated into different cycles: a 5-note melody over 15 rhythmic values in the cello; a 29-chord progression over 17 rhythmic values in the piano (both being isorhythms); and the violin and clarinet adopting a more fragmented quality:

¹¹⁹ Messiaen writes of the first movement: 'Between three and four in the morning, the awakening of birds: a solo blackbird or nightingale improvises, surrounded by a shimmer of sound, by a halo of trills lost very high in the trees.' Quote from: Messiaen, O. (1942) 'Preface' to score of *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, i.



Figure 5.17. (Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, Mov. I:
b. 4-6: layering of different temporal materials)¹²⁰

Such considerations to texture and surface link back to the introduction of this chapter, and my wider examination of bringing plural ideas together within the same piece. In *A Dancer Ready to Dance*, *the Right Foot Forward*, and *October Tune*, I enhanced both my technical and poetic methods of plurality with the various approaches to hybridity and layering examined over the course of this chapter. These approaches also enriched my broader practice of embracing different strands of tonalities alongside multiple sources from inside and outside of music, with the development of my own style being a natural outgrowth of them. In view of form, these plural methods also had a bearing on my approach to structure, with the combination of objects generating blocks, layers, and composites that resulted in episodes and sections combining to form whole works. These works helped me to clarify my aesthetic and technical ideas on different expressive levels, and in Chapter 6, my musical characters, moods, and identities are put under the microscope in respect to the defining of my wider musical languages.

¹²⁰ Messiaen, O. (1940) *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, p. 27.

Chapter 6 – Style: Character; Mood; Identity: *For Cello, Three Movements, April Tune*

I began Chapter 4 with some remarks made by Schoenberg in his *Fundamentals of Musical Composition*, concerned with one's capacity for forming emotional connections to music. He titles this section of his book 'Character and Mood', and makes some further observations that offer a useful starting point for the topics being discussed in this chapter:

'There also exist a great variety of 'characteristic pieces' expressing every conceivable mood. There are *Nocturnes*, *Ballades*, *Funeral Marches*, *Romances*, *Scenes from Childhood*, *Flower Pieces*, *Novelettes*, etc., by Chopin and Schumann. There are Beethoven's *Eroica* and *Pastorale* Symphonies; Berlioz's *Roman Carnival*; Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*; Strauss's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*; Debussy's *La Mer*; Sibelius's *Swan of Tuonela*; and a multitude of others.'

'The term *character*, applied to music, refers not only to the emotion which the piece should produce and the mood in which it was composed, but also the manner in which it must be played. It is fallacious to think that the tempo indications determine character. In classical music, at least, this is not true. There is not one adagio character, but hundreds; not one scherzo character, but thousands.'

'In composing even the smallest exercises, the student should never fail to keep in mind a special character. A poem, a story, a play or a moving picture may provide the stimulus to express definite moods.'¹²¹

A commonality that can be seen running throughout all my portfolio works is an interest in creating contrasting characters and moods that can be juxtaposed, metamorphosed, and hybridised in some of the different ways indicated thus far. In order to create such contrasts, my engagement of stylistic plurality, and embracement of diverse source materials—both from inside and outside of music—has the intention of forming musical works with different identities. For me, having various stimuli to 'express definite moods', and the manner in which different idioms can be in interplay with one another are closely related, and Schoenberg's 'hundreds' and 'thousands' of potential characters being within the same tempi demonstrates this. The character of a funeral march, a nocturne, or a humoresque is found in its tonality, style, rhythm, and form, and for me the conscious mixture of these languages provides an exciting way of creating musical drama. Chopin's *Piano Sonata No. 2*, for example, provides a clear example of this idea, with its four movements containing a wide array of musical characters and styles as well as allusions to Bach and Beethoven. The famous *Marche funèbre* movement alone displays huge contrasts, described by Ewelina Boczkowska as 'a stark juxtaposition of funeral march and pastoral trio'.¹²²

¹²¹ Schoenberg, A. (1970) pp. 93-5.

¹²² Boczkowska, E. (2012) p. 217.

A good example of a relatively extreme use of plurality in style and character can be found in Peter Maxwell Davies's monodrama *Eight Songs For a Mad King* (1969), which sets a text extended from King George III's writings during dementia. The baritone sings in a huge array of stylistic and extended contemporary vocal techniques, with the ensemble echoing the King's disturbing mental descent into confusion and insanity. Seemingly anachronistic juxtapositions of styles and tonalities are heard, with sources and references (described by Maxwell Davies) ranging 'from Handel to Birtwistle', and 'the effect being schizophrenic'.¹²³ In the fifth song, sections from an 18th century styled suite are intermittently weaved between wild and aggressive modernist outbursts, and at times even become layered simultaneously to heighten the drama. In Figure 6.1 below, a Handelian rondino can be heard beneath harsh and crazed expressions of grief, marked in the score to 'ululate, like a dog'—these materials evoking an identity of insanity, and perhaps of the King's inner mood:



Figure 6.1. (Maxwell Davies's *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, from Song V, mark 'T' in the score)¹²⁴

In my works, I handle my approach to characters, moods, and styles at various levels of transparency, extending from the explicit and discernable to the more ambiguous and unfamiliar. This spectrum is important to my aesthetic, and the extent to which a certain style or particular fabric is exploited or alluded to is directly related to how I construct such characteristics in the first place, and how I intend to convey expressivity. In my portfolio, this spectrum ranges from: identities that develop out of a response to an idiom or source with a pre-existent nature to work with, to those that are shaped from raw musical material. For example, in my piano piece *Polly*, or the string quartet *All Things*, the intertextual nature of my approach informed the character and style of the music; which can be seen, for example in *Polly* with my use of the term 'Mischievous', and the layered right and left hand

¹²³ Maxwell Davies, P. (1971) *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, programme notes.

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

identities. In works formed more organically and out of raw material, the musical language is formed out of the expressive needs of my poetic intentions: for example, with the treatment of melody, tonality, and texture in *October Tune* to create certain moods; or with my specific renderings of Virginia Woolf's imagery and landscape in *Passage* (light, birds, flowers, and so on). In *Earthly Delights*, one can find a mixture of characters and moods as I sought to express musically the multifaceted identities found in grotesque artworks, and the sudden stylistic changes helped underpin and illuminate this. It is perhaps clear then that my use of expressive markings and performance directions within a score is also a significant and meaningful part of my method, and this descriptive quality of my music is at the forefront of my mind during the whole compositional process.

The following concluding works being looked at in this chapter: *for Cello* (for solo cello), *Three Movements* (for chamber ensemble), and *April Tune* (for solo piano), are chosen here for two reasons. Firstly, they were written with attention to the aforementioned considerations surrounding 'character; identity; and mood' through my construction of musical material, and secondly, they have associated stylistic features pertaining to this that are idiosyncratic to the conditions of each piece individually and in relation to their time of composition.

For Cello

In light of my discussions thus far encompassing frequent reference to 'style', 'contrast', and 'juxtaposition', *For Cello* focuses its attention on a dialogue between two principal and distinct musical characters: 1) 'Spirited; dancing', and 2) 'Supple; intimate', much like in my piano piece *Foil*. I began with these two tropes, and before writing a single note of music, I drew up a table expanding on them in both technical (first four rows) and expressive (mood; identity: bottom row) terms:

<i>For Cello</i>	
Spirited; dancing	Supple; intimate
Tonal, diatonic	Atonal
Scale derived, modal	Interval derived
Metric, rhythmic	Ametric, elastic
With barlines	Without barlines
Lively Playful Driving	Resonant Yearning Reflective

This provided me with a clear-cut set of contrasts, almost in the form of binary opposites, and from this I began constructing my musical material. The two main ‘characters’ here are presented in a similar way to how one might outline characters in literature, and unlike in the more hybridised and layered approaches to material found in many of my other pieces, I wanted to keep them individual and in structural juxtaposition. By pitting them in this way, they are forced into a dialogue with an objective of interrogating each other and heightening their respective qualities as a result. The ‘idiosyncratic’ feature mentioned above, in this piece, is the instrument the work is written for, and the timbral qualities of the cello as a physical entity motivated my approach. This explains the simple title of ‘*For Cello*’: the piece being for the cello, about the cello, and directly inspired by it in toto. The characteristics of the cello therefore informed the characters in the music, with range, tensity, and resonance leading many of my compositional choices—as can be seen in the following analysis.

♩ = c. 168
Spirited; dancing

The musical score consists of three systems of music in treble clef with a 16/8 time signature. The first system includes a tempo marking '♩ = c. 168' and a character marking 'Spirited; dancing'. It begins with a forte 'f' dynamic. The first measure is boxed and labeled 'E major'. The second measure is boxed and labeled 'E minor'. The third measure is boxed and labeled 'F major'. The second system continues the melodic line, with a boxed measure labeled 'Eb major'. The third system includes a 'c. 2'' marking above a measure. It features a boxed measure labeled 'A major' and another boxed measure labeled 'Whole-tone (on D)'. The final measure of the third system is boxed and labeled 'f' (dm), V (A), and I (D). The dynamic 'sfz' is marked at the end of the third system.

Figure 6.2. (Opening 3 systems of *For Cello*: ‘Spirited; dancing’ character)

Derived from the table above, Figure 6.2 shows the lively, playful, and driving opening mood of the piece. This material immediately begins in the top area of the cello’s range, and the use of its high and taut register becomes a reoccurring feature throughout, the purpose of which is to create a tensity in its muscular physicality that results in an effectively vigorous mood. For many, the cello’s timbral identity is often associated with its rich lower tessitura, and so by beginning with this immediate and penetrating spirit, both performer and listener are plunged into an energetic world. The tonality here

is based around a mixture of modes, which become subject to a variety of shifts and enharmonic alterations as the music progresses and returns. This situation gives a familiarity of diatonicism, but with a capricious disposition. For example (see red boxes in Figure 6.2), the first two bars suggest a key of E major, bars 3 & 4 E minor, and by bar 7 a sudden shift to an F major territory. By the 5/16 bar in the second system, we suddenly reach E \flat major, at the 10/16 bar, a hint of A major, and then at rehearsal mark 1, a brief suggestion of i-V-I (dm-A-D), that then gets swept away further into a whole-tone territory. The use of mostly major hues here is to amplify the ‘lively’ and ‘playful’ mood, and additionally to set it apart (in preparation) from the later mood of the second, more atonal and yearning character. The timed silences (see c.2” in Figure 6.2) contribute a different type of tension, with the visual element of the cellist suddenly pausing mid phrase adding a rigidity that is in direct contrast in tone with the second character.

This capriciousness is likewise found in the irregular rhythmic language, which is also shifting, with constantly moving downbeats and a variety of articulation markings creating a ‘driving’ force that feels tireless and propelling. The use of rhythm here was born out of some studies of mine concerning Bulgarian and Argentine asymmetric rhythmic groupings, such as found in the styles of Bartók and Ginastera respectively, and I wanted to encapsulate some of the jagged jiggling found in their music. I also found the connections this music has with folk traditions to contribute an additional quality, with it expressing an inherent ‘dancing’ and ‘spirited’ nature. Figure 6.3 below shows an example taken from the first movement of Ginastera’s second piano sonata, in which one can see parallels with my own asymmetric approach.



Figure 6.3. (Ginastera’s *Piano Sonata No. 2*, Op. 53 mov. I, first system of page 6: asymmetric/Argentine rhythms; 3+3 | 3+2 | 3+2+3 | 3+2+3)¹²⁵

The various musical components add up to create my overall ‘spirited; dancing’ character, and over the course of the first section of the piece (up to rehearsal mark 6), this character continues to twist and turn, getting even higher in range, reaching a top D \sharp , and alongside this the timed silences

¹²⁵ Ginastera, A (1995) *Sonata No. 2 for Piano*, Op. 53, first system of p. 6.

become more irregular (4", 1", 5", 3"). When the 'supple; intimate' material enters it is, in the words of Boczkowska, in 'stark juxtaposition':

Figure 6.4. (From the second page of *For Cello*: first statement of 'Supple; intimate' character)

At rehearsal mark 6, without even hearing the music, the change of character is obvious by simply looking at the score. The short and playful accented notes are replaced with long and stately ones, with the ability now for the cello to exhibit its singing quality through rich vibrato and more generous phrasing arcs. The loss of bar lines move the music away from the metric element to allow much more elasticated rubato playing, and as such generates a reflective character that no longer has the same desire to propel and push, but instead to resonate and deliberate. As in the table in the introduction to this piece, the tonality is now of an atonal hue, and I derived the melodic line out of intervals instead of modes. In the example above (Figure 6.4; see red boxes), eleven different intervals have been used within the space of only two systems, which leaves the music without any form of tonal centricity, and as a result creates an altogether different mood than what was heard before it. This continues throughout, although in order to depict a sense of 'yearning', I introduce a dissonance—>consonance resolution in the form of a major 7th resolving down to a major 6th (the first instance of this can be seen shortly after rehearsal mark 7 in the score) which comes back frequently, although in the same vein as the overall character, moves around in pitch and avoids any tangible tonal center. The fluid and singing quality of this material can be found in countless works for the cello, and I wanted to celebrate this quality whilst at the same time interposing it between the more driven material. This aesthetic bears a resemblance in some way to the extremities in mood often found in the stylistic characters of György Kurtág's world. Whilst I was spending time during

the pre-composition process of *For Cello* listening and absorbing previous solo cello repertoire, I was struck by the idiomatic use of the instrument in Kurtág's *Az Hit* (1998) and its expressive space¹²⁶, which was originally written for soprano (perhaps demonstrating the suitability of the cello's singing quality for this purpose), and this exerted an influence on me when I approached my 'supple; intimate' material.

Amid all the strong contrasts discussed thus far between my two musical characters in *For Cello*, there are nonetheless some similarities too, which help with adding a subtle coherence between the characters. The use of an extreme range, from the very bottom to the electric heights of the top, is explored within both characters, and the timbral tensivity alongside the resonant qualities of the cello are expressed in different lights as a result. Another similarity here is the relationship between note values and asymmetrical phrases, with the slower intimate material sharing similar contours that are derived from the 'Bulgarian/Argentine' stylistic starting point in the opening; for example, by often grouping in irregular sequences of twos and threes and often altered by the use of triplets and quintuplets. Nonetheless, this derivation is perhaps more of a masked one, as the infusion of it into the supple and flexible context expresses a quite different poetic result from the Ginastera example. Perhaps a final connection between the two characters could be found in the use of enharmonic shifting, which can be seen in the comparison below:



Figure 6.5. (Shortly before rehearsal mark 3 [top] & r.m. 10 [bottom])—red lines show enharmonic shifts: in top line A# becomes B \flat , D# becomes E \flat , and G# becomes A \flat ; and in bottom line, B \flat becomes A#, F# becomes G \flat , and A# becomes B \flat again)

¹²⁶ Kurtág's expressive marking at the beginning of the score reads 'Parlando, rubato, con slancio, molto passionato: *cantabile*', a similar characterization to my material. See: Kurtág, G. (2007) *Az hit*.

Over the course of the piece in general, the two characters become juxtaposed in different proportions, and in a similar way to in *Foil* looked at back in Chapter 2, function as opposing forces ('solidity vs pliancy') that switch and interject in an unpredictable manner. An example of this can be seen between rehearsal marks 10 and 11 in the score of *For Cello*, where the dancing material cuts out below the long double stop marked 'sub. *mp*', with a tonally shifted¹²⁷ allusion to the i-V-I mentioned earlier (however this time, i-V-IV instead; 'cm-G-F') that only lasts for a short two systems before returning to the supple material. At rehearsal mark 14, the opening gesture begins a false recapitulation (the exact same notes and rhythms as in the first bar, one octave lower) before again being taken in a different direction, however this time towards what could be seen as a third and more 'fervent' character (see rehearsal mark 15). This materialises as the piece draws onwards into an unceasing and resonant crest, in a somewhat virtuosic fashion. As I was writing the piece, and in particular when approaching the more rhapsodic elements, I wanted to continue to explore different characteristics that the cello itself offers, and found certain composers' styles and practices to soloistic writing for the instrument to be contributive in guiding some of my gestural and expressive choices. Having not written for solo cello before, notable works worthy of a mention here include: Henze's *Serenade* (1949), Ligeti's *Sonata for Solo Cello* (1948/53), Britten's *Cello Suite No. 3, Op. 87* (1971), and Saariaho's *Sept Papillons* (2000), of which the example in figures 6.6 and 6.7 below give a good instance for comparison.

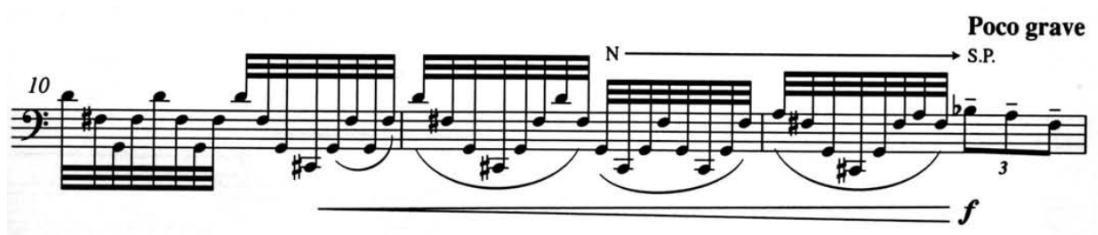


Figure 6.6. (Saariaho's *Sept Papillons*, VII, b. 10-12: long and fast gestures; 'norm.' moving to 'sul pont.')¹²⁸

¹²⁷ The interjection at rehearsal mark 11 is taken from the figure at rehearsal mark 1, however shifted down a tone (now beginning on E \flat) creating a new and brief tonal center (of C), and instead of returning to 'I', moves in a different direction (to F major; 'IV').

¹²⁸ Saariaho, K. (2000) *Sept Papillons*, p. 8.

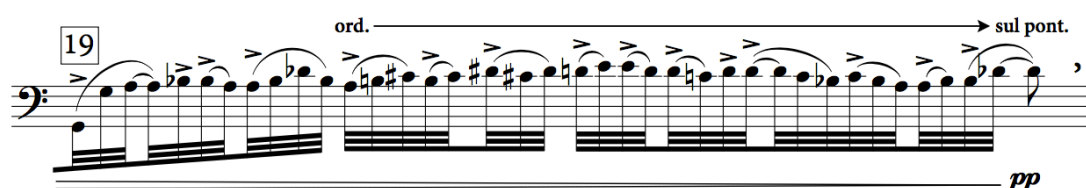


Figure 6.7. (Rehearsal mark 19 from *For Cello*: long and fast gestures; ‘ord.’ moving to ‘sul pont.’)

The expressive outcome and identity of this piece slots well into my overarching aesthetic, as within it I explored both an initial reaction to my defined characters through raw musical material and distinct expressive contrasts, as well as saluting to new and old stylistic dialogues in relation to the cello’s individual attributes. The poetic nature of this piece, and perhaps its overall mood is one of being ‘in two minds’—the rigid against the flexible, the driven against the reflective—and from two minds to three minds, my chamber work *Three Movements* extends on some of these approaches, but through the use of movement form. As one of my final portfolio pieces, the following discussion provides a good case study for comparison into how my techniques in tonality, source, and style, and the pluralism of them matured and refined over the course of my investigation. *Three Movements* was written for a Birmingham Contemporary Music Group workshop, and concerned itself with the use of different and developing tonal idioms concentrated as single movements within a larger work. It revisits many of the ideas, methods, and poetic intentions already covered during this dissertation, but my objective here was to infuse these elements and develop them into my own overall style. Therefore, tonalities, sources, styles, characters, moods, persuasions, and so on, were organically realised without the need for any formal labelling, and my deeper aesthetic and artistic awareness was crystalised through the process as a result.

***Three Movements*; for chamber ensemble**

In this 10-minute piece for chamber ensemble, I focussed on articulating my materials in a honed and direct way by creating distinctly contrasting characters that sit side by side almost as three short autonomous pieces coming together to form a larger body. They form three contrasting expressions, each taking a different focus of my practice as a way of exploring plural poetic distinctions and dialogues. I embraced the movement between idioms that, whilst having different global designs, also share certain underlying functions, with the titles of the movements informing my approach to the shaping of this:

I. JAUNTY, QUEER
 II. SLOW, SEARCHING
 III. PULSATING, LILTING

Jaunty, Queer, uses combinations of irregular rhythmic contours that have a jiggling motion, which never settle tonally and have a playful, somewhat impulsive character. This is formed from a three-part polyphonic texture (see Figure 6.8) that—although being made up of diatonic intervals that have traditional tension and release moment-to-moment gestures—moves around so much that any form of tonal centre is immediately lost through the constantly shifting state of changing intervals and enharmonic alterations¹²⁹. This is similar to the device used in *For Cello* exemplified earlier in this chapter.



Figure 6.8. (Reduction of alto flute, viola, & bass clarinet, b. 31-36)

I conceived the moment-to-moment movement of these harmonies in a way akin to the ‘linear harmony’ technique discussed back in Chapter 2, and creating this non-functional direction from one object to the next, alongside the irregular rhythmic language, helped to create the particular mood of the overall movement (jaunty, queer). The rhythmic irregularity here came organically alongside the harmonic movement, and also in consideration to Kondō’s ‘listening experience’, with it being informed by the various levels of dissonance and having almost illusory cadential points. For example, in the third bar of the above example (bar 33), the finality achieved with the even crotchets (in 2/4) combined with the contrapuntal movement and the falling bass and rising treble leading into bar 34 suggests a cadential point, or at least a feeling of something coming together. However, the harmony and rhythm is quickly swept onwards into different tonal areas, without one being able to predict where and when.

¹²⁹ ‘Enharmonic alterations’—see for example in Figure 6.8: Viola Bb in b. 31(leading to C) becomes A# in b. 32 (leading to B#).

Apart from the use of three harmonically static interruptions that are studded throughout the movement (creating a larger structural element), the irregular and impulsive figures continue to twist and turn right through to the end, where the ‘jaunt’ cuts off without any form of functional cadence or natural conclusion. My use of the trio also imparts to some extent the style of an off-kilter and lively folk identity, that moves in a ‘queer’ and unsettled way, as though it could carry on forever. The combination of a series of constantly changing roots, irregular rhythmic activity, and an almost impish spirit, results in a state of uncertainty, and the movement’s short and somewhat flamboyant nature allows room for the following movements to contrast in their identities.

In Movement II, ‘*Slow, Searching*’, my aim was therefore to achieve a more restrained response with a pared-down surface texture, whilst employing a similar harmonic technique as in the first movement in order to give a reflective quality. This took the form of one long linear melody, which is suspended in its lack of melodic centricity, however it is now harmonised by being layered above very long notes in the bass—acting as drones. The rhythmic language here is also irregular, but unlike in the first movement, behaves in a more nebulous way. To contrast with it, and to express the ‘searching’ mood of this sound-world, the main melodic line, which runs through the violin part, contains long expansive phrases unconstrained from any rigid phrase structures, and uses a mixture of tuplet groupings that gives it a constantly flowing contour, always present and always curving:

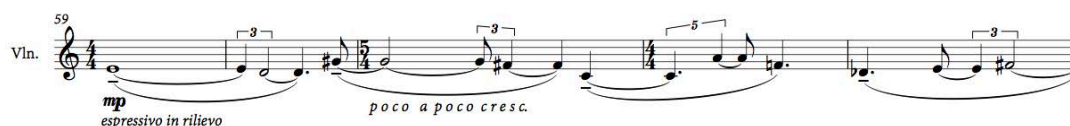


Figure 6.9. (B. 59-63: Broad, searching violin line, which is coloured by the other instruments and remains present throughout the entire movement)

The movement is split into six unequal sections, each with a different single bass note, effectively forming six slowly changing tonal centres; something that is absent in Movement I. To play with the level of familiarity here, each statement begins on a major third, which hints at a comfortable and consonant tonality, but one that gets swiftly taken off into a different direction each time. The recurrence of the major third consonance clearly provides a powerful relationship to functional tonality here, but in a similar way as found in many of my other works, it moves around without being governed by any particular overall ‘progression’ (see Figure 6.10 below for a pitch reduction of the entire movement).

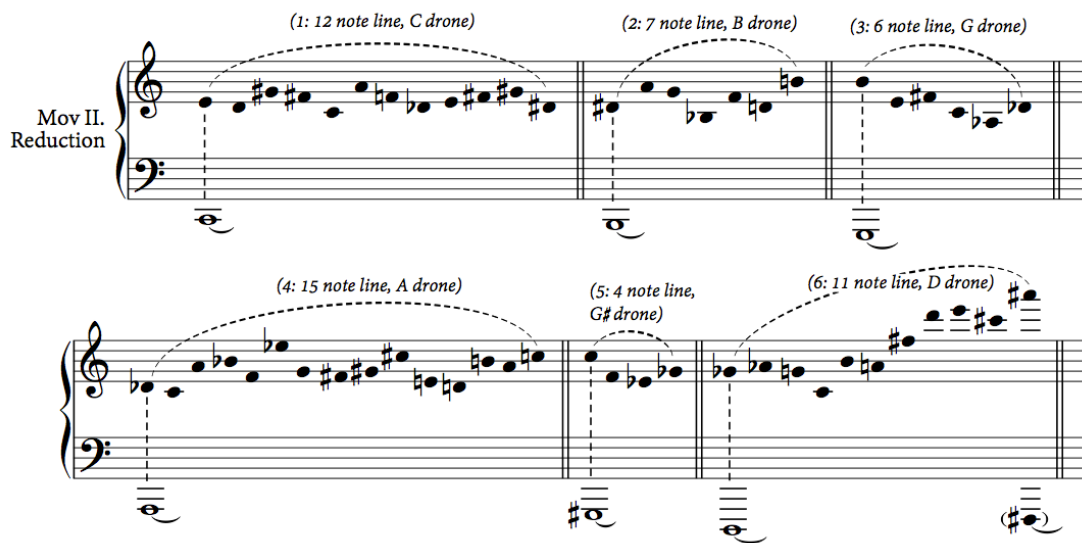


Figure 6.10. (Red. of second movement: six unequal sections, each beginning on major 3rds)

The musical narrative here is concerned with the passing of one sonority to the next, within a larger overall trajectory that is akin to a stream of consciousness style, generated out of a negotiation between my initial guiding ear's intuition, and then the crafting and refining that ensues. Composer Kamran Ince shares a similar outlook to mine here, reflecting that his 'sonorities exist for themselves; there is no need to move to the "next" area or to resolve. The choices I make as to where I take them defines my language - to another tonal sonority at a different pitch level, to an atonal sonority, etc. Having freed tonal sonorities I feel I can truly emancipate the atonal sonorities and move between these two types'¹³⁰. This 'moving between two types' is a central part of my overarching aesthetic in this work and many others, and in this movement, gives it its expressive tone, with its relatively long length and expansive structure adding to this as a proportional contrast.

The third movement, '*Pulsating, Lilting*', combines certain aspects discussed in the first two movements and again takes them in a different direction and to a different territory, proceeding as perhaps the most 'tonal sounding' of the set. Stylistically, the driving rhythmic and intervallic language took its starting point from a more minimalist aesthetic¹³¹, offset against what has come before it, now having more noticeable structural signposts. As in Movement I, the harmonic roots move around often, winding and shifting in different directions again. This also takes inspiration

¹³⁰ Ince, K. (1992) p. 49.

¹³¹ For example, see similarities between the rhythmic drive in '*Pulsating, Lilting*' and the well-known riffs and grooves of Steve Reich and Philip Glass.

from the parallel movement of major thirds as in Movement II—instead now built on stacked 5ths—sometimes with major hues, sometimes minor, sometimes both. The thicker overall vertical textures in this movement add warmth, whilst the layering of different rhythmic rates, and abrupt metric modulations¹³², create fluctuating proportions as well as fluctuating textures¹³³ that have an underlying relationship with the first two movements.



Figure 6.11. (Harmonic reduction of violin, viola, and cello, b. 1-114)

By using a continuous pulsing texture and a palpitating energy to go with it, there becomes an allusion to a semi-recognisable sound-world of a rhythmically driven, almost ostinato-like identity, which has perceivable historical links and shared stylistic influences ranging from baroque to cinema music. However, the customary techniques often found in these stylistics—such as functional harmonic progressions, the return to a home key, orderly sequences, and uniform regularities—have been reframed and distorted. Instead, I implement the aforementioned methods of tonal ambiguity and use tripping rhythmic figures as a way of crossbreeding my practices and altering these familiar sound-worlds. Therefore, instability can come out of stability, and vice versa, and finding my own personal balance between the tangible and the ambiguous, continues to be a salient aspect of my overall approach—my intentions aligning here with Jonathan Harvey:

There must be a clear statement of idea and intriguing dissolution of the ideas formed. *Statement and ambiguity must both be strong.* All statement, the music is tediously obvious: all ambiguity, the music is irritatingly vague. That's really the essence of the matter'.¹³⁴

The overarching identity of *Three Movements* is thus a plural one. Each movement approaches its inner characters and general moods in different stylistic and aesthetic ways, sharing certain common

¹³² The reduction does not illustrate this, but in the full score, the rhythmic movement shifts between different metric cores, most often between simple and compound time—4/4 into 9/16 etc.—with: (♩ = ♪).

¹³³ Along with the metric shifts, the overall texture concurrently changes (suddenly) between broad and full-bodied (*in the simple*), and delicate and reduced (*in the compound*): the harp takes the rhythmic drive, the strings switch to a lighter accompanying role, and the woodwind contours the harp figures. Towards the end of the piece, these two textures synthesise.

¹³⁴ Harvey, J. (2010) p. 288.

features whilst opposing others, my intention being to explore how these changes might function within the same work. The overall identity of the combined movements is one of changes: three short chapters of distinct moods, with the movement between dissonance and consonance, irregularity and regularity, and dark and light, being weaved throughout its fabric. To bring the discussion of the works in my portfolio to a close, it seems germane for me to finish this dissertation with a closing reflection of the final piece I composed for the portfolio, *April Tune*, from my *Piano Suite III*.

Piano Suite III: *April Tune*; A Postlude

In Chapter 5, I mentioned the autumnal scenario in which *October Tune* was conceived, and how the landscape of the morning stirred a short melody that became the driving force of the entire piece. *April Tune* works as a companion piece to this, and in the same attitude, is wholly derived from a short melodic figure, which can be seen contained in the first bar of Figure 6.12 below. The piece was written both as the closing movement of my *Piano Suite III*, and also as the closing piece to this portfolio, and I therefore wanted it to possess a simplicity and directness in its pervading tone.

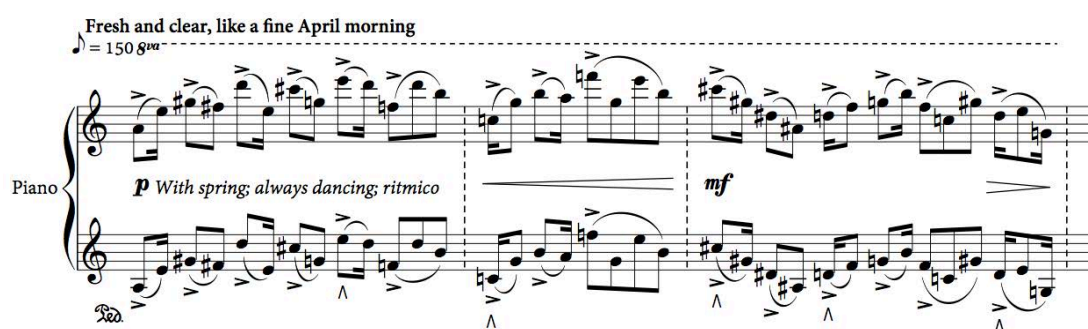


Figure 6.12. (Opening of *April Tune*)

The melody has a skipping character, and one can immediately see similarities in its shape, intervallic nature, and rhythmic language to the initial melody from *October Tune*, as well as the linear characteristics of the ‘Spirited; dancing’ material in *For Cello*. In some of the motivic material in my very first portfolio piece *Flux*, one can also observe a bond with the ‘Effervescent’ and ‘Lilting’ tropes, which can be seen back in Chapter 1, and this creates a form of intertextuality within the development of my works. In *April Tune*, the thirteen notes found in the first bar meander and transpose throughout the piece, and it is constructed solely from quavers, semiquavers, and quaver triplets. I feel this rhythmic restriction promoted the simplicity and directness I was looking for, whilst the twisting and turning of pitch and harmonic colour adds a whimsical atmosphere,

characteristic of my aesthetic identity. The right and left hand of the piano writing is always in unison (two-octaves apart), and I chose to do this to give contrast to the other piano pieces in the suite, and also as I felt this pared-down and simple use of the piano added to its symbolic position as my portfolio's concluding musical statement. I find that having a piano melody set precisely two-octaves apart gives a luminous clarity and vibrancy to a line, and the mood of this piece evidently comes out of the title in this way.

The expressive markings at the beginning of the score continue my approach to defined materials here, perhaps offering the performer extra poetic information that adds to the distinction of character, and expands the musical identity outside of the score itself. I was influenced here to some extent by Erik Satie, whose curious and charismatic directions imbue the composer's personality and identity to his scores, such as '*Comme un rossignol qui aurait mal aux dents*' (like a nightingale with a toothache' (see Figure 6.13), or '*Peu saignant*' (bleeding a little)¹³⁵.



Figure 6.13. (Satie's *Embryons desséchés* (1913): 'like a nightingale with a toothache', p. 18)¹³⁶

My expressive directions 'Fresh and Clear, like a fine April morning' and 'With spring; always dancing; ritmico' (see Figure 6.12 above), are implemented here in my own piece in the same way as Satie, and the nature of April and its bright spring mornings feeds into the identity of my piece. As discussed in earlier chapters, this approach provides a way into the composition—giving me a catalyst for the music I am writing—and this motivates an awareness of its poetic intentions. Although this chapter's focus was on *For Cello*, and *Three Movements*, this concern of mine with regards to 'Character; Mood; Identity' encompasses and has congruity with all of my works, wherein

¹³⁵ '*Peu saignant*' can be found in: Satie, E. (1989) *Croquis et agaceries d'un gros bonhomme en bois* in 'Klavierwerke, Band 2', p. 25.

¹³⁶ Satie, E. (1989) *Embryons desséchés* in 'Klavierwerke, Band 2', p. 18.

their tonalities, concern with source(s), and stylistic tendencies govern my choices in consideration to material. These choices are aimed at celebrating musical relationships, and ultimately embrace plurality as an unbounded approach to my compositional outlook.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this dissertation, I have provided concluding remarks on the nine works comprising my portfolio as and when the topics of the respective chapters came to be addressed. Due to the nature of practice-based research, the inherently sequential route of creating musical works—and then reflecting on them—produces a trajectory of how my artistic awareness has been developed from one piece to the next. This development forms, and has a direct bearing on, the results of my conceptual, aesthetic, and technical approaches, with the purpose of examining how my methods matured over the course of this trajectory.

The principal element within my research—the use of plurality as a method of exploring approaches to: tonality; sources from inside music; sources from outside music; techniques of hybridity and layering; and the defining of musical characters and moods—forms a salient feature of how I negotiate my (continuing) stylistic voice. From the initial starting points in *Flux*, to the final works discussed in Chapter 6, my overarching motivation has manifested itself in the process of distilling my craft through the combination of distinct materials from varied and cross-historical origins. Whilst the works comprising my portfolio contain their own individual approaches to the elements mentioned above, my stylistic voice could also be seen as a culmination of these elements, and the ways in which my works inform one another brings new possibilities for future works, by ripple effect. At the heart of this research, my intention has been to contribute my personal practice of adopting and nurturing plural materials as a way of creating expressive compositions, and thus situating my portfolio within the wider field of current as well as historical compositional practices and perspectives.

Through the examination of works that engage with stylistic heterogeneity as a way of nurturing expressivity, this research illustrates how composers subsuming external source materials into their creative practice can engage with a wider plurality of musical fabrics that are not restricted to rigid aesthetic forms (e.g., entire pieces being tonal *or* atonal). This landscape in which the old and new; the dark and the light; the complex and simple, and so on, can be in hybrid dialogues with one another—whether that be in juxtaposition, elision, or layers—is a significant feature found in many

works of today's 'contemporary classical' composers. As a unifying objective, my project produces new models of interpreting how these engagements are manifested in contemporary classical musical works that explore pluralist approaches, and contributes new techniques for analysing and theorising such works.

The broader contribution of this research project contends that a conscious engagement with diverse materials can result in an expanded exploration of conceptual, aesthetic, and technical palettes by composers today. The noticeable tendency of composers writing music that is engaged with history—and being conscious of it as an approach—has become increasingly prevalent over recent decades. As we move further into the 21st century, this tendency of embracement rather than rejection is becoming more recognised, and consequently hierarchies (and perceptions of them) are being challenged in creative and open ways. Indeed, for many in the arts and beyond, a pluralist approach brings to the fore many communicative qualities and expressive potentials, and importantly promotes—to return to the words of Diana L. Eck—'*the energetic engagement with diversity*', the '*active seeking of understanding across lines of difference*', and ultimately fosters musical languages that are '*based on dialogue*'¹³⁷.

By integrating research methodologies, this project was also aimed at bringing the discourse between theory and practice in closer relation, whereby they enhance—rather than obstruct—each other. The consequent production of knowledge-through-practice thus augments emerging creative insights and their wider understanding(s). The outcome of my research pushes forward the expansion of contemporary compositional practices beyond certain enduring romantic models of the artist as the sole-author, with the prospect of assumed and historically distinct stylistic boundaries becoming more permeable. Additionally, the wider awareness of incorporating practice-related research methodologies within academia is an expanding field, and I hope the results of this project, both in its practical and academic application, strengthens the value and validity of this field moving forward.

During my three-year research period, in addition to the works presented in the accompanying portfolio, I developed an interest in composing graphic scores that can be performed by non-musicians. These works were published in interdisciplinary journals aimed at a wide audience, and

¹³⁷ Eck, D. (2006).

these endeavours required a pluralist approach in order to break down barriers that might be currently stopping audiences from being able to engage with contemporary art forms¹³⁸. There are consequently various aspects of my wider research area that I now wish to further, and continuing to embrace the conscious synthesis of diverse fabrics and techniques will be central to my upcoming work and its outlook. Moving onward from this, I hope to address some of the wider limitations of the research undertaken in this thesis, notably: the situation of electroacoustic music within these compositional practices; how alternative forms of musical notation explore diverse approaches to such practices; the role of improvisation in relation to pluralism; and how popular- and ethno-musics and cultures can potentially be further embraced stylistically within the field of contemporary classical concert mediums.

To explore the above considerations, I now intend to develop the findings of this thesis into further academic study investigating how composing with plural approaches to tonality, source, and style can be pushed into more experimental interdisciplinary territories. Through interdisciplinarity and collaboration, I now wish to compare how compositional approaches differ when expressing—in sound and music—different branches of knowledge, and how they yield progressive stylistic identities. Further to the above, I intend to establish whether integrated creative efforts can result in enhanced possibilities and outlooks, by broadening the current scope of 'interdisciplinarity' to encompass more diverse instances where artists and researchers from inside and outside of music can be brought together. The first application of this is already underway, with a year-long Royal Philharmonic Society apprenticeship with the Wigmore Hall that will include collaborative and interdisciplinary projects, and culminate in a commission for a new string quartet première.

¹³⁸ The two published graphic scores were both quite different in their aesthetic nature—one of Shakespeare, and one of popular music, see: Fardon, D. (2016) 'When icicles hang by the wall', in *Birmingham Journal of Literature and Language (Ad Alta)*; and: Fardon, D. (2017) 'SONG-PEACE-WAR-SINS-INDUSTRY-DISCONTENT-FAME-OBSCURITY', in *Riffs: Experimental Writing on Popular Music*.

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AUDIO RECORDINGS

Audio CD/USB Flash Drive track listing with performers & location:

1) Flux

Orchestra – London Symphony Orchestra, LSO St Luke's, London.

2) Piano Suite III: I. Prelude: Morceau

Solo Piano – George Fu, The Playground Theatre, London.

3) Piano Suite III: II. Roots

Solo Piano – George Fu, The Playground Theatre, London.

4) Piano Suite III: III. Foil

Solo Piano – Benjamin Powell, St Michael's, Manchester.

5) Piano Suite III: IV. Little Steps

Solo Piano – George Fu, The Playground Theatre, London.

6) Piano Suite III: V. Passage

Solo Piano – Daniel Fardon, the DOME, University of Birmingham.

7) Piano Suite III: VI. Polly

Solo Piano – George Fu, The Playground Theatre, London.

8) Piano Suite III: VII. Saudade

Solo Piano – William Howard, Hoxton Hall, London.

9) Piano Suite III: VIII. April Tune

Solo Piano – George Fu, The Playground Theatre, London.

10) All Things

String Quartet – Ligeti Quartet, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham.

11) Earthly Delights

Chamber Ensemble – BCMG, the DOME, University of Birmingham.

12) A Dancer Ready to Dance, the Right Foot Forward

Sinfonietta – NME, The Elgar Concert Hall, University of Birmingham.

13) October Tune

Chamber Ensemble – LSO Chamber Ensemble, LSO St Luke's, London.

14) Three Movements

Chamber Ensemble – BCMG, the CBSO Centre, Birmingham.