Ben Hanlon

Connections:

Original Compositions

with

Detailed Analytical Commentary

Volume 1 of 3

Submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Music)

Waterford Institute of Technology

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Abstract

The creative spirit is always alive in the human heart. It constantly seeks to renew itself by finding different and original ways to express the fundamental things which paradoxically appear to remain the same. This research seeks to connect with those fundamentals: the mystery of the past and our sense of belonging to a history, collaboration with others, the excitement, energy and inspiration brought about by experiencing new things, new music. A significant body of compositions has been produced for a range of performing groups comprising:

1. *O Frondens Virga* for SATB choir
2. *Compline* a fantasia for orchestra
3. *Summer Suite* for oboe and bass Clarinet
4. *Children of the Monsoon* for mixed instrumental ensemble and soprano
5. *Tall Ships Suite* for traditional group and string quartet
6. *One of the houses James Joyce lived in. Once*
   for soprano, alto, tenor, baritone, bass and clarinet in Bflat
7. *Bust* a short opera in two acts
8. *3 Songs for Baritone and Piano*[1]

It is hoped that this work will not only be of the highest standard but will demonstrate the acquisition of a compositional style that is uniquely personal and that it will make a significant and original contribution to the advancement of new music.

[1] Volume 1 contains detailed commentary on all works in chronological order. Volume 2 contains seven of the eight scores, number 7, *Bust*, exists as a separate volume (Volume 3).

Acknowledgements

Dr. Marian Ingoldsby has been my supervisor for the last three years of this research. It would be impossible to thank her adequately for her shrewd musical judgement, insight and guidance, her practical support and great generosity and of course, her infinite patience.

I would also like to thank Dr. Eric Sweeney who was my supervisor for the first two years of this research for his wise advice, encouragement and excellent musical mentoring,

Thanks too is due to all members of staff of the Creative and Performing Arts Department, Waterford Institute of technology, for their help and support.

Introduction

The principal aims of this research are: to write a substantial body of high quality works which will be at the forefront of new music today; to develop compositions which display an understanding of, and connection with, the world in which they are produced; to communicate in a detailed and insightful commentary, the processes, approaches and rationale employed in the compositions.

The research will demonstrate the key skills and techniques associated with contemporary music composition. Building on a Master in Arts (MA) degree completed in 2008, the composer will produce a portfolio of contrasting, large-scale works in which he will seek to define his own unique and original approach to music composition. The research will therefore increase the scope of his work and bring greater clarity to a style that is continually evolving.

A key objective of the research is the achievement of interconnectedness. It seeks to connect with other composers at a national and international level, as a means of being at the forefront of recent developments, learning from the work of others and finding opportunities to have compositions performed. A practical objective is to attend courses or conferences when possible and to seek travel grants from the Arts Council of Ireland for this purpose. A number of international courses have been selected which offer a range of musical opportunities. These will be referred to in the course of the commentary.

New music covers a very diverse range of styles and approaches. Minimalism, renewed tonality, spectral music, serialism, electronic music, anti-modern, avant-garde, are just a few of the terms used to describe contemporary composition. While all composers ultimately must find their own way and develop their own style, it is also necessary to conduct a thorough examination of, and reflection on, the wider music tradition by being open to all forms and aspects of contemporary music. The study encourages the composer to take a broad view by exploring experimental music that may initially appear strange or uncomfortable.

Forging links with earlier musical traditions such as the music practices of the middle ages, Irish traditional music and ethnic folk music is also an objective of this research. While plainsong is often considered as the basis of western art music from the middle ages, there is a question about its relevance in the twenty first century. It is intended that this question will be explored in one of the compositions. Nowadays traditional Irish music is appreciated and sought after both in Ireland and internationally. However, while traditional groups are very experienced in the fusing of their music with popular and ethnic styles, little has been written to bring traditional groups into collaboration with new music. The research will focus on both the music and the musicians (groups as distinct from solo performers), to see how contemporary processes might be applied. The results of this study will be beneficial to performers of both traditional and new music.

The research will also facilitate collaborations with key groups such as performers and audiences. Two-way communication between performer(s) and composer is vital if both are to be satisfied with the performance outcome. The composition process will therefore involve seeking technical and compositional advice from the intended performers. Equally, it is important to invite audience reaction, since composition does not take place in a vacuum. Having said that, a composition needs to be sufficiently well thought-out and the composer needs to have confidence and belief in the work and in the various connections that are being created..

Social awareness and responsiveness to current issues which are of concern to people, is a further key objective. Music can be a powerful tool in the process of reflection. One need only watch a film to see how the message is not only reinforced but is sometimes hugely dependent on the music to make its point. Of course, music has its own voice and can speak independently of a programme. In the past a fundamental objective of all art was to uplift and enhance. However, from the early twentieth century expressionism demanded a wider definition whereby art could disturb, upset, even anger those who experienced it. Nowadays, the entire panoply of emotions and life situations are open to musical interpretation and comment, and this is reflected in the portfolio.

The research will provide opportunities to forge links with music organisations at home and abroad which promote new music. Collaborating with the Contemporary

Music Centre (CMC), and the Association of Irish Composers (AIC), creates many links, sharing compositions, concert opportunities and learning new techniques from fellow composers.

Research at this level requires the composition of a number of large-scale works. An extended orchestral work and an opera are planned as a response to this objective. Working on a large canvas requires integrated structural planning in order to develop several different and contrasting elements such as the various scenes which go to make up an opera. At the same time the musical ideas at the heart of different sections or scenes will need to be linked in a coherent manner if an overall unity is to be achieved. A further challenge in the opera will be to let the music tell the story effectively, through a process of character-identification where the audience quickly becomes familiar with various aspects of the character's situation such as their mood and the dilemmas with which they are faced. Credible development of each character by way of their music will also require great skill.

The music composed for this research is for performance. It is not an academic exercise about the possible. While it is a huge challenge and expense to mount performances, they are judged as crucial to the overall outcome of this research. Having the work performed and gaining the reaction and advice of both audience and performers is seen as an absolute necessity if valuable lessons are to be learned and an emerging style is to evolve.

In conclusion, this research has high, yet modest expectations. The works which comprise this portfolio will be original, resulting from a high level of creative endeavour, craftsmanship, skill and collaborative effort, thereby making their own unique contribution to new music.

O Frondens Virga

Introduction

O Frondens Virga was commissioned by New Dublin Voices in 2009 for the Cork International Choral Festival, Fleischmann Competition 2010. This chamber choir comprises thirty five voices and their programmes include music from the medieval to the contemporary. The choir specialises in performing the works of living composers.

The latin text is by Hildegard Von Bingen, the 12th century mystic and botanist[1]. It is entirely in keeping with Von Bingen's intense interest in plants and nature that the opening line of this prayer should compare Jesus to a flowering, noble stem, which 'comes forth like the dawn.' The prayer goes on to call on us to 'rejoice and be glad,' asking the Lord to 'free us from evil ways.'

The powerful imagery was one of the main reasons for the selection of this text. Four images emerge which determine the musical response to the prayer. Firstly, the vivid comparison of the stem emerging like the dawn *'O frondens virga, in tua nobilitate stans sicut aurora procedit.*' (O flowering noble stem, your flower comes forth like the dawn.) There is a sense of mystery and emergence in the opening line, which is replaced in the second line with a mood of happiness and joy, *'Nunc gaude et laetare…*' (Rejoice and be glad and free us…..). The third image *'Atque manum tuam porrige'* (Stretch out your hand) is very tactile, suggesting a number of different musical responses. The final words of the text are a call to God to lift us up. *('Ad erigendum nos'*). For this image the musical ideas revert to those used for *'Nunc gaude et laetare'*.

The strong contrast between these different lines of text offered many opportunities for a variety of textures, tone, speed, dynamics, harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic ideas. To a great extent therefore the text itself suggested the musical ideas and the overall form of the piece.

1. Form

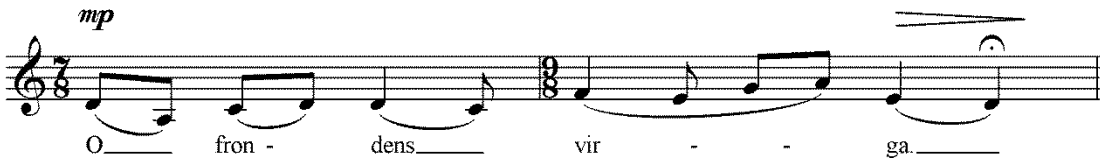
O Frondens Virga *Form Chart*

Bar	Form	Subject Matter	Texture	Pitch	Tempo
1-2	Introduction A	Call to prayer	Monophonic/ Octaves	Dorian mode D	Moderate
3-29	Section 1 B	Flowering	Homophonic/ Clusters	Dm/F/C/ Bflat/ Dflat/D	Slow
30-60	Section 2 C	First Dance	Polyphonic/ Linear	Dorian mode D	Fast
61-77	Section 3 D	Stretch out your hand	Homophonic/ Cluster	Whole Tone	Slow
75-100	Section 4 C1	Last dance	Polyphonic/ Linear	Dorian mode D/ Chromatic	Fast

2. Texture

O Frondens Virga uses three different forms of texture each of which is linked to a specific tempo. The Introduction or Call to prayer, uses a delicate monophony and is taken at a moderate speed. Since the style here is quasi-plainchant, what matters is that the melody expresses itself without either rushing or dragging.

Ex 1 *O Frondens Virga* Introduction bars 1-2



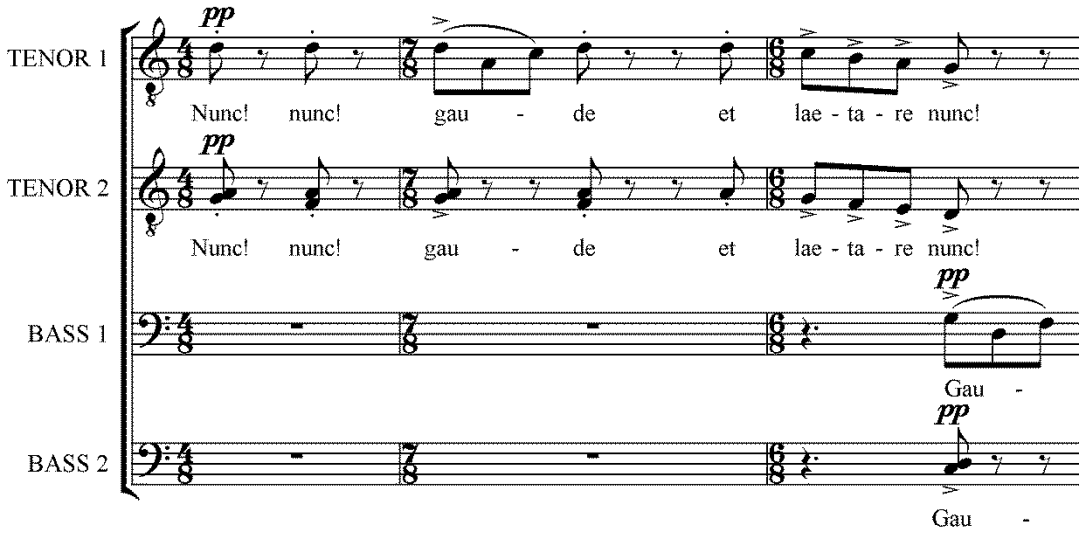
Sections 1 and 3 (Form Chart above) are both homophonic using clusters, and in the case of Section 1, chordal harmony is also employed. The first cluster is a sustained *ppp* chord comprising F4, G4, A4, B4 and is sung by the sopranos and altos from bar 3-7, (Ex 11 below). This music is repeated at bars 12-17 by the tenors and basses. The melody moves over the cluster gradually dissipating it, while the soprano line takes exclusive possession of the melody, with the other voices providing the harmony. The chordal texture dominates from bar 18-29 as the music becomes more dense, and new voices are added. Bar 29 concludes the section with a *ff* D major chord.

The homophonic texture employed in bars 18-29 was also chosen with the text in mind. The music seeks to depict the flower coming forth like the dawn and more specifically, the gradual dissipation of the early morning fog by the rising sun. There is a morphing of existing chords into new ones with some voices holding notes across as suspensions while other parts move. A deliberate attempt is also made to heighten the tension in the course of this section through the particular set of progressions employed and the use of chromatic harmony.

The eight-part cluster employed in Section 3 uses the notes of the whole-tone scale while the melody is carried by a small group of sopranos and tenors, firstly, in octaves, and later with the tenors providing a harmonic backdrop for the soprano line. A slow tempo is used for both of these sections, allowing the clusters to have maximum impact.

The two polyphonic sections (2 and 4) are both fast. A linear approach was adopted here to better express the joy of the text. Line two of Von Bingen's prayer calls on us to *'Nunc gaude et laetare'* (Rejoice now and be glad). The music is therefore happy and free. Both the texture and the tempo are crucial in achieving this. The pitches of the *Nunc motif* are taken directly from the introduction, given a new rhythm and sung in three parts by the tenors, while the basses echo at the interval of a perfect fifth lower.

Ex 2 *O Frondens Virga* Section 2 *Nunc* motif lower voices, bars 30-32



The second altos enter at bar 38 singing the *Nunc motif* a perfect fifth higher. The sopranos enter at bar 43 with a new melody in longer notes while the other voices continue to sing the *Nunc motif*. There are between six and eight voices singing at the climax of this section and yet it is not too weighty due to the linear texture. The music in Section 2 gradually quietens as the number of voices decreases, ending on a unison D4 in the second altos in bar 60.

A new motif is introduced for the words for *'Ad erigendum nos'* (To lift us up) in Section 4 at bar 75. At first there is four-part imitation, but at bars 86-90 this is reduced to two parts with the sopranos and altos singing in fourths, and the tenors and basses answering in fifths. The augmentation of the melody of bars 86-90, helps to steady the music and signals the that end is approaching. It is followed by a rush to the final climax which concludes the piece. The final ten bars are homophonic.

The intrinsic value of the linear approach lies in its ability to provide contrast to more monumental homophonic sections which are often built on clusters or chords and where the sense of movement is based on a vertical relationship. A linear approach or free counterpoint is conceived as horizontal movement, which facilitates forward momentum. This compositional technique can be used with both free lines and strict imitation and also with different combinations of voices, thereby offering a myriad of registral possibilities. The practice of baroque composers contrasting short but

powerful homophonic sections with longer and, usually lighter, polyphonic ones, finds resonance in this work though in a more contemporary context, especially in relation to pitch material.

3. Rhythm

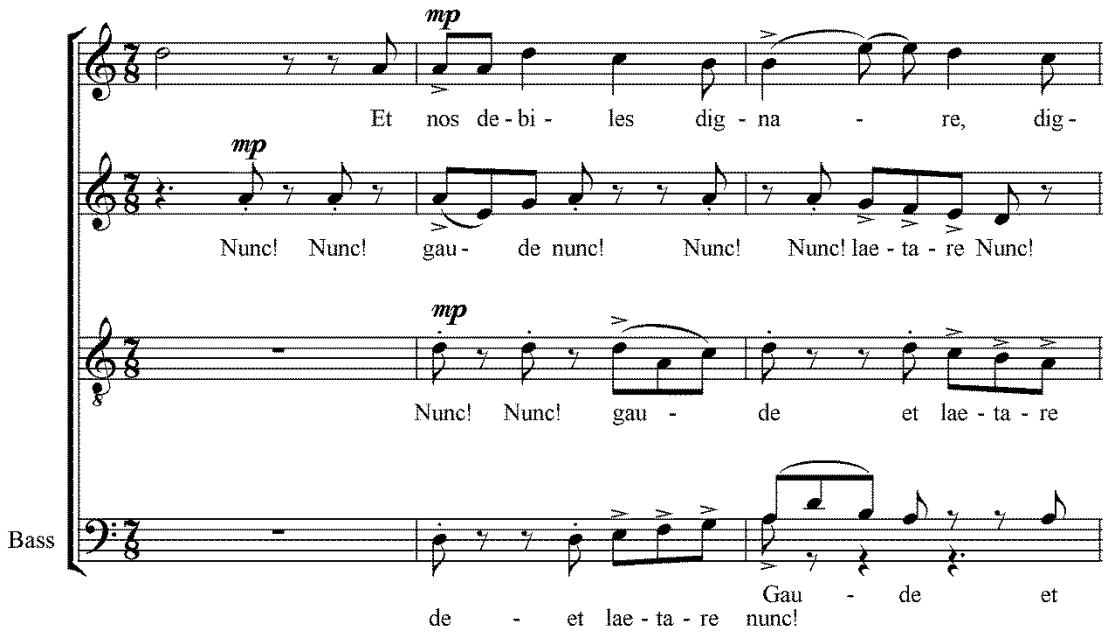
Rhythm has a powerful influence on this piece. Naming two of the sections *Dances* points to the fact that the rhythm was among the first considerations when planning the piece.

Although the opening chant of the first two bars uses two time signatures, 7/8 and 9/8 respectively, these are simply indications and the music should demonstrate the free rhythm of plainsong. The words should determine the rhythmic flow.

The two slow sections, 1 and 3, tend to use longer note durations. Section 1 mainly moves in crotchets and minims, while Section 3 almost exclusively moves in minims. These values assist in creating an atmosphere of calm.

On the other hand, the two dances in Section 2 and 4 are based on a steady quaver beat, while the groupings of words and phrases determine the metre. The first dance begins at bar 30. The new tempo marking ***Dance it!*** gives the music a lively feel and supports the rhythmic energy. The snappy, clipped rhythm propels the music forward, while the texture is also light at first, gradually becoming more dense as new voices are added. This rhythm unfolds over a pulse of fast quavers, and rhythmic interest here can be understood to mean the constant buzz of the quaver movement. Time signatures change, dictated by the various groupings of words but the steady, skipping quaver beat is relentless. The constantly changing time signatures and the cross rhythms ensure the music does not settle, thereby keeping it rhythmically alive and fresh.

Ex 3 *O Frondens Virga* Section 2 cross rhythms, bars 48-50



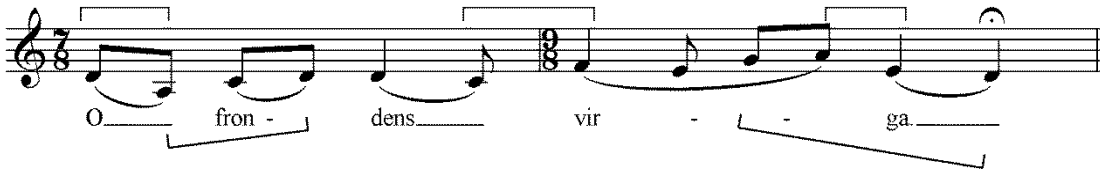
Other features which contribute to the rhythmic vitality, evident in this section, include rests, articulations such as *staccato* notes, accents, and augmentation. The augmentation employed at bars 86-90 (Ex 12 below) has the effect of steadying the music before it rushes headlong for the finish line. There is an effective contrast between the pace set by the crotchets in bars 86-90, compared to that of the quavers which return at 91, pushing the music forward towards the final tonic chord(s).

4. Harmony/Pitch

O Frondens Virga is centred on the Dorian mode. The mode allows for interesting and effective combinations of notes, clusters and a great variety of harmonies. It also facilitates the creation of independent vocal lines built on free counterpoint.

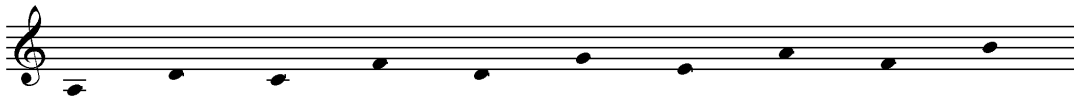
The opening phrase (Ex 1 above) establishes the mode from which the subsequent music flows. Intervals of a fourth play a central role in both the melody and harmony of this piece. Looking at the influence of fourths in the melodic structure of *O Frondens Virga*, one can identify five actual or implied fourths in the Introduction (bars 1-2).

Ex 4 *O Frondens Virga* Introduction sets of fourths, bars 1-2



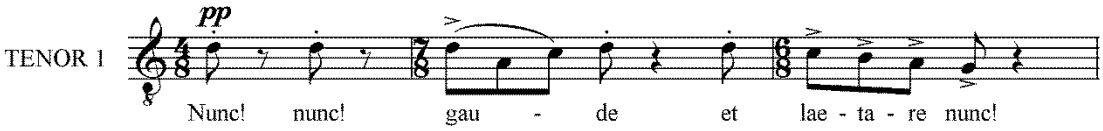
Perhaps the most striking use of a fourth from a melodic standpoint is when the tritone is outlined in bars 4-7 of the tenor 1 line. This motif is repeated later in the soprano 1 part at bars 15-16. The sound of the tritone has a special quality. It continues to remain difficult to sing in tune, and yet it possesses a haunting quality. While all the fourths emerge from the opening phrase of the piece, the tritone does not appear there. The opening phrase, re-stated as ascending 4ths in Example 5, would seem to suggest that the music should extend up to B4 in bar seven, thus creating the tritone F4-B4.

Ex 5 *O Frondens Virga* bars 1 – 2 re-stated as ascending 4ths + tritone



The first four pitches of the piece, later become the opening notes of the *First Dance*. The descending fourth D5-A4 and its transpositions are particularly prominent throughout this dance.

Ex 6 *O Frondens Virga* Section 2 *Nunc* motif pitches from bar 1, bars 30-32

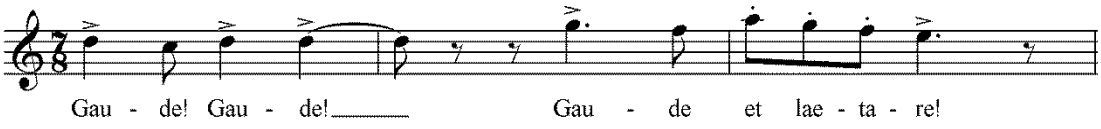


As the dance progresses, other connections with the opening bars become obvious. For example, at bar 38 the *Nunc* motif is transposed up a perfect fifth in the alto part,

giving A4, E4, G4, A4. These notes were already heard earlier in a different order in bar 2.

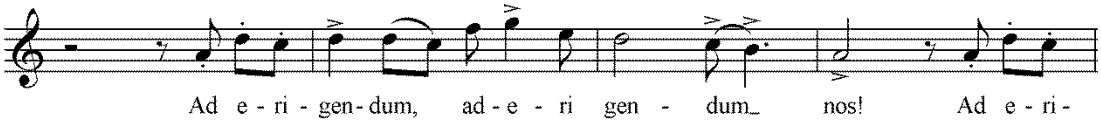
The *Gaude* motif introduced at bar 43 in the soprano 1, is also built on the relationship of a fourth: D5-G5, A5-E5.

Ex 7 *O Frondens Virga* Section 2 *Gaude* motif, bars 43-45



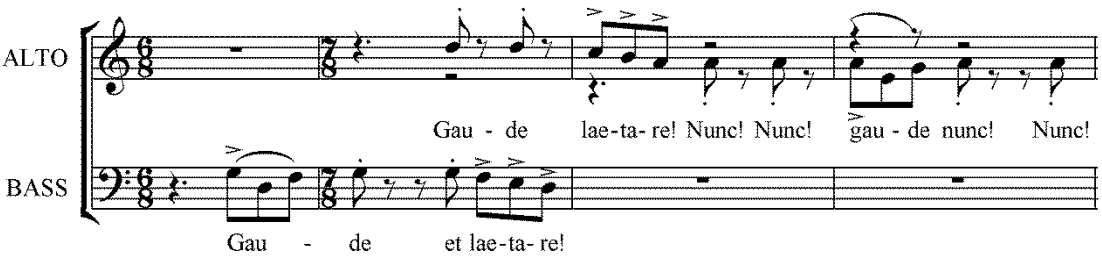
The *Last Dance* begins at bar 75 and has an even stronger link with fourths. The soprano 1 part, at bar 77, appears to grow naturally from bars 1-2, (Ex 1 above), creating a new melody of its own which is heavily dependent on fourths.

Ex 8 *O Frondens Virga* Section 4 pitches from bars 1-2, bars 77-80



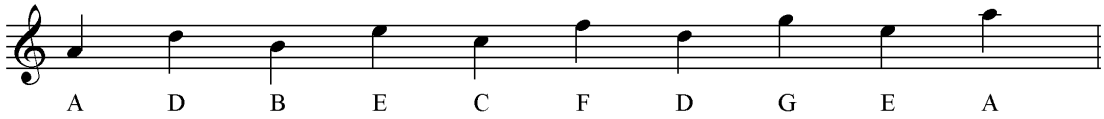
Similarly the fourths heard in bars 39-40 in the bass 1, and those in the alto at bar 40-42, fit the music comfortably, because of their close relationship to the opening two bars.

Ex 9 *O Frondens Virga* Section 1 alto and bass parts, bars 39-42



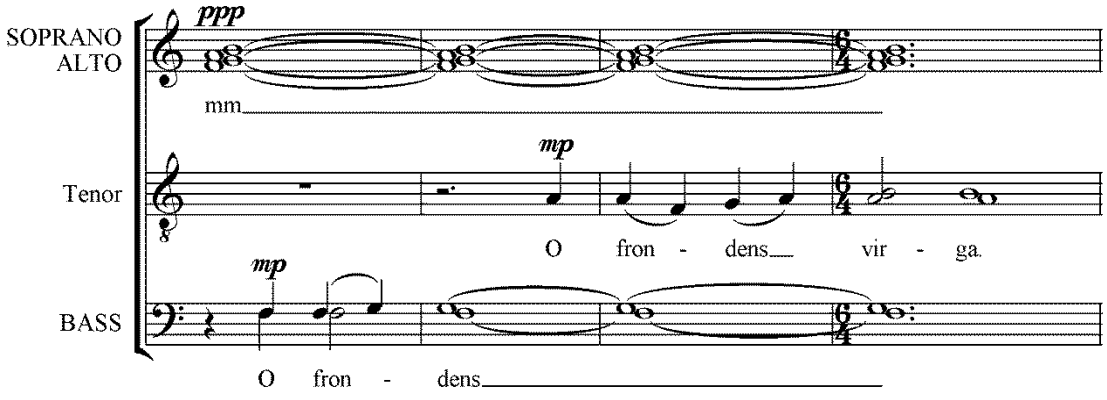
Finally, a chain of ascending fourths is used to create a new motif for the words *'et nos debiles dignare a mala consuetudine liberare'*. (And free us from evil ways, weak as we are…) This sequence which occurs at bars 49-52, in the soprano part, is interesting because it includes the fourth B4-E5 which has not been used in the piece until now. The full sequence is: A4-D5, B4-E5, C5-F5, [D5-G5, E5-A5]. The final two intervals are implied through the contour of the line.

Ex 10 *O Frondens Virga* chain of ascending 4ths, bars 49-52



Quartal harmony is a feature of the work as a whole. The opening cluster in the ladies' voices at bar 3, and in the mens' voices at bar 12, is framed in the outer parts by a fourth, the tritone F-B. As previously stated, the melody in the tenor 1, bars 4-7, follows the contour of the cluster ascending from F3-B3. The tritone is the most significant interval in the cluster because of its resolution. F3 in the bass, bar 7, falls to E3 in bar 9, while B4 in the soprano 1, bar 7, rises to C5 in bar 8, thus causing the music to gain momentum and move towards the new tonal centre, C.

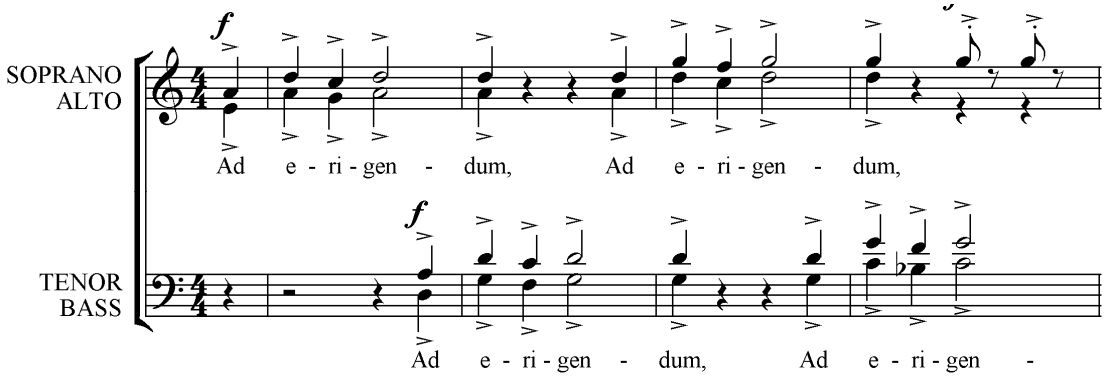
Ex 11 *O Frondens Virga* Section 1 tritone + clusters, bars 4-7



Fourths are also prominent between the soprano and alto parts at bar 22, later at 43-45, and between the tenor 1 and 2 voices at bars 31-32.

The quartal harmony itself emerges out of the use of fourths in the melodic structure of the piece, thereby helping to create a sound that is both unified and contemporary. Fourths in medieval times were considered consonant intervals. Organum, whereby the melody is harmonised in parallel fourths below is essentially quartal harmony. Between 1600 and 1900, the fourth was heard as a dissonance if it occurred as a suspension requiring resolution in the voice leading, thus limiting its use. It is possible to argue that Wagner's Tristan chord where he superimposes a perfect fourth, D#-G#, over an augmented fourth, F-B, led to the renewed use of quartal harmony. Composers who use this technique include Claude Debussy, Francis Poulenc, Alexander Scriabin, Alban Berg, Leonard Bernstein, Arnold Schoenberg, Igor Stravinsky, Bela Bartok and Anton Webern. The clear, somewhat hollow sound (lacking the third) of this interval makes it ideal for use in new music. With the fourth there is a certain ambiguity, or at least a lack of commitment to triadic harmony which helps steer the music away from more obvious harmonic conclusions. The music in bars 86-89, (Ex 12 below), demonstrates this clearly. The implied harmony is not spelled out, at least not initially. This allows for more options as the music proceeds, and also encourages listeners to use their imagination as to which harmony might be intended, in other words the music encourages an element of ambiguity.

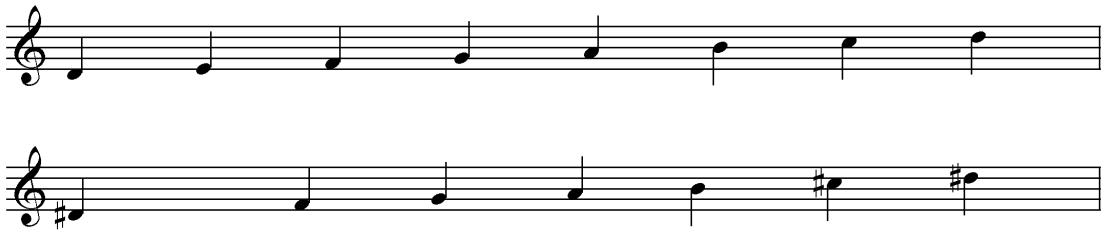
Ex 12 *O Frondens Virga* Section 4 fourths, bars 86-89



*O Frondens Virg*a also features the whole-tone scale in Section 3, bars 60-74. A transition is made between the Dorian mode and the whole-tone scale with the introduction of C# and D#, each note being raised by a semitone. The process of creating the whole-tone scale through stretching or pulling apart notes of the existing

mode, suggested itself in the text: *'Atque manum tuam porrige'* or 'Stretch out your hand.'

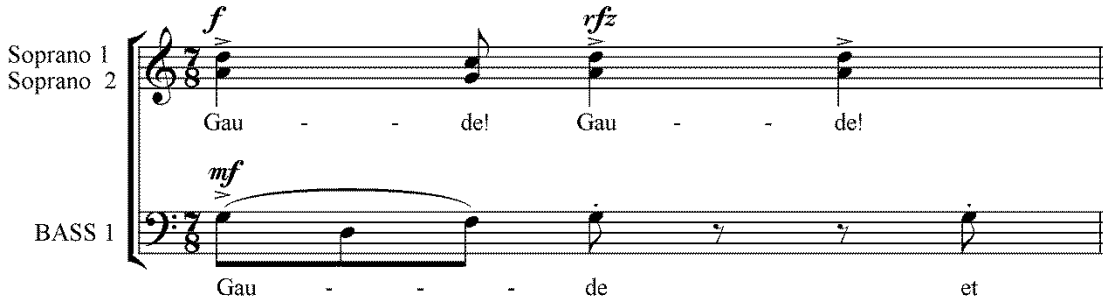
Ex 13 *O Frondens Virga* – Mode and whole-tone with chromatically altered notes



5. Approaches to word-setting

For the most part, the words of the text are treated in a conventional manner. The writing is mostly syllabic, and occasionally melismatic. A feature of the two dances is the unusual placement of an accent on a particular word or syllable. Firstly, the expected accentuations are not always followed. The accent is occasionally placed on a weak syllable when the listener or performer might expect it on a strong accent. For example, the *de* of *gaude* is sometimes placed on a strong beat, thereby giving it an accentuation it would not usually have. Secondly, the placement of the accent can vary for different repetitions of the same word. For example in bar 43 there are two different accentuations for the word *gaude*. In the two soprano parts the accent is on the first syllable *gau* where we would normally expect it, while *de* comes on a weak part of the bar or on a weak beat. On the other hand, the bass 1 has a 7/8 bar divided into three and four quavers. The *gau* here is on the first quaver of the three-quaver group while the *de* is placed on the first quaver of the four-quaver group, giving it a slight accent. Example 14 below shows how the word *gaude* is treated differently within the same bar.

Ex 14 *O Frondens Virga* Section 2 accents on *gaude*, bar 43



Placing the accent on a syllable, not normally expected often occurs in popular music, and jazz. Bob Marley's Redemption Song is a typical example[2]. In the case of *O Frondens Virga* the words *gaude et laetare* are primarily a means of conveying a mood of celebration. This is achieved by giving equal weight to each syllable of each word in the phrase and also by investing the resultant set of syllables with sharp rhythms and lively tempi. A similar approach to word-setting is used in *Bust*, Scene 4, bars 61-70. The precise order of the words is not so important either. In the case of word- order, the text is often set *Nunc! Nunc! Gaude et laetare nunc!*, while the actual text reads *Nunc gaude et laetare.*

6. Mood and Colour

The text of *O Frondens Virga* has a number of subtle shades of mood and colour. The opportunities for word-painting are endless. The different moods of the piece can be identified in a number of key elements such as the texture employed, the rhythms used, the dynamics, the word-setting, the compositional approaches, and in particular the style of melody and harmony adopted.

One can identify at least four very different moods running throughout the text. *O frondens virga in tua nobilitate stans sicut aurora procedit*, (Section 1). The mood here is one of mystery. The flower opens out like the dawn. But the central comparison is that the flower is really Jesus.

The opening two unison bars in plainchant style is an introductory call to prayer. The music in the Section 1, bars 3-7, is at once calm, mysterious, dark. Colour is a key

component of this section as the text suggests. The upper voices sustain a *ppp* cluster built on B4,A4,G4, and F4, while the melody, shared by the baritones and tenors, climbs gently in crotchets from F3 to B3, the voices combining to create an atmosphere of both calm and anticipation, (Ex 11 above). The gradual transformation from darkness to light is what the music sets out to achieve. The opening is dominated mainly by crotchet movement, with no sense of haste. At the same time however, there is a very deliberate attempt to capture the unhurried, but nonetheless certain, onset of the dawn through the sense of forward motion, which is supported by the crotchet movement. The resultant even rhythm is derived from the regular crotchet beats over the slow pulse. The dark colour of the cluster B4,A4,G4,F4, gradually lightens into a brighter C major tonality at bar 24.

The climax of the opening section occurs at bars 24-29. Word painting or colour painting continues as the A5 in the soprano 1 part reflects the bright light of the sun, while the shifting, inner tones, mainly in minims, picture a softer sun whose rays are being constantly filtered. In his *Seachanges*, Raymond Deane begins the work with a powerful depiction of the harsh glare of the Mexican sun, by using C8, C7 octaves in the piano, doubled by the piccolo[3]. There is no hiding from this merciless sun. On the other hand, the sunlight at dawn as it emerges from early morning fog, moving and changing as it dissipates the haze, is much more forgiving, as it gently warms us with a welcome heat. This is the sun which is depicted here. Although the A5 in the soprano 1 line is sustained, the notes underneath are shifting (sometimes chromatically), painting a picture of diffused light and creating an atmosphere of mystery. As the music shifts through Bflat7, a vaguely Dflat tonality with raised 5^{th,} (a tonality favoured by Debussy) emerges, sliding up to D minor and finishing on a bright D major chord. The sunlight is now resplendent and full.

The initial mood of wonder and awe is quickly replaced by a celebratory mood. *Nunc gaude et laetare et nos debiles dignare a mala consuetudine liberare* (Section 2) calls on us to rejoice and be glad as we ask God to free us from evil ways. This mood of happiness and celebration is represented by lively and fast-moving dance music. Some of the features of dance such as rhythm, articulation and rests which contribute significantly to the creation of a joyful atmosphere, have been dealt with already. Dance, perhaps because it is so rooted in beat, which is essentially primal, has an

almost direct route to our senses. While the mood here makes us happy and glad, by contrast, the dance in *Compline*, which also forms a part of this research, touches our darker or shadow side. There was a strong desire on the part of the composer to compose music that would excite both the singers and audience alike, borne out of the possibly unfair and mistaken belief that too often contemporary choral music and especially religious music, can be slow and dirge-like in character.

The mood which dominates the words *Atque manum tuam porrige* (Section 3) 'Stretch out your hand,' is one of urgency. Can God stretch far enough to touch us? The cry to God to 'stretch out his hand to us' is depicted in sustained whole-tone clusters, over which a single line in octaves is sung by the soprano and tenor. It is as though the only thing moving is God's hand.

Section 4 is a setting of the text *Ad erigendum nos* in which the poet calls to God to 'lift us up.' This text really belongs to Section 3, *Atque manum tuam porrige.* However, the dance music already heard in Section 2, is re-worked here as a setting of the final words, in order to conclude the piece in a happy, joyful, even triumphant mood.

7. Conclusion

Hildegard Von Bingen's own musical setting of *O Frondens Virga* is still performed today. Her beautiful prayer, although written in the twelfth century, continues to generate interest and excitement in our time. The setting discussed here is the composer's unique and original response to this text. It offers performers and audiences an opportunity to experience these ancient words in a new and very different musical context, linking our world to an earlier period in history. The work of Irish composer Linda Buckley, through its exploration of medieval processes such as organum, makes a similar connection. Compositions that help preserve links with the medieval tradition can have a valuable role in the world of music today.

The manner in which words are set varies from composer to composer. But the general rule that all the words must be assigned to at least one voice part goes without saying. However, it is also possible to look at the words as a vehicle for the music

where the spirit of the words or text is set, as opposed to the literal meaning. Where this latter approach is adopted, two features may be evident in the setting. Firstly, each syllable is given equal weight and then used to create a rhythmic pattern of syllables where the rhythm has a higher importance than the individual words or the syllables that go to make up the words. Secondly, words or syllables may be repeated as part of the rhythmic pattern and once again the words serve the rhythm. This approach to word-setting is used in *O Frondens Virga* and other vocal works in this portfolio.

Choral music and choral composition in Ireland would appear to be blossoming. Choirland – an anthology of contemporary Irish Choral Music was published in 2012 by CMC.[4] This volume, which includes *Molaimis go leir an tAon Mhac Chriost* by Ben Hanlon, is significant because it brings together the choral works of many composers thereby giving status to new and emerging Irish choral music. New and exciting compositions by Irish composers are being performed on a regular basis. *O Frondens Virga* seeks to make a contribution to the new choral repertoire.

Compline

Introduction

The office of Compline is the night prayer of the Christian Church. In Solesmes, the French Benedictine Monastery, [5]famously associated with the revival of plainsong in the nineteenth century, the monks sing the *Salve Regina*, with the light of a single candle burning in the sanctuary of the church, before filing off to bed. The solemn tone of the plainchant *Salve Regina*[5] is the basis of this orchestral work. It is one of four Marian Antiphons which have been sung at the end of Compline, since the thirteenth century. The practice continues today in the Roman Catholic Church, to sing a different antiphon for each of the four liturgical seasons. The *Salve Regina* is sung in the season known as *ordinary time*. The antiphon is in the D mode, also referred to as Mode 1. The music is at once very simple and yet possesses a haunting beauty. The text of the prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, salutes Mary and seeks her intercession.

Salve Regina is charged with powerful atmospheric qualities, while the text, coupled with the time and place of performance, are also rich in meaning and allusion. This plainsong therefore seemed to be an ideal vehicle to stimulate new and very different musical ideas.

The work was begun after a long reflection on night and the various themes associated with it, such as sleep, calm, death, romance and dreams. Part of that reflection involved sitting in a room with a single candle lighting in a corner. Many thoughts welled up while sitting there. The rug, chair, and picture shown up by the light were interesting but those things hiding in the half-light and semidarkness were often, even more fascinating. A very different experience occurred while sitting in an empty, unlit chapel at night, listening to all the sounds from inside and out. The sounds were at once eerie, unnerving but the silence was also very calming. Light at night, the sky, starlight and moonlight, were compelling, especially, when observed through the gaunt, bare branches of winter trees in the local People's Park. The reflection included calling to mind eternal sleep, while attending the funerals of two young people, both celebrated in a church that was bathed in winter sunshine and crowded with friends

and young people full of tears. Part of the process also involved calling to mind the deaths of dear ones, the painful experience of being with a dying person, the sounds of death and the pain of parting. These all have a place in this work. And finally, there was the recollection of dreams or perhaps more accurately, nightmares.

Compline was inspired by James McMillan's *Veni, Veni Emmanuel*,[6] a large-scale orchestral work, based on the popular Advent melody *Veni, Veni Emmanuel*. While the original melody (especially the chorus section) is very audible throughout the work, the brilliant and exciting use of percussion, the daring harmonies and rhythms employed and the overall structure, make this a most compelling piece of music. Composers have used existing music as the springboard for new and original compositions for centuries. William Byrd reworked John Taverner's music in the *Sanctus* of his *Mass for 4 Voices*[7] and Michael Tippet composed *Fantasia on a theme of Corelli*[8]. Plainsong seemed to fit the contemporary context of McMillan's music very comfortably and it was primarily for that reason that chant was used as the basis for *Compline*. The *Salve Regina* was chosen in part because of its beauty but also because of the dramatic possibilities suggested by a 'night' piece: peace, stillness, a sense of finality or death, rest and the feeling of 'dis'-ease or disturbed rest. These ideas could be exploited and examined in a variety of strongly contrasted musical approaches.

In general, long and obvious phrases from the melody are not quoted but rather short motifs from the existing plainsong are used to fashion something very new and different. Where phrases are quoted, there is a deliberate attempt to make them appear in a new and different light. However, *Compline* does conclude with complete playing of the retrograde and original of the *Salve Regina* but the treatment of the antiphon could not be described as conventional.

The work is for a modern orchestra, with specific instruments being chosen or omitted, depending on their ability to deliver the precise sound required. For example, the marimba was chosen instead of the harp because of its ability to create hollow, haunting and magical sounds. The marimba features in the opera *Bust* (one of the other works in this portfolio) for the same reason. The antique cymbals as opposed to the triangle, were also chosen because of their particular timbre.

1. Form

The work is based on the solemn tone of the plainchant Marion Antiphon *Salve Regina* (Hail Holy Queen), normally sung as the last prayer of *Compline*. It is a prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Compline Form Chart

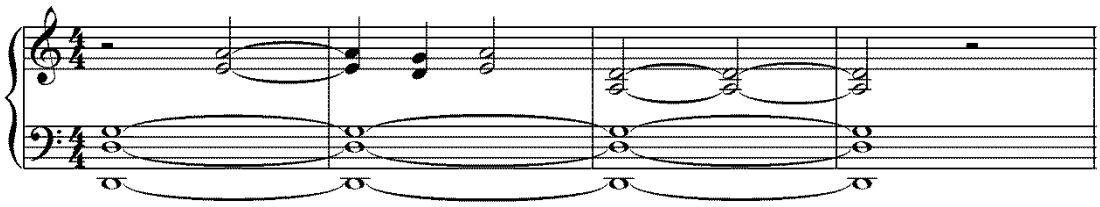
Bar	Formal Section	Theme	Pitches/Tonality
1-195	Exposition		
1-111	Section A		
1-	A1	*Salve* motif	D
1-	A2	Bass Pedal	
5-	A3	*Gementes* motif	Dm
19-	A4	Flute melody	
37-	A5	Cluster chord strings	
41-	A6	Cluster melody	F
63-	A7	Viola/Cello melody	Bflat
112-195	Section B		
112-	B1	Sustained note vlns	F
112-	B2	*Ad nos* motif	F
113-	B3	*Hac la* motif	
140-	B4	*Regina* motif	
153-	B5	Waltz	Whole-tone
180-	B6	*Misericordes* motif	D
196-320	Development		
196-219	A1	*Salve* motif	Gm
220-320	B5	Waltz	Aflat->F
321-410	Recapitulation		
321-353	A4	Flute melody	Bflat
	A6	Clarinet	
	A7	Horn/trombone	
354-382		*Salve Regina* retrograde	Dm
383-410		*Salve Regina* original	
411-415	Coda	*Salve* motif	

The Exposition: Section A Bars 1-111

The Exposition, Section A, has as its basis two melodic quotations from the original *Salve Regina* melody. Example 2 below, is the first of these. It is referred to as A1 or the *Salve* motif. This motif is so-called because it uses the first four notes and the first

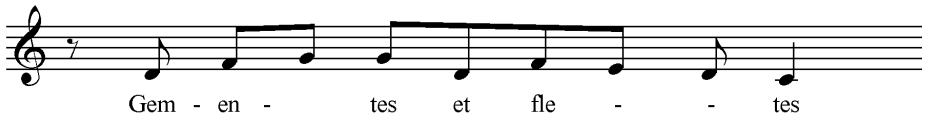
word (*Salve*) of the antiphon. It is played in fourths by the horns. This motif is in effect a *ritornello*, making more than six appearances throughout the work. A2 is a three-note bass pedal, consisting of the following notes: D2 in the double basses, with *divisi* cellos playing D3 and G3.

Ex 1 *Compline* A1 *Salve* motif and A2 bass pedals, bars 1-4



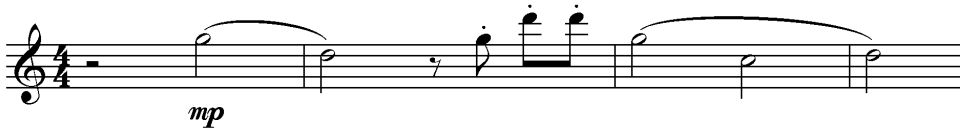
The second melodic quotation is from the eighth phrase of the original plainsong and the text is *Gementes et flentes*. This will be referred to as A3 or the *Gementes* motif.

Ex 2 *Compline* A3 *Gementes* motif



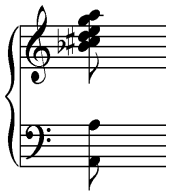
The work opens with motif A2, a triple *ppp* bass pedal and a *pppp* roll on the timpani. The *pp* horns play the *Salve* motif, A1, in 4ths. At bar 5 the *Gementes* motif, A3, is played in canon by divisi violas in crotchets. The motif uses an additive process working from the centrepoint to the beginning and then from the centrepoint to the end. At bar 8, *divisi* violins play the *Gementes* motif, now in quavers, as a four-part canon at a quaver, again using the additive process. Meanwhile, in bar 15 an Eflat is introduced in the violas which acts as a distortion which will gradually be expanded and developed as a rising figure in seconds. At bar 19 a new four-bar flute melody, A4, moving mainly in minims, and derived from the *Gementes* motif, is introduced.

Ex 3 *Compline* A4 Flute melody, bars 19-22



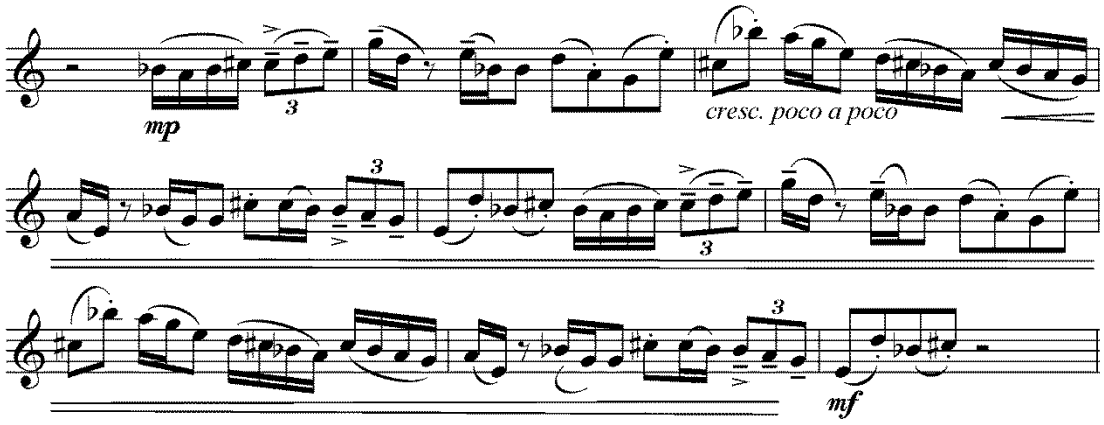
The *Gementes* motif, A3, using a subtractive process, and heard on the alto flute, is combined with the flute melody, A4 in a form of heterophony. The horns return with a variant of the *Salve* motif, A1, at bar 37, while the strings have repeated *staccato* quavers which form a cluster chord, A5.

Ex 4 *Compline* A5 cluster chord on strings, bar 37



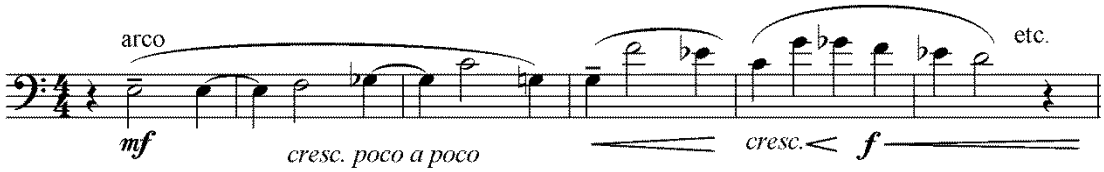
The pitches of this cluster shown in Example 5 above, are derived from the *Salve* motif, A, G, D with E and C# expanding from D, and Bflat expanding from A. These pitches form the basis of A6 or cluster melody, an agile, five-bar phrase consisting of semiquavers, quavers and dotted rhythms. The cluster melody in shown in Example 6 below, and is introduced at bar 41 by the clarinet, while the cello plays the same melody, in longer values an octave lower, creating a form of heterophony. At bar 45, it is taken over by the oboe and clarinet and treated as a canon in its original and retrograde forms.

Ex 5 *Compline* A6 cluster melody derived from cluster chord (Ex 4 above), bars 41-45



At bar 56 the tonality shifts towards Eflat as we hear again A1 on the horns with a new *pizzicato* chord response on the strings. Later *divisi* strings play A6 as a four-part canon at a semiquaver, while the broad rising melody in the violas and cellos, A7, which consists mainly of minims, confirms a B flat tonality.

Ex 6 *Compline* A7 melody in violas and cellos, bars 63-68



The bass melody, A7, shown in Example 6, grows from the Eflat distortion in the viola part which was first heard at bar 15. There is a strong contrast between the two melodies A6, in the violins, which has a rich shimmering sound caused by the micropolyphonic semiquaver repetitions, and A7, the bass melody played by the violas and cellos, which is in many ways the heart of the section with its expressive line that allows the violas and cellos to soar and sing. At bar 79 this section is repeated in C major with all the parts being further varied.

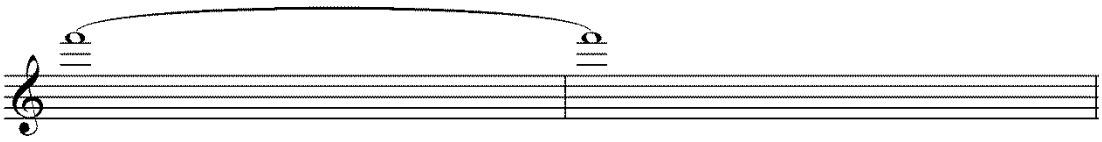
At bar 90 a new variation of the opening *Salve* motif is heard. It leads into a short interlude for brass based on the *Salve* motif, A1. The opening bars are three-part counterpoint for 2 trumpets and tuba. From bars 102-110, the intervals in the first trumpet part expand progressively through 2nd, 5th, 3rd, 4th, 5th, Octave, 6th and 9th,

while the second trumpet and tuba parts repeat short motifs which are confined to a very narrow range. At bar 104 horns and trombones are added causing the texture to thicken as the music gathers pace and rushes to an *fff* climax.

Exposition: Section B Bars 112-195

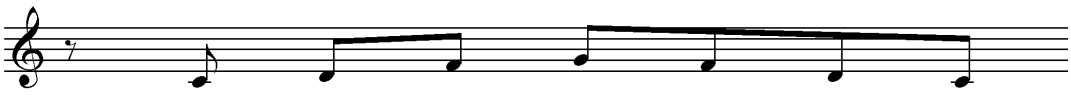
This section begins with a sustained F6 note in the violins, which will be referred to as B1.

Ex 7 *Compline* B1 sustained F6 in violins, bars112-113



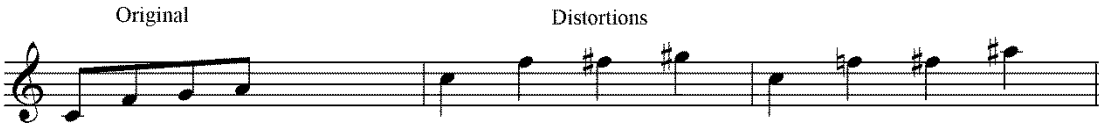
At bar 112 we also hear B2 or the *Ad Nos* motif in the alto flute. The seven non-retrogradeable notes of this motif are quoted in Example 8. They form the music for the text *Ad nos convert(e).*

Ex 8 *Compline* B2 *Ad Nos* motif non-retrogradeable



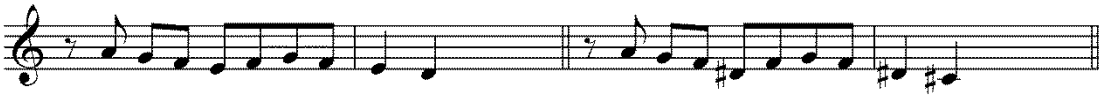
Subtractive and additive processes are used as the *Ad Nos* motif is deconstructed and then re-assembled. A new four-note *Hac la* motif, B3 is developed simultaneously, using chromatic distortions, retrograde, diminution and augmentation.

Ex 9 *Compline* B3 *Hac la* motif + chromatic distortions



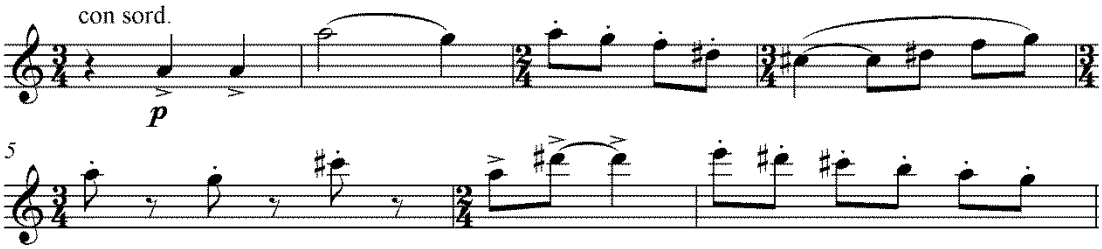
At bar 128 the sustained F6 transfers to the first and second flute. A whole-tone scale is gradually assembled in the woodwind instruments. The first and second clarinet, the cor anglais and the bassoon all play a two-note motif which employs an interval of a major second, each instrument playing at a different pitch. The music accelerates and at bar 140 the second clarinet accompanied by a dotted motif on the bassoon and cor anglais, gradually unfolds a new motif, B4 or the *Regina* motif. This motif is heard in full on the cor anglais at bar 144 and then repeated as an echo in the first and second clarinet and bassoon. At the same time, rising whole-tone scales can be heard in the marimba, while the first, third and fourth notes of motif B4 are repeated on the antique cymbals. Example 10 shows the *Regina* motif, taken from the opening phrase of the original plainsong antiphon. Chromatic alterations to the fourth, eighth and ninth notes result in a whole-tone melody.

Ex 10 *Compline* B4 *Regina* motif original version and altered (whole-tone) version



The first and second clarinets and bassoon play the full melody in canon at bar 148-149, before handing it over to the first and second violins, where it is transformed into a fourteen-bar waltz melody at bar 153. Example 11 quotes the first seven bars.

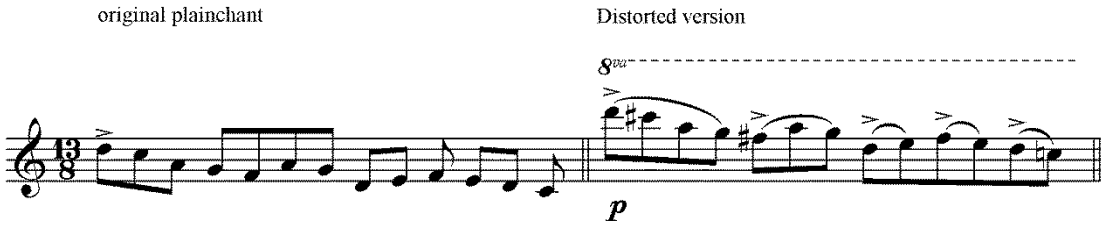
Ex 11 *Compline* B5 Whole-tone waltz melody violins, bars 152-158



The waltz melody is repeated at bar 166, featuring a countersubject on the bassoon. From bar 173 the whole-tone gradually disintegrates with the introduction of tones and semitones.

The slow tempo is also restored at bar 179 and in bar 180 a new idea, B6, *Misericordes* motif, is heard on the piccolo with accompaniment from the bassoon, violas and cellos.

Ex 12 *Compline* B6 *Misericordes* motif – original and altered versions



B6 is the distorted version of the original chant and it forms an effective contrast with the earlier motifs because it has a wide range of a 9th. This section is heavily dependent on quartal harmony, exploiting the sound possibilities suggested by the tritone. The distorted version involves two tritone leaps, one between C#5-G4 and the second between F#4-C4. Both are played by the first violin at bar 181, while the second violin has the retrograde. From bars 186-196, the marimba plays a highly ornamented version of B6, the *Misericordes* motif, focussing on the interval of a 4th and 5th, while the *tremolo* strings play both the original and retrograde versions in crotchets. At bar 194 the original played by the piccolo and the retrograde played by the flute are heard simultaneously, while loud, accented C and F# semiquavers are swapped between right and left hand on the marimba. The first violins play a succession of descending 4ths, while the second violins play the retrograde with altered rhythm.

Development Bars 196-320

A1 in the horns and *pizzicato* strings, is heard early in the Development, in bar 199 and is a further variant of the previous A1 statements heard in bar 1, 37, 57 and 91.

We then have a version of A6 (Ex 5 above) as a four-part canon at a quaver in the flutes and clarinets. The pitches are altered and the tonality now centres on Aflat, while the rhythm is also varied. The bass is mainly provided by the doubled violas and cellos which have a part similar to that heard in the Exposition. However, the bassoon has an entirely new part. Although we have heard this music before it now has a totally different sound from what we have already heard, with the constant semiquaver movement giving the music a neo-baroque feel.

The centrepiece of the Development is the waltz, already heard in Section B of the Exposition at bar 152. It enters brightly at bar 220 with a false start in Aflat. Beginning at bar 224, the full fourteen-bar melody, now in A, is played by the strings and antique cymbals, the music gradually abandoning the whole-tone scale on which it was originally based. On its second appearance the waltz features strings, with oboe doubling the melody while the bassoon has a new running countersubject. At bar 252 we hear it for a third time with completely new scoring for cor anglais, horn, violin 1 and 2 and cello, and with an Aflat tonality. The texture is lighter and the five-part counterpoint allows each instrument to have an independent voice. From bar 265 to the end of the Development at 320, the music focuses on bars 4 and 5 of the original fourteen-bar waltz melody. There is antiphonal dialogue in bars 265-301 between woodwind and brass on the one hand, and strings, supported by bass drum, on the other. The music gathers momentum and builds towards bar 301 as all instruments combine over an F2 pedal in the double basses. The dance hurtles to a climax with descending scales in the violins, flute and piccolo, and finally collapses on an *ffff* B flat at 317. Close imitation employed in the flute, piccolo and violins at bar 313 adds to an atmosphere of excitement.

Recapitulation 321-410

The recapitulation opens with the alto flute, cor anglais, clarinet and oboe playing in turn their particular version of A4 (flute melody). At bar 339, A6 (Ex 5) is played by the clarinet, while A7 (Ex 6) is played separately by horn and trombone and later by horn and trombone together.

At bar 354 the tonality reverts back to a D tonality, with the violas playing the entire *Salve Regina* melody in retrograde. Each note of the original melody is treated as a quaver and played *sul ponticello* on muted, *tremolo* violas. An unrelenting wall of sound and an eerie atmosphere is created as all 224 notes of the *Salve Regina* are played. Over this continuous wave of sound, different musical events, most of which have already been heard in the work, are revisited with new treatments. The trombones, followed by the horns, make constant interjections with a sustained tritone of F3-B3. The piccolo plays a dance-like version of A1 (*Salve motif*) using semiquavers. At bar 361, B5 (Waltz melody Ex 11) makes an appearance on the clarinet using a dotted semiquaver rhythm, accompanied by the alternating B2-F3, the notes of the tritone, in the bass clarinet. Later they swap parts. At bar 366 the flute joins in with A1 in long notes and wide leaps featuring *glissandi*. A3 (*Gementes* motif) in both the original and retrograde forms, and also using diminution, augmentation and sequence, is heard from bar 371 in a dialogue between the clarinet and muted trumpet. The flute, clarinet, bassoon and trombone, double the viola part for the final two bars of the *Salve Regina* (retrograde).

Beginning on the upbeat to bar 383, the *Salve Regina* melody, in its original form, is played by the cellos in quavers, while different instruments take turn in doubling the melody as it unfolds. A sustained tremolo D6 in the first violins is introduced at bar 382. An atmosphere of calm comes over the music as the relentless quavers move along, unruffled, while around them different memories of earlier events are being recalled. At bar 386, the bassoon plays a version of A1. B3 (waltz melody), including its retrograde, is heard at bar 387 on the horn. It is then played as a sequence. Short quotations from the end of the *Salve Regina* melody are also heard on oboe and alto flute. A chord derived from the *Gementes* motif (A3) and made up of E, F, G and C, makes its first appearance in the *divisi* violins (2,3,4) and violas at bar 393, while violin 1 and the flute alternate D6 as a sustained note between them.

Ex 13 *Compline* Chord in *divisi* violins and violas, bars 393-394

This chord maintains a repeated rhythmic pattern of crotchets punctuated by rests to the end of the piece. At bar 398, the marimba has an elaborate melody based on A1. The texture gradually thins, the repetitions of the chord become fewer and eventually they die away completely. All that remains is the cello playing the final notes of the *Salve* antiphon, supported by D pedals in the double bass (D2) and first violin (D6) and a roll on the timpani.

Coda Bars 411-415

The horns conclude the work, recalling in long notes the opening *Salve motif* (A1), which is reinforced by accented quavers on antique cymbals, played over muted *tremolo* strings.

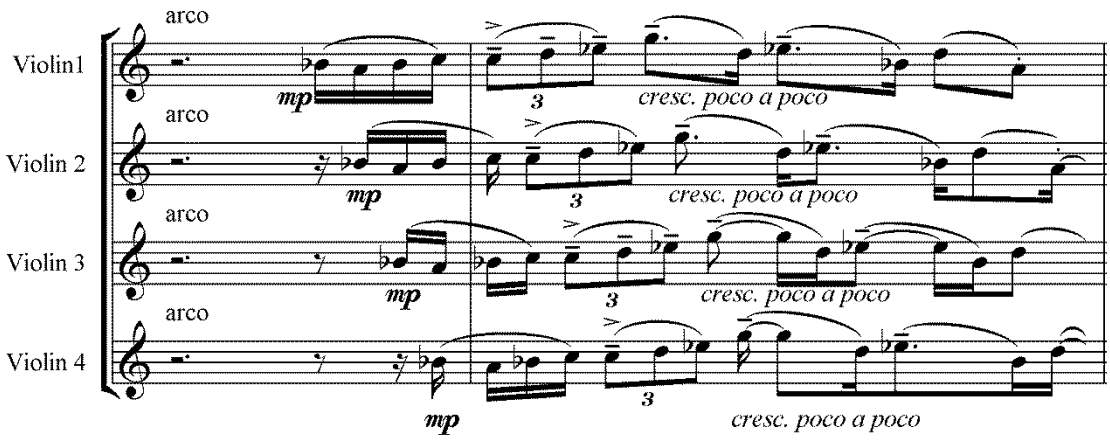
2. Texture

The overall texture used in this work is contrapuntal. With few exceptions the writing is linear in conception, mixing both free counterpoint and strict imitation.

Strict canonic writing is a feature of the work. This is especially the case in the first sixty bars of the composition where three different canons are used, each in a different manner. Bars 5-15 feature a two part canon in crotchets at the quaver played by violas. Bars 15-28 have a four part canon in quavers played by *divisi* strings. A two-part canon at a crotchet in the oboe and clarinet is developed at bars 45-56. This latter canon is also an example of heterophony, since the cello part uses the same notes as the oboe and clarinet but in longer values.

Micropolyphony is used very sparingly, making two appearances: bars 63-75 and 79-90. The four-part canon at the semiquaver is played by the strings.

Ex 14 *Compline* Micropolyphony in divisi violins, bars 63-64



As already stated, the close imitation gives the music a hopping or repetitive quality, so much so it sounds like there is just one single melody.

Free counterpoint describes the writing in the exposition section B, bars 112-195. Many of the *Salve* themes use additive and subtractive processes and these are built up freely through the development of a variety of different lines. At bar 113 there is three-part writing for the woodwind which is expanded to four parts at bar 117 when the piccolo is added. At the same time the two-part *divisi* violins also expand to become four parts. The independent lines create rhythmic contrast by employing different values. For example, the chant theme is played by the alto flute mainly in quavers while the oboe and piccolo have crotchets and the clarinet has mostly minims. The linear texture is lightened at bar 140-153, with dialogue in the woodwind and marimba. The Recapitulation, from bar 354-410, is primarily contrapuntal in character. While the single line of the *Salve Regina*, retrograde and original are played out in the violas and cellos, the work's other themes are recalled often in new guises and combinations. All these themes are developed horizontally. The sustained fourths heard in the cellos at the beginning of the work and the long pedal notes first heard at bar 112 in Exposition Section B, are now used as further layers or blocks over which the moving lines can unfold. The texture therefore continues to be contrapuntal. At the climax of the development, bars 301-316, the presence of overlapping imitative entries of the waltz theme in *divisi* violins contributes to a more dense texture.

The ritornello or *Salve* theme makes five short appearances and while each is given a different treatment, the texture in each case is homophonic.

3. Rhythm

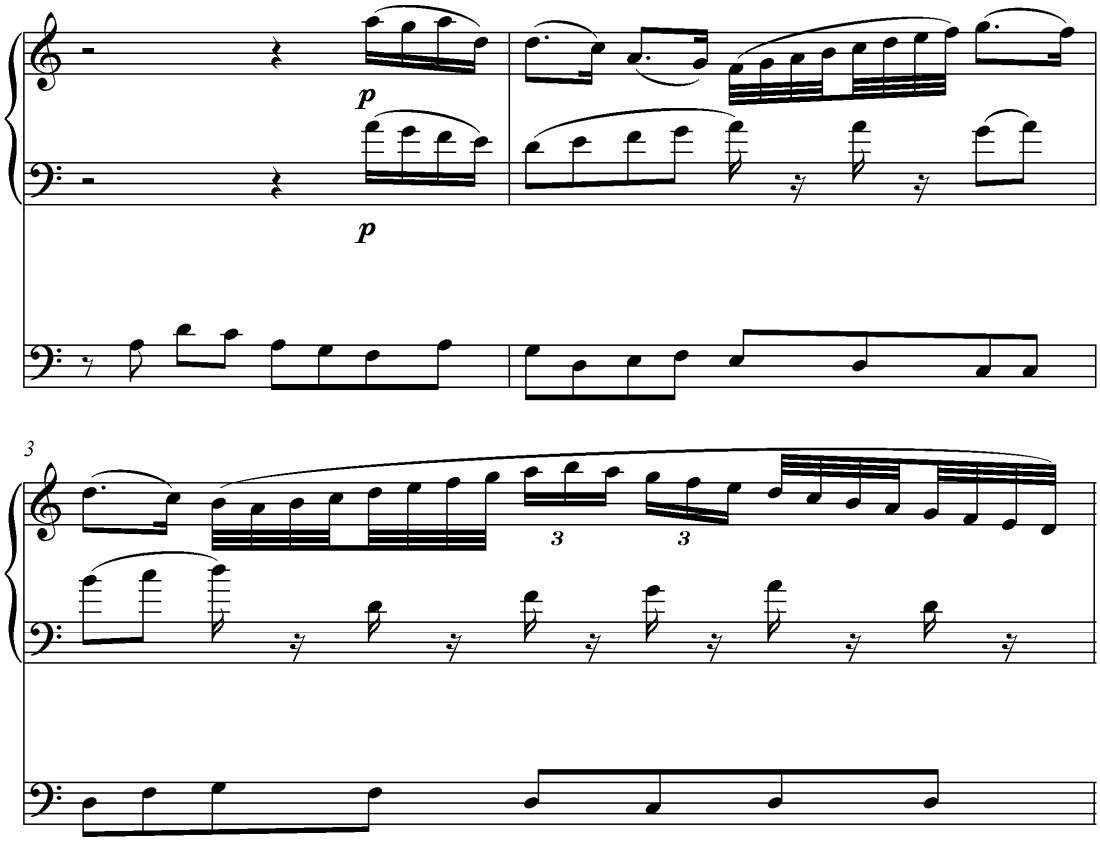
Rhythm is developed in a variety of ways in *Compline*. While the entire work is metred suggesting a conventional approach to rhythm, there are at the same time a number of significant rhythmic features which are worth noting.

Changing time signatures are a feature of specific sections rather than throughout the entire work. While the first ninety-six bars are in 4/4, the changing time signatures employed in bars 97-110 have the effect of causing a ripple and disturbing the predictable atmosphere

One might not expect to find a dance rhythm in a *fantasia* that deals with sleep and death, taking its inspiration from a religious antiphon. The waltz rhythm gives the music a lightness, lending it a theatrical quality. The sombre, ecclesiastical side of death is replaced by a more garish tone. It is almost like laughing in the face of inevitable death.

Rhythm generates a very different mood through the four-hundred and forty-eight continuous quavers which are played by the violas, and later the cellos, in the Recapitulation, bars 354-410. This section of the work, marked *legato punto d'arco*, *sempre piano*, lasts just over three minutes, enveloping the listener in a kind of hypnosis. The effect is like speaking in a monotone for a prolonged period of time. The purpose is to create a kind of musical freeze while at the same time generating a mechanical movement. Three very different types of rhythmic effect can be observed here: firstly, the continuous, though even, movement of the quavers (*legato punto d'arco*,) and secondly, the highly-contrasted rhythms of the various musical moments from earlier in the work, now recalled in an intermittent fashion. Finally, there is the contrast which is achieved when both of these are combined, allowing each to stand out in clearer relief. Example 15 shows this contrast between the cello and marimba parts.

Ex 15 *Compline* Recapitulation *Salve Regina* in quavers in cellos *Salve* motif A1 in marimba, bars 398-400



Ornamental rhythms are also a feature of the work. The marimba part in the Exposition, bars 186-196, is highly ornamented both in terms of rhythm and melody, (Ex 18 below). There is a certain nocturnal starkness in the writing which exploits the almost contradictory sounds which characterise the marimba. This instrument can be dark, velvety, resonant and at the same time dull, hollow and light. In the Recapitulation bars 358-364, arabesque-like rhythms are a feature of the writing for piccolo, clarinet and bass clarinet.

Finally, a repeating effect is noticeable in the microplyphonic section, bars 63-75 and 79-90. The four-part imitation at a semiquaver creates, especially in the higher ascending sections, a sound similar to that heard when a vinyl record has skipped, resulting in multiple repetitions of the same sound. It is as if we are hearing just a single melody that is being shaken out or staggered.

4. Harmony/Pitches

Compline is based on clearly identifiable tonal centres. The music can be modal, tonal, diatonic, chromatic and bitonal and there is also use of the whole-tone scale. There are a number of instances where modal and chromatic music is developed at the same time.

The pitches used are short quotations or motifs from the *Salve Regina* antiphon which is in the D mode. The motifs generated are detailed in section **1. Form** above. These phrases were selected on the basis of variety and their capacity for variation and development. Usually the pitch of the notes is preserved on first hearing although the rhythm is often changed. The *Salve Regina* antiphon is rarely obvious since the quotations are part of a larger orchestral tapestry and only a few notes of the original are used at any given time. The treatment to which they are subjected such as canon, retrograde, additive and subtractive process, wedging and splicing, also blurs the their connection to the original. Gerald Barry's comments in a radio interview with the musicologist, author and teacher Arthur Sealy speaks about borrowing as transformation:

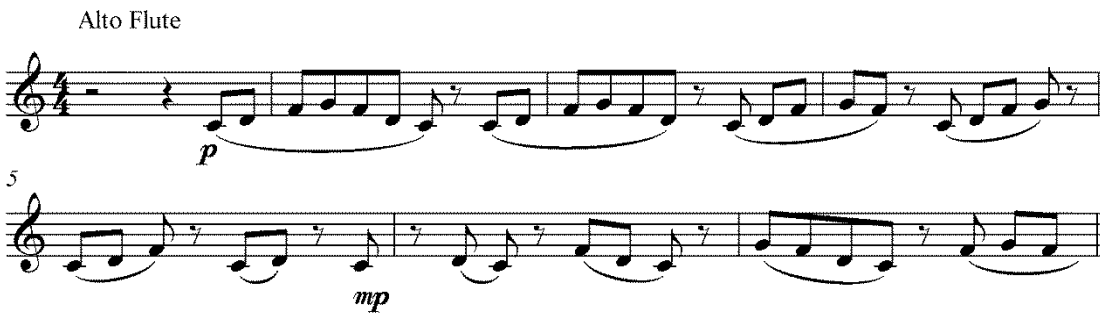
> 'There's no difference in my mind between different periods. All that matters is the quality of something. I am as emotionally involved in something that happened in the 18th century as something that happened in 1998. In the early '80s in Cologne, Germany, I and two other composers Kevin Volans and Chris Newman, founded a Society for Newer Music. We never had any concerts but we had a manifesto. That's all we had. In that manifesto it said we were free to take anything we wanted from any period of music. Whatever we wanted we would take. All of history was ours, one vast continuum, and there was no difference between the 13th and 21st centuries. It's all ours. But we must make it our own. This is the only duty you have to something you take. You must give it something new; at least as good as it has already. The only difference in taking something is what you do with it and what the final result is. If you take something you have a real duty not to betray it. Anybody can take anything. That's easy! But what's important is what you do with it..'[9]

Compline does borrow heavily and hopefully what has been taken is not betrayed but rather transformed into something that is radically different.

The opening of *Compline* demonstrates how modal, quartal and chromatic harmony can be combined to produce something that is different. The work begins with the horns and cellos playing in fourths which result in seconds, giving the music a dissonant quality as opposed to a purely modal one, (Ex 1). The *Gementes* theme which follows in the *divisi* violas and then the *divisi* violins, is modal in character but this is increasingly disturbed by a chromatic distortion, an Eflat, which is heard in the violas. The violas gather support from the cellos and flute, gradually 'worming' their way into the modal tonality centred on D, eventually destroying it. The clusters in the strings at bar 37 move the music towards D minor with the presence of Bflat and C#. These chords become the basis of the D minor melody played at first by the clarinet at bar 41 (Ex 5) and then after an eight-bar transition, by *divisi* violins in Bflat major at bar 63. The tonality continues to shift as the music of bars 63-75 is repeated from bar 79 in C major.

Melody is often developed through additive and subtractive processes, canon and retrograde, or varied by augmentation and diminution. There are several aims in the use of these approaches. Firstly, it is important to achieve a sense of line. The chant offers an excellent example of an interesting line. By building up the phrase note by note or doing the reverse and also by using retrograde and inversion, a whole new set of lines can emerge. Treatment of a melody by canon, augmentation and diminution can cast it in an entirely new light. Example 16 shows the development of the alto flute line through subtractive and additive process.

Ex 16 *Compline* B2 *Misericordes* motif in alto flute, bars 112-118



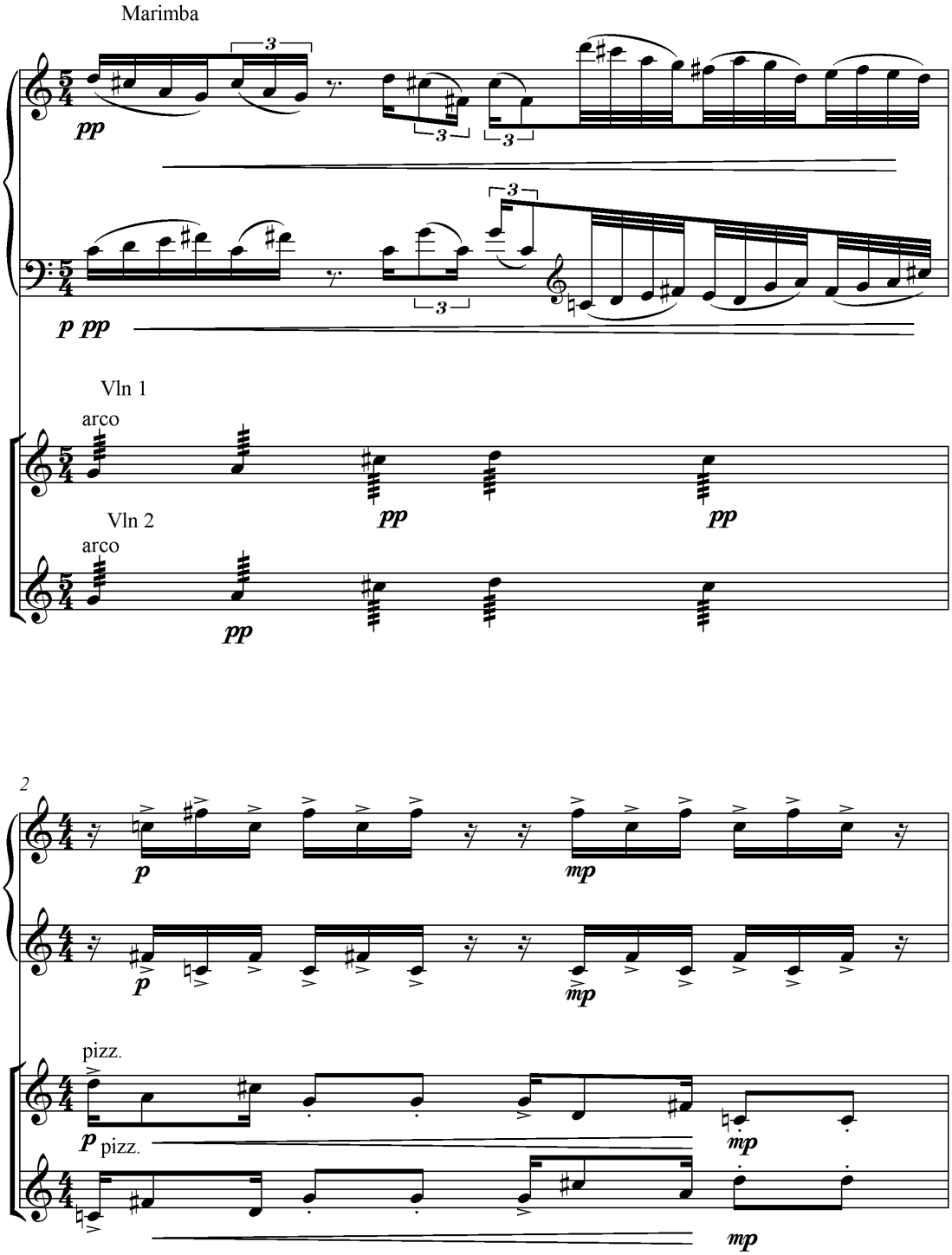
Giving each line its own melodic and rhythmic independence is a further aim in the writing, with the purpose being to generate greater energy and forward motion. If this

can be achieved in a number of different lines then the momentum should be all the greater.

At the same time, there is the question of how to give a sense of unity to many independent lines? This is primarily achieved by the common pitch material shared by all the lines. It is very easily and effectively done when all the pitches are from the same mode. As our modern ears cope comfortably with the dissonances found in chromatic clusters, combining lines where the pitches are fundamentally chromatic can also be effective, interesting and unifying.

Quartal harmony has already been referred to above. A special use is that of the tritone. It can be heard in particular in the Exposition B bars 192-195 in the marimba and violins and later in the Recapitulation in trombones and horns in bars 357-382.

Ex 17 *Compline* Exposition Marimba + violins tritone, bars 192-193



The use of the whole-tone scale has already been discussed. This scale emerges from the *Regina* motif, by chromatically altering the fourth, eight and ninth notes. Because each note is a major second apart, it is more difficult to create a sense of journey,

climax or satisfying cadence. The sameness leads to a certain blandness in the harmony. This sound is exploited in the Waltz, (Development bars 220-313).

Finally, it is interesting to observe how a purely modal line can be placed with chromatic harmonies and work very effectively. In bars 112-121, the alto flute plays the modal *Ad Nos* motif, against which the strings, clarinet, oboe and piccolo all develop chromatic lines. While there is a strong contrast between the sounds, they nevertheless complement one another.

5. A Programme work

Salve Regina is used for daily Christian worship. As part of the liturgy it has a living context which gives it meaning and purpose and a sense of time and place. In other words, it already has a programme. To use it as the basis for the creation of a new programme therefore seemed a natural development. The fact that the piece is sung at the end of night prayer, immediately associated the piece with a number of specific themes: sleep, death, night, shadows, light at night and the sounds of death and night. Of course the prayer itself could also have been the basis for a programme, as in McMillan's *Veni, Veni Emmanuel,* however, in the case of this work the prayer forms no direct part in the ideas which shaped the piece.

Section 1 of the work opens with an invocation of the night with the horns playing the *Salve* motif, the short *ritornello* which punctuates the entire piece. A mood of calm is established via the long notes on the horns while an air of anticipation is also generated by the hushed sound of sustained bass pedals and timpani roll.

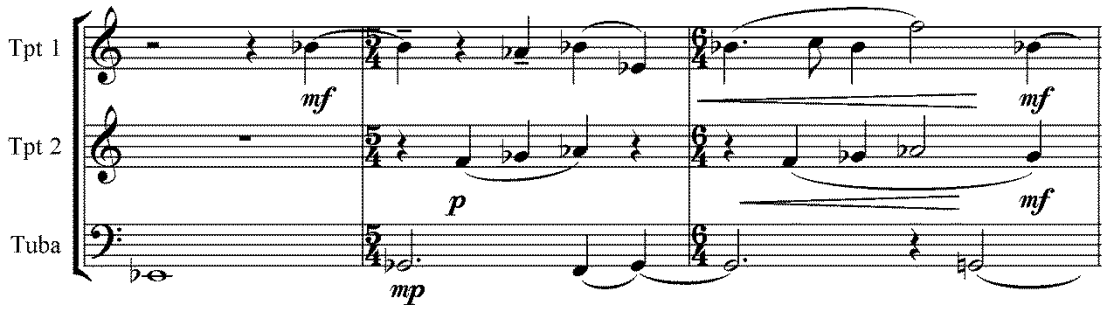
An eerie atmosphere, shrouded in darkness then begins to emerge as the *Gementes* motif, A3, gradually unfolds in the violas as crotchets at bar 5 and later at bar 15 in the violins as quavers. The unison Eflat3 in the violas from bars 15-22 is a distortion which gradually disturbs the sound as it becomes louder. From bars 23-28 the violas divide, playing minor seconds, Eflat3 and E3, with this interval ascending and the sense of disturbance becoming more pronounced. The ghostly mood is further underlined by interjections from the flute, playing a version of the *Salve* motif in long

notes at a high pitch. The opening twenty bars set out to create an atmosphere of night, darkness and wonder.

Bars 41-90 are a reflection on the eternal sleep or death. The writing here is influenced by the deaths of two young people in the weeks leading up to Christmas 2009. Specifically, the mood of the music is inspired by their funerals, each on a beautiful day, each in a church full of sunshine. The contradiction between the darkness of the event and the bright sun which suggested summer and happiness, was so powerful, it made the sadness even more unbearable. The melody at bar 63 is a four-part canon at the semiquaver for *divisi* violins, and it suggests the bright sunlight. The micropolyphony gives the music a shimmering feeling, like a mirage or the reflection of the sun on sea. The countermelody (Ex 6) doubled in the violas and cellos seeks to capture the heartbreak and fraught emotions of each of the funerals. The cello/viola melody grows out of the 'disturbance' motif, heard first in the violas at bar 15. However, it grows into a soaring melody, using the upper register of the cellos to increase the sense of expressiveness. The rising line is supported by the basses which ascend by step in semibreves through an octave in bars 63-74. This music is an attempt to connect with deep emotions, particularly those of grief and loss.

Section 1 ends with what might be termed the sounds of death. The *Salve motif* returns at bar 90 as thirds, in the horns, accompanied by tuba and double bass playing an E flat pedal. Beginning at bar 96, a fifteen-bar brass interlude explores sounds one might hear as a person is dying. This is not so much a detailed aural representation of, but rather a musical response to, the sounds heard. In death there is often a clear breathing pattern. This pattern can often be accompanied by pitched sounds of different types such as moaning, crying or gasping. These sounds often have a narrow range. The music here is repetitive, confined, agitated and restless. As the restlessness increases, the tempo quickens and the sounds become short and uneven. Bars 96-103 is a trio for two trumpets in C and a tuba. The music is very repetitive and the use of rests gives it an uneven feel. Both the second trumpet and tuba have a narrow range, while the first trumpet pivots on B flat and A flat, occasionally moving to the fifth above or the fifth below, and playing a variation on the *Salve* motif.

Ex 18 *Compline* Exposition brass trio, bars 96-98



Trombones are added at bar 103 and horns at bar 104, as the music becomes more erratic, with more use of rests, a wider range and an increase in tempo, suggesting greater disturbance and agitation. The music from bars 103-112 describes a type of panic attack. Quaver-note values predominate, with off-beats in the horns, a further increase in tempo and very loud dynamics. People in the final hours may experience many such moments and the music is a direct response to the composer's own experience of accompanying a family member on his final journey. The instrumentation is significant also, with the brass being used purely in order to achieve a brashness and hollowness in the sound.

A nocturnal atmosphere is introduced in the opening of Section 2, bars 112-144. A sustained and muted F6 is heard in the first violins, while the sustained notes in muted second violins slowly ascend from the octave (F5) through F#5, G#5, and A#5. The night sky, dotted with stars, magical, romantic night, is represented here. The *Ad Nos* motif (B2), enters at bar 64 on the alto flute played in quavers, (Ex 16 above). The stop-start nature of this seven-note motif, as it is deconstructed and reconstructed, attempts to create a sense of magic and wonder. This atmosphere is enhanced by the chromatic countermelodies in the oboe, clarinet, piccolo, flute and bassoon which are based on the C-F fourth, derived from motif B2.

The waltz, which forms a central part of the Development, takes its inspiration from ballets which sometimes act as interludes in operas. It also explores the paradox between the enjoyment of dance and the terror of nightmares or bad dreams. Nightmares depicted as part of an opera ballet sequence may be at once beautiful, garish and even terrifying. Their function can be similar to the aside speech in a play

where characters allow the audience into their mind, their real thinking and feelings. Such ballets are sometimes conceived as dreams where the characters unveil to us their greatest joys and hopes or their fears and nightmares. The dance featured in *Compline* was also inspired by the reading of a poem by Mark Granier, titled *Dancing Plague*[10], based on a strange epidemic which took place in Strasburg, Alsace, in 1518, where hundreds of townsfolk danced continually for up to four days until many of them eventually dropped dead of heart attacks or exhaustion.

While there is no specific programme for the waltz, which forms part of *Compline*, in a general way the dance is used to depict a scene where a person might be dancing in the face of death or dancing towards death. Without being frightening it is intended to be strange or perhaps even weird, with the whole-tone scale giving a whiteness or blandness to the sound. As the dance progresses, an atmosphere of frenzy is developed with more instruments joining in, the dynamics becoming louder and the sense of excitement building through the use of closer imitations. The cymbal crash at bar 318 signals the collapse of the dancers in a heap either dead or exhausted.

There is no attempt in this work to paint a picture with the clarity of a Richard Strauss tone poem. It may even be the case that the waltz rhythm, the whole-tone scale and the instrumentation are sufficient cues to allow each listener to imagine their own programme? From a musical standpoint the dance form is deliberately chosen to act as a total contrast to what has gone before by giving the chant a very different context, and by using the whole-tone scale to not only create the appropriate mood but also to achieve a certain disconnect with the mood and tone of the music up to this point.

The mood of the final three minutes of the Recapitulation, bars 340-410, is one of increasing calm brought about by the rhythmic monotony of the continuous quaver movement, first in the violas and then the cellos for which the players are given specific directions. Firstly, they are asked to play *sul ponticello* making the sound slightly scratchy and secondly, *legato punto d'arco*, giving a very joined, even sound made with the tip of the bow. In effect, each note is played with the same weight and coupled with the *sempre piano* dynamic, creates a mood that is at once stark and hypnotic. It endeavours to evoke that state which is between consciousness and unconsciousness or semi-sleep.

6. Background and context

Developments in a particular field can come about as a result of the earlier, sometimes pioneering, work done by others. Some commentators believe that Bach's finest achievement was to take forms which earlier composers had created and pioneered, and expand and develop them into something much greater. It seems that composers have always studied and learned from other composers, in some cases building on and developing earlier styles and in other cases, using them as stepping stones to create new and very different music. A number of the works and styles which influenced *Compline* are referred to here.

Plainsong has been used to fashion new music since medieval times and perhaps before. Many great renaissance masses and motets are based on particular chants. In the 20th century, Durufflé based his Requiem on the original plainsong *Missa De Profundis*, giving it a modern harmonization and a metred rhythmic structure. James McMillan's *Veni, Veni Emmanuel* is interesting because of the thoroughly contemporary orchestral setting in which the ancient music is placed. While the idea of using old music to generate new music is a well-established and accepted tradition in the world of composition, one cannot but wonder, will a simple diatonic piece survive in the very varied and highly sophisticated world of contemporary composition? How will a modal piece fit in with highly chromatic music where tonality may be vague and inconsequential? Will the originality of the new music be compromised? How will two very different traditions be linked?

McMillan succeeds in creating a very dynamic and dramatic piece of music, which is totally permeated by the sounds of the advent plainchant *Veni, Veni Emmanuel*. Those who doubt that the chant will stand up to the rigours of a contemporary treatment are proved wrong. The chant is subjected to many different approaches and yet it has no difficulty in holding its own, even when it is part of a very complex musical context. Perhaps the lesson is that strong lines in whatever style they are written, will usually have a powerful impact. However, it is also worth noting that what James McMillan has really done is composed a percussion concerto and the plainsong sits very easily with the sound of the drums and not least the ethnic percussion instruments.

Plainsong in the context of *Compline* is used in a different way. The *Salve Regina*, unlike the *Veni, Veni Emmanuel*, is a long antiphon, with many phrases. The approach would need to be different. From the outset, a number of micro-phrases were identified for use and development, (See **1. Form** above). The plainsong could be used in a number of ways: the phrase could be deconstructed and then reconstructed; the phrase could be used to create something new and different; the intervals of the phrase could be widened by wedging or narrowed by splicing; the phrase could be subjected to instrumental effects such as *sul ponticello, pizzicato* or *tremolo*; the rhythm could be altered and each note given the same value. The overall conclusion seems to be the same as with McMillan's work: namely that plainchant is a very flexible type of music which can be easily adapted to fit many different and varied styles and musical contexts.

Borrowed tunes also feature in Gerald Barry's music. In his *Piano Quartet*, Gerald Barry takes existing music, traditional Irish melodies, and in a compelling manner, transforms them into very different music. He is single-minded in not wanting the borrowed material to be recognisable. In a radio interview with the late Arthur Sealy, Barry said; '..in my Piano Quartet you can really hear some of these tunes. Part of me regrets that actually…'[11] Barry employs an effective compositional approach by taking well known Irish tunes such as Carolan's *Sí Bheag*, *Sí Mhór* or Thomas Moore's *The Last Rose of Summer* and disguising them through inversion, retrograde and rhythmic variation. Despite his protestations to the contrary, there are probably few people would recognise the presence of *The Last Rose of Summer* in Barry's Quartet. In the case of *Compline*, the borrowed material is possibly more apparent, but the context in which the plainsong finds itself is so utterly different and the use of the material is so varied, that one could only conclude that this is genuinely new music. Perhaps there is merit too in taking something and not so much trying to hide it, as dressing it in such a way as to give it an entirely new aspect?

Gerald Barry and Raymond Deane use many compositional techniques which are of interest to the contemporary composer. The principle of melodic transformation is very evident in the work of both composers. In *Compline*, there is wide use of the subtraction and addition principles which is also a noticeable feature of Deane's *Seachanges*.[12] Augmentation, diminution, inversion and retrograde are compositional

devices used by Barry and Deane and they also feature in *Compline*. Wedging (stretching) and splicing (narrowing) of intervals is a particular feature of Barry's *Piano Quartet*, (see bars 140-169), and it is also widely used in this work. Examples from *Compline* include the viola part, bars 23-27, first trumpet, bars 97-111, oboe, bars 113-120, flute and piccolo, bars 117-127.

Gerald Barry's focus on the primacy of line finds resonance in this work. There is a use of canon although not to the same degree as in Barry's *Quartet*. At the same time, *Compline* is essentially a linear work with a strong emphasis on the creation of independent lines and with few enough purely homophonic sections. The counterpoint in *Compline* is primarily derived from the motifs taken from *Salve Regina*. These motifs have already been described. Using this pitch material many different layers of melody, including a number of strict canons, are developed.

At the same time, much of the opening sixty bars of *Compline* explores a precise polyphonic texture. The micropolyphony, heard at the beginning of *Compline* was not only inspired by the music of Ligeti but also by the physical appearance of his scores. Listening to Gyorgy Ligeti's *L'Atmospheres*[13], *Lux Aeterna*[14] and *Ten Pieces for Wind*[15], were stimulating particularly in terms of the sheer wall of sound that these works create. But the actual score is no less compelling. The notes on the page are so dense it looks like a carpet with a very tight, rich pile. A different kind of counterpoint occurs in the development of independent lines. The distortion of a phrase or motif through the use of new (chromatic) notes is an important compositional technique found in *Seachanges* and is also used in *Compline*.

The choice of instruments used in *Compline* owes much to Raymond Deane's *Seachanges*. His use of marimba, alto flute and antique cymbals is highly effective, while the writing is also very idiomatic. All three instruments were added to the *Compline* score because of their particular sound and timbre and in order to produce a particular effect. The somewhat hollow, ghostly sound of the marimba is used in Section 2, bars 144-150, to usher in the waltz, while the alto flute with its breathy, even tone, is used for passages with continuous quavers where the more brilliant colour of the flute is not required.

A further influence is the effective writing for individual instruments and ensembles as evidenced in Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra*[16]. Melodies are crafted to suit the tonal and expressive possibilities of particular instruments, such as the magical opening to Movement 2*, Allegro Scherzando*, for side drum, two bassoons and *pizzicato* strings. Britten's *War Requiem*[17] is certainly a most inspiring work, and a study of this monumental work is also hugely rewarding because of the many practical approaches to music composition it offers. For instance, Britten demonstrates how to craft beautiful melodic lines and also how to create drama in music, combined with an effective but economic marshalling of orchestral and vocal forces. The wind writing in Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* was also an influence through its use of contrasting textures and *tempi*. Lutoslavski's *Funeral Music for Strings*[18] and his *Concerto for Orchestra* were also inspirational.

7. Conclusion

This composition seeks to link medieval and new music. It attempts to find inspiration on the one hand, in music of the past and at the same time to learn from and build on a great body of compositions produced by the musical giants of our time. It attempts to answer two questions: Can the exciting musical sounds being explored today be fused successfully with completely different music of the medieval period? Is chant still capable of being a catalyst for musical originality in our times? The answer to both these questions is in the affirmative. Plainsong, which is said to be the bedrock of Western music, continues to have the capacity to be a potent musical force in the composition of new music.

The majestic melodic line of *Salve Regina*, and its modal context, suggested a wide array of compositional possibilities. Three musical events in particular show the enormous flexibility and capacity for invention which plainchant provides: the micropolyphony in Exposition A, bars 63-75, the waltz featured in the Development, bars 220-320, and the trance-like unfolding of the entire *Salve Regina*, retrograde and original, in the Recapitulation, bars 354-410. The creative musical response enabled by the chant is very different in each of these three sections and yet each is engaging and is capable of gaining the listener's attention. This music makes a real connection with another epoch, while still emerging as new music with its own unique voice.

The personal significance which the *Salve Regina* holds for the composer, has a powerful influence on the programmatic nature of the work. The visits to Solesmes and the ritual encountered there, the singing of the chant in semi-darkness, the blowing out of the candle and the stillness of night, these memories were powerful triggers for the imagination.

Compline then is a work with many links: links to a special time in the composer's life, links to a world of medieval music, links to the night world of calm, quiet and nightmare, links to a world of eternal calm. These are universal themes which make the meaning of this work different for every listener.

Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet

Introduction

This work was commissioned by the duo, Emmet Byrne (oboe) and Katherine Lacy (bass clarinet). They specifically asked for a work for cor anglais and bass clarinet due to the limited repertoire for this combination. The suite was begun in June 2010. Soon after, the duo contacted the composer to say that they thought the timbre produced by combining the higher register of the oboe with the lower register of the bass clarinet was very striking. They asked him to reconsider the instrumentation and instead write for oboe and bass clarinet.

The re-worked music for the new instrumental combination seemed to work better from the outset. The brighter, more resonant tone of the oboe combined very effectively with the deeper more mellow sounds of the bass clarinet, while there was further contrast in the registral possibilities of each instrument. The blend was also enhanced by the similarities of these instruments: both are melody instruments and both are very agile when it comes to fast passages. Finally, the characteristic *vibrato* of the oboe and the absence of it in the bass clarinet gave this instrumental pairing a special quality. It is also interesting that repertoire for this combination appears to be non-existent. *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet* may be the first work for these two instruments.

Two works in particular were studied before the Suite was composed. Firstly, Carl Nielson's *Quintet for Winds*, Opus 43[19] and secondly Benjamin Britten's *Six Metamorphoses after Ovid* Opus 49[20] (a work for solo oboe). Nielson's work written for members of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet in 1922, is both challenging and idiomatic. It demonstrates his ability to write music which gives the instrumentalist an opportunity for virtuosity thus enabling the full range of each instrument's capability to be displayed, while simultaneously ensuring the ensemble is dynamic. The strong lyrical flair which characterises Nielson's music is particularly evident in the opening movement *Allegro ben moderato* and is heard in the bassoon solo which commences the work. The fanfare-like theme with upbeat semiquaver repeated notes is first played in octaves by the flute and oboe at bar 31, capturing perfectly the character

demanded of wind writing and at the same time typifying the energy required to give the music powerful forward momentum.

Benjamin Britten's *Six Metamorphoses* was written in 1951 for the daughter of his friend, the composer, Rutland Boughton. This work is written in Britten's later style and it offers both challenge and opportunity for the solo oboist. What is compelling in this work is the clarity of the programme expressed in Britten's writing for the oboe. The second movement *Phaeton*, marked *Vivace ritmico* paints a vivid picture of Helios's son, Phaeton riding his father's chariot of the sun for a day only to be hurled into the river Padus by a thunderbolt, having soared too high. Niobe's weeping in the third movement, lamenting the death of her fourteen children, is no less convincing. Britten gives a lesson in how to tell a story in a simple but highly effective manner.

Summer Suite for oboe and bass clarinet comprises three movements: *Seaside, Glencomeragh* and *The Final. Seaside* endeavours to catch some of the excitement of summer by the sea, while *Glencomeragh,* on the other hand, focuses on the peace and calm to be found in a very beautiful and quiet place of retreat in the foothills of the Comeragh Mountains. The third movement, *The Final*, attempts to capture some of the frenetic excitement we associate with summer sport.

1. Form

Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet is in three movements:

Movement 1 *Seaside*

The structure of Movement 1 is a set of vignettes or episodes. The movement begins with an introduction followed by five episodes. Each episode explores the musical material presented in the Introduction. The movement concludes with a Recapitulation and a short Coda.

Summer Suite *Movement 1 Seaside* *Chart 1*

Bar	Formal Section	Pitches/Tonality	
1-40	Introduction	F, Fm, A flat, A flat m D, Dm	3rds major/minor in bass clar. Ascending 6th, descending 8ve in oboe Seagull motif = 3 repeated quavers in oboe
42-55	Episode 1	B flat (m) -> G	Dialogue – seagull, 3rds, scales
56-64	Episode 2	Shifting	Sequential, 6th & 8ve inverted
64-90	Episode 3	F(m)	Seagull motif, 3rds
91-98	Episode 4	Shifting	Sequential, 6th in oboe
98-110	Episode 5	B flat (m) shifting	Dialogue based on 3rds
111-161	Recapitulation	G (m) ->F	Motifs from Introduction Descending triplet 3rds bass clar. Dialogue recalls episodes 1 & 5
	Coda		3rds, 6ths, 8ves in oboe Seagull motif in bass clarinet

Movement 2 *Glencomeragh*

This movement is loosely based on a palindromic structure. The rate of movement, dynamic levels, texture and intensity all gradually increase reaching a point of climax. They then retreat gradually, decreasing before retuning to the point from which they began. The formal shape reflects an experience of calm which gradually leads to more heightened emotion and subsequently returns to the original calm.

Summer Suite *Movement 2 Glencomeragh* *Chart 2*

Bar	Formal Section	Pitches/Tonality	
1-34	1	B m	11 note *Cantus Firmus* (*C.F.*) 3 times in oboe, *ppp –> pp -> p* Countermelody derived *C.F.* in bass clar. (bar 12)
34-52	2	B m/dim	*C.F.* in crotchets and quavers Louder dynamics
53-69	3	D (m)	Longer note values, softer dynamics, retrograde bars 24-34 in oboe & bass clar., dialogue
70-91	4	B m	Inversion *C.F.* bars 1-8 in oboe Retrograde *C.F.* bars 1-11 in bass clar. Bitonality Bm + Bflat Reprise *C.F.* Final 3 bars in unison

Movement 3 *The Final*

The final movement is an exact palindrome. The original and retrograde versions are joined by a two-bar link consisting of dotted minim minor sevenths.

Summer Suite *Movement 3 The Final* *Chart 3*

Bar	Formal Section	Pitches/Tonality	
1-4	Introduction	B,D,F + adjacent pitches: C#,C, Bflat,Eflat, E	Four-bar phrase: b.1 seven quaver motif + rests. b.2 retrograde - varied b.3 retrograde inversion – varied b.4 retrograde of retrograde inversion
5-8			Oboe repeats bars 1-4 Bass clar. Bars 1-4 in jumbled order: 2,1,4,3
9-54	Main Section	B,D,F C#, C, Bflat, Eflat, E	Bass clar. ostinato 20 times bars 1-3, subtractive process Oboe combative melody adjacent notes
55-56	Link		Pause on 7^{th} D – C
57-102	Main Section 1 retrograde	Bdim + C/Cm Adjacent pitches	Bass clar. *ostinato* builds from 1-20 notes retrograde Oboe agressive melody
103-110	Introduction 1	B,D,F + adjacent pitches	Retrograde bars 1-8

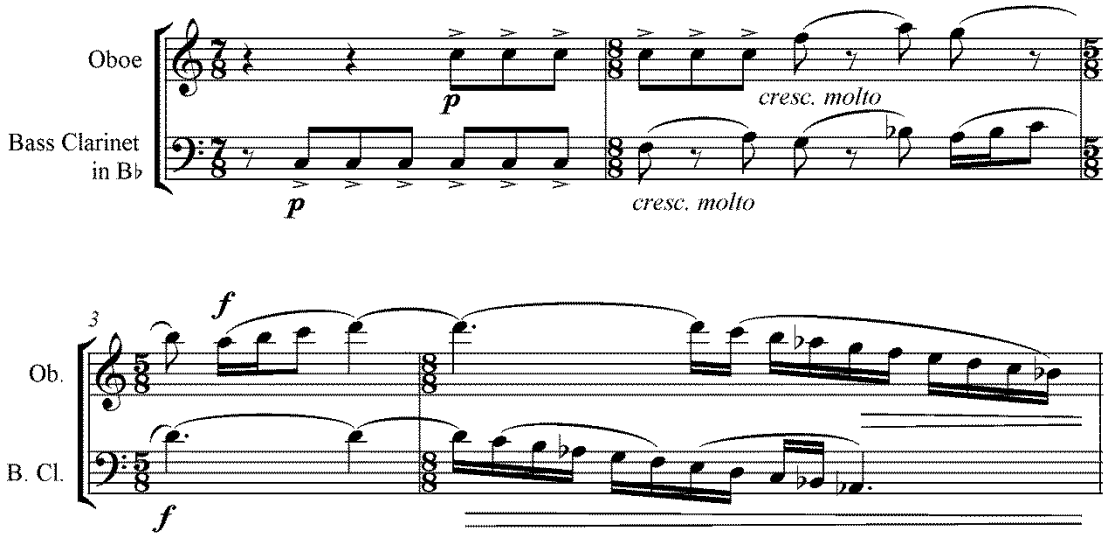
2. Texture

The entire work is dominated by a contrapuntal or linear texture with specific polyphonic techniques employed in the three movements.

In Movement 1, *Seaside*, we have examples of canon and free imitation. The lively melody played first by the bass clarinet at bar 51 and then taken up by the oboe, is a typical example.

Ex 1 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*

Movement 1 *Seaside* canon, bars 51-54



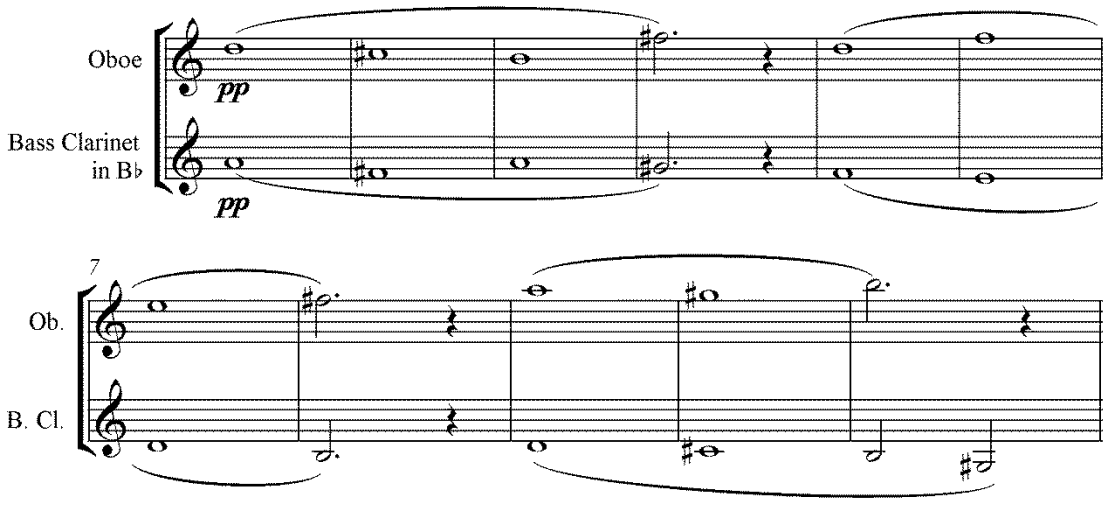
Movement 2, *Glencomeragh,* begins with an eleven-bar *cantus firmus* for solo oboe. The *cantus firmus* is repeated by the oboe with a countermelody in the bass clarinet derived from the same pitches.

Ex 2 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*

Movement 2 *G*

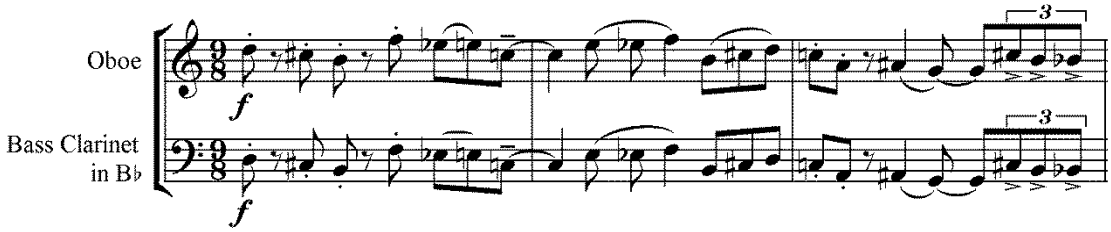
Glencomeragh

cantus firmus and countermelody, bars 12-23



In the Movement 3, *The Final,* serial techniques such as retrograde, inversion, pitch row, additive and subtractive processes are also employed. Bar 2 is the retrograde of bar 1, while bar 3 is the inversion of the retrograde. As can be seen in Ex 3, the retrograde and retrograde inversion, both have a slightly altered rhythm.

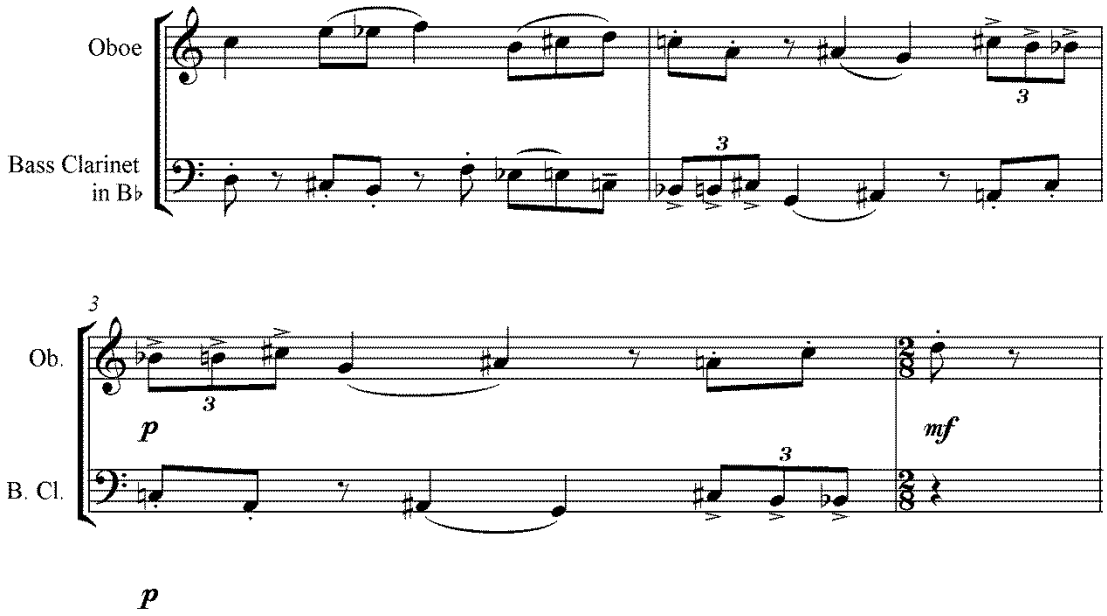
Ex 3 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*
Movement 3 *The Final*, bars 1-3



The music is conceived in a linear manner, with the horizontal movement being central to how the music proceeds. Tonalities emerge as the lines develop with little deliberate attempt to organise chords or chord progressions. Harmony therefore, can be seen as a by-product of the interaction of the two lines and not as something that is deliberately planned. While the music is clearly tonal, it is not triadic, because the freedom of individual lines is more important than ensuring a particular set of progressions. Linear freedom facilitates both the development of lines appropriate to the particular instrument and in addition, the crafting of music designed to be substantial and challenging, in terms of both rhythm and melody, for the instrumentalists. Allowing the lines to move freely produces a wide variety and combination of sounds. An example of this can be seen in the strong rhythmic counterpoint generated in Movement 3, *The Final*, bars 6-9. Example 4, demonstrates the total independence of the parts resulting in cross rhythms, three triplet-quavers against two quavers which give a powerful bounce to the music, and the use of rests which come at different junctures in each part, adding to the interactive nature of the music.

Ex 4 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*

Movement 3 *The Final*, bars 6-9



On occasions there are snippets of melody in the oboe which are accompanied by the bass clarinet. This is the case in *Seaside* at bar 76 (Episode 4). The melody features a sequentially treated rising third in the oboe, while the bass clarinet plays a one-bar accompaniment figure which descends by step. This is one of the few examples of homophonic texture in the entire suite.

Given the limitations imposed by two-part writing, one would expect monophonic texture to be used in the music from time to time. It affords a strong contrast with the polyphonic and homophonic textures and heightens the voice of the solo instrument when it plays alone. There are a number of examples, one such being the opening four bars of *Seaside*, where the music is introduced by a solo bass clarinet. Movement 2 is also introduced by a solo oboe, (see Ex 13 below) while the bass clarinet plays a solo at bar 34. The movement concludes with the oboe and bass clarinet playing the first two phrases of the *cantus firmus* separately before coming together to play the final three bars in octaves. The first four bars of the third movement are also played in octaves. One can find great clarity and a powerful focus in a fast, loud, unison

passage, as is the case here, adding to the contrasting effect of the harmony which emerges at bar five when the instrumental lines separate.

Heterophonic texture is a feature of the Movement 2, *Glencomeragh*. As already stated above, the pitches found in the eleven-bar *cantus firmus*, are the basis of all the music in this movement. We can see this at bars 47-52 (Ex 17 below), the bass clarinet has the *cantus firmus*, now in crotchets and quavers while the oboe plays the various minor thirds which characterise the *cantus firmus*. The same melodic (pitch) material being played simultaneously is a quality, particularly of this movement.

3. Rhythm

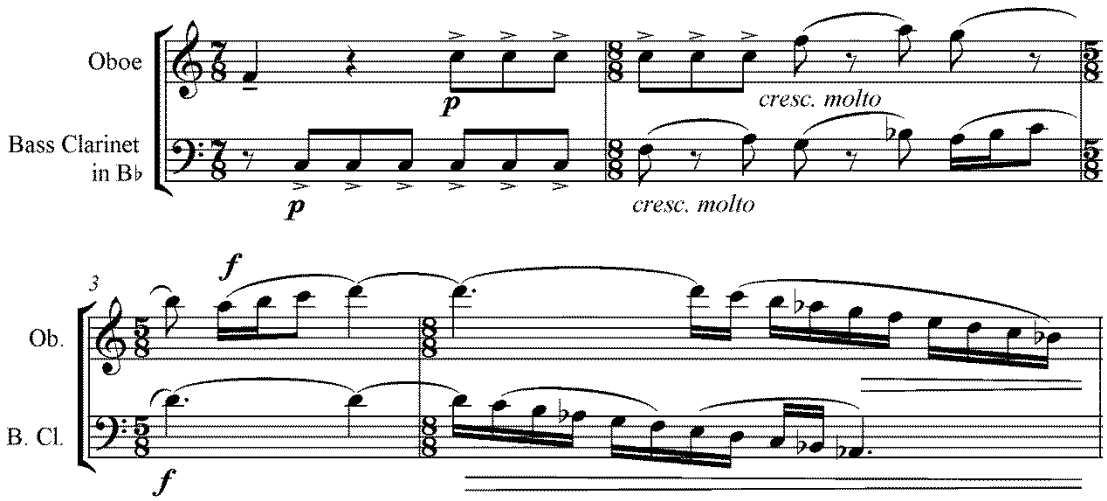
Rhythm has a vital function in all music. But in two-part writing rhythm has an even more important function. There are no beautiful chords, no exciting clusters, no rich orchestral colours, in other words the music is very exposed. A key means of making it interesting for the performer and listener alike, is through the use of rhythm that is dynamic. In the *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet* there are a number of different approaches to rhythm.

A feature of the three movements is changing time-signatures. For example, in Movement 1, *Seaside*, Episode 2, bars 42-55, there are twelve changes of time signature, (Ex 1 above). In addition to constantly changing time signatures in Movement 3, there are also irregular groupings particularly in some of the 9/8 bars, with each instrument having its own grouping. A typical example occurs in bar 8 where there is 2+2+2+3 in oboe against 3+2+2+2 in bass clarinet. These rhythms underline the combative, aggressive nature of the music and the programme. There is a real sense of the two instruments going their own way, independent of each other. This is also a feature of the 9/8 music in the opera *Bust*.

A chance element is also applied to rhythm in Movement 3. Since the pitch materials are mixed freely to create the lines, thereby facilitating a linear texture, it should also be possible to adopt a similar approach to rhythm. However, what is attempted is on a very limited scale. The idea is to maintain a strict tempo and adherence to note values in the bass clarinet part, which is an *ostinato* (bars 1-3) being treated subtractively in bars 9-52 and a retrograde *ostinato* being treated additively from bars 59-110. The

oboe part is totally different to that of the bass clarinet. It is aggressive, uses lots of repeated notes, has a wide range and its phrases are separated by long rests. If the oboe part is considered horizontally, with no concern for precise vertical alignment, it might allow for greater freedom of expression. However, there is one demand: the oboist makes the correct entry, re-aligning with the bass clarinet, after each of the long rests which punctuate the phrases comprising the oboe part.

Ex 5 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*
Movement 3 *The Final* rhythmic freedom, bars 33-36

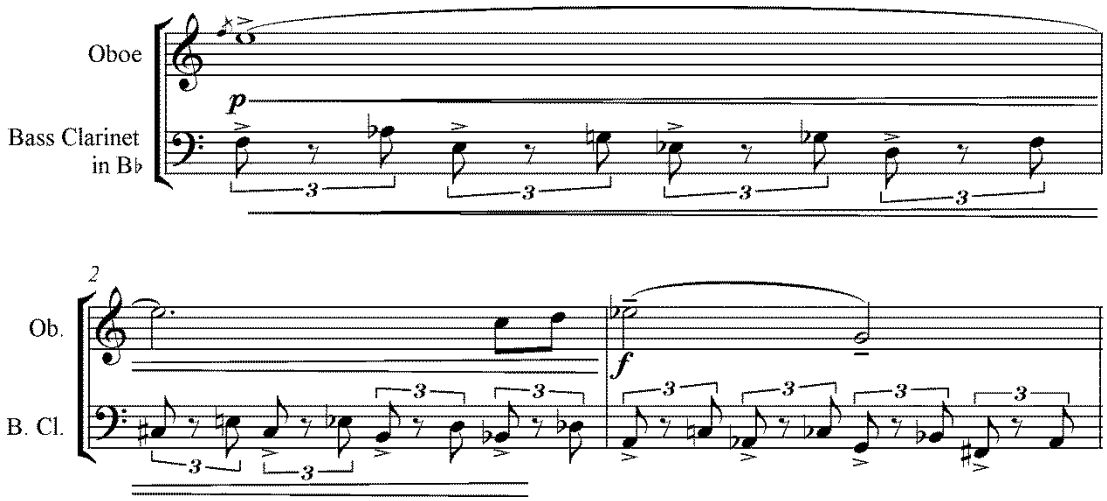


The gradual increasing and decreasing of note lengths/values is an interesting way of changing the rate of movement without altering the tempo. We see this in Movement 2, where the semibreves with which the movement begins, change to minims briefly, then crotchets, quavers and finally semiquavers, before the process reverses to the point from which it began. The value of this process is that a sense of calm is maintained through the tempo, although things around it may be on the move.

The use of short clipped notes against long ones is also an effective method of achieving rhythmic contrast which is enhanced by the different tone colours of the two instruments. The oboe's long plaintive note with contrasting triplet quavers in the bass clarinet in Movement 1, *Seaside*, bars 142-144, is a fine example.

Ex 6 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*

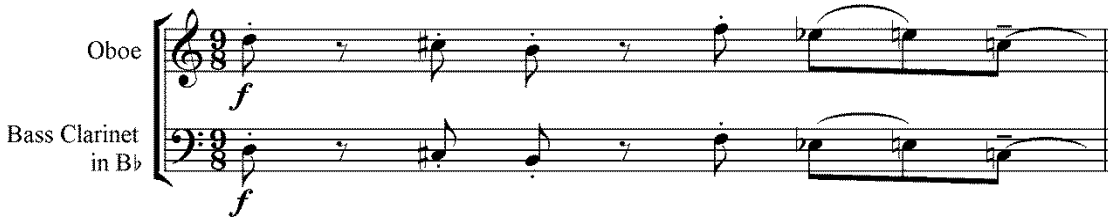
Movement 1 *Seaside* bars 142-144



Rests are an integral part of rhythm, which is one of the primary contributors to the sense of drama in this work. The rests in bar 1 of Movement 3 suggest excitement, that something is about to happen. They create an atmosphere of uncertainty.

Ex 7 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*

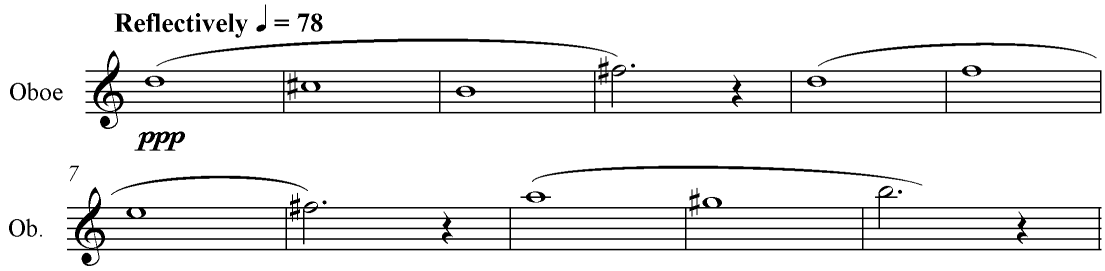
Movement 3 *The Final* use of rests, bar 1



Similarly, the rests in the oboe part at bars 33 and 36 of the same movement, are almost like a fighter who steps back to take a rest before returning to the fray. (Ex 5 above)

However, the three crotchet rests employed in the *cantus firmus* of Movement 2, bars 1-11, have a very different dramatic impact. Here they are used to induce a sense of calm.

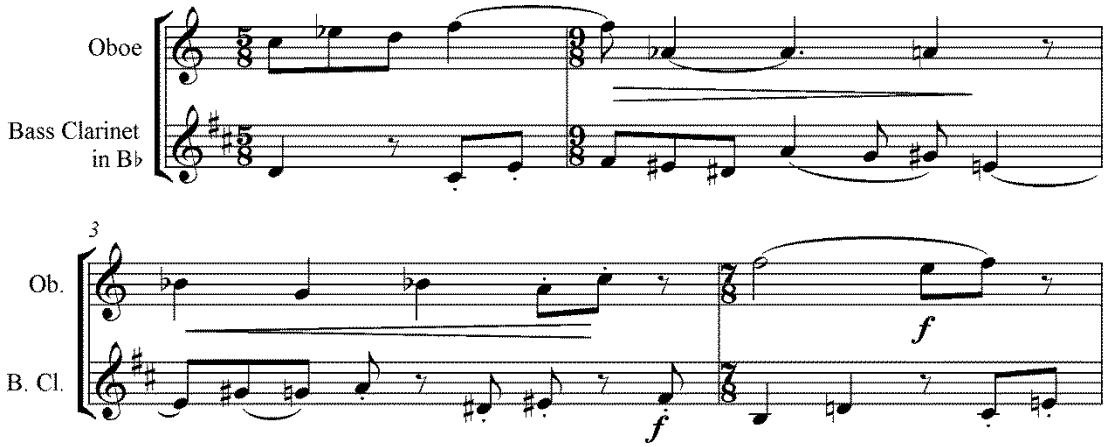
Ex 8 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*
Movement 2 *Glencomeragh Cantus Firmus*, bars 1-11



The mood of the movement is one of contemplation, facilitated by the absence of *busy-ness* or any sharp sense of focus. The long notes, the rests and the *pianissimo* dynamics all contribute to this sense of quiet, as does the palindromic shape, which suggests a journey of going and returning.

Finally, drama is also created by the use of syncopated rhythms and strongly contrasted rhythms in each instrument. The rhythm in Movement 3 is strongly conditioned by the use of the palindrome. This is particularly the case where long-short values are employed in the original. The retrograde therefore has short-long values leading to heavily syncopated music as can be seen in Example 9.

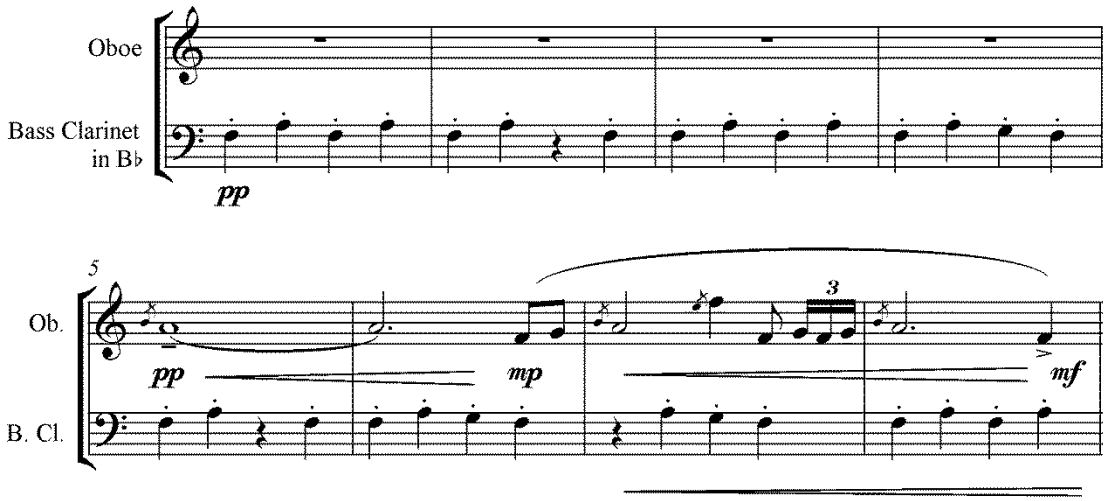
Ex 9 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*
Movement 3 *The Final*, bar 85-88



4. Harmony/Pitch

The three movements in the suite all emanate from the interval of a third. In the case of *Seaside*, the specific pitches are F-A/Aflat. In this movement the pitch is constantly shifting to new tonal centres while the intervals of a major and minor third are repeatedly explored. When the oboe enters at bar 5 we are immediately aware that its notes are derived from the third heard in the bass clarinet in bars 1-8.

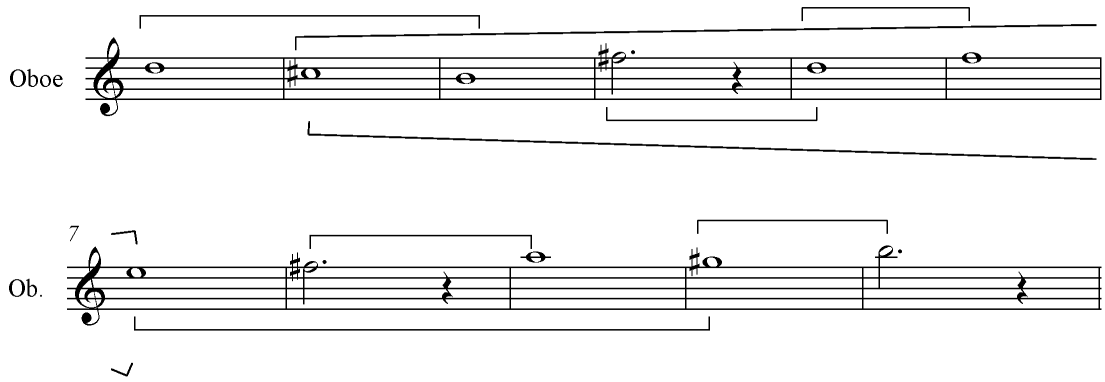
Ex 10 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*
Movement 1 *Seaside* bars 1-8



In the Movement 2, the interval of the minor third becomes the basis for the entire movement and the pitches outlined in the opening eleven bars give rise to all the pitch material in the movement.

The *cantus firmus* which is heard in the oboe, bars 1-11 outlines seven thirds, five of which are minor thirds. The music is centred on a B tonality.

Ex 11 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*
Movement 2 *Glencomeragh* major and minor thirds, bars 1-11

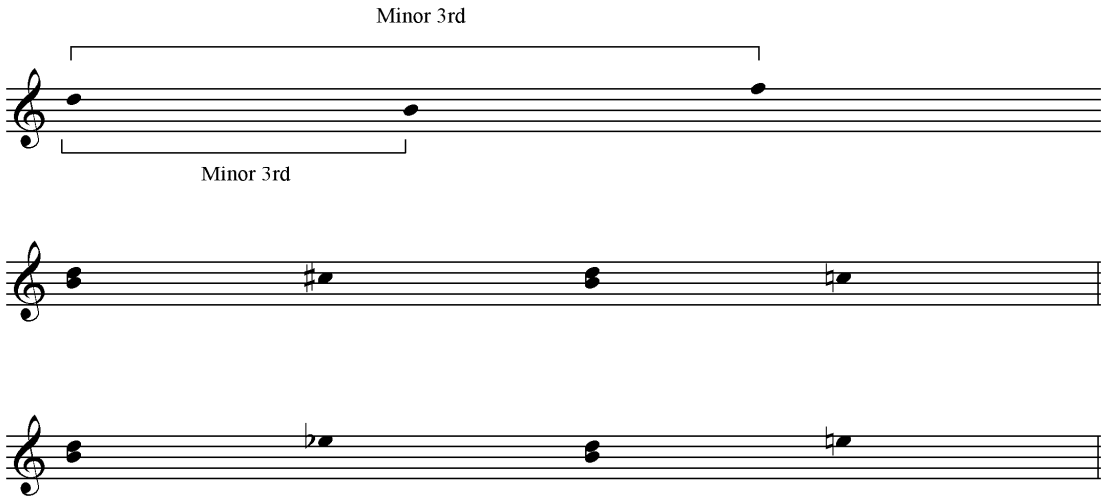


Again in Movement 3, the minor thirds on either side of D, D-B and D-F, form the initial pitch basis of *The Final*. However, what takes on a new significance in this movement are the notes which connect the minor thirds; D-B (C sharp and C natural) and the notes which connect D-F (E flat and E natural). These connecting notes provide much of the pitch material for the oboe part, (Ex 5 above).

Almost all the pitch material for *The Final* is derived from bar 1, the seven pitches heard on the oboe and bass clarinet are explored and developed in a variety of different ways throughout the movement. Here, as in the second movement, the pitches grow from the first and third notes, D and B, which form a minor third. If we think of the D as a kind of fulcrum, then D and F (F is the fourth note we hear) also form a minor third. We can also see that the pitch material of this movement grows directly from the minor thirds heard in Movement 2. However, as in Movement 3 there is the vital additional element referred to above, in that the notes on either side

of D are pushed upwards towards the F and downwards towards the B, in a type of wedging (i.e. stretching the original interval further apart) and splicing, (The opposite, making the interval smaller)[21]. With D as the axis, it is possible to imagine the two minor thirds being subjected to a process of connection, which effectively morphs the thirds into seconds.

Ex 12 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*
Movement 3 *The Final* connecting minor thirds to create seconds, bar 1



The seconds which are generated by focussing on notes on either side of each minor third, also have a significant effect on the harmony, creating a large proportion of sevenths and ninths. As this movement progresses, a two-bar *ostinato* in the bass clarinet is developed from the notes of bar 1 and its retrograde. At the same time motifs built from the notes C, E and E flat become dominant in the oboe part. The clarinet *ostinato* has a clear B tonality while the oboe part which is based on the connected notes, has a C tonality, (Ex 5 above). The two tonalities, each a step apart, grow naturally from the process outlined above.

5. Instrumental Timbre

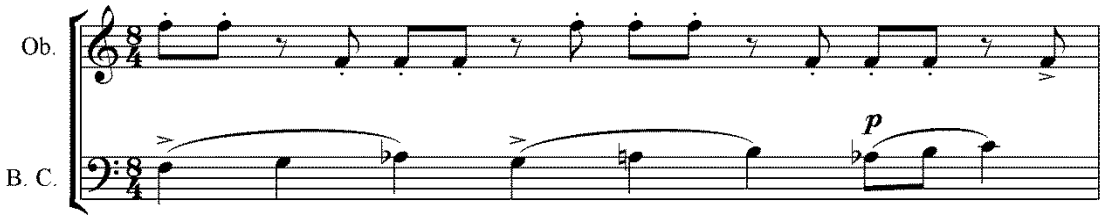
Since the oboe and the bass clarinet are in many ways an ideal pairing for a duet, it is strange that little if any music has been written for this grouping before now. The fact

that composers from the latter part of the 19th century onwards favoured the bass clarinet for its dark and powerful range ultimately may have resulted in it being stereotyped? Wagner, and even the composers of the second Viennese School, seemed happy to exploit the sombre dark tone of the instrument which is especially evident in its lower register. And somewhat like actors who become typecast, the same may have been the lot of the bass clarinet. It is only in the second half of the 20th century that composers began to write for the bass clarinet as a solo instrument, that is, as an instrument with its own voice/part in an ensemble or as a single instrument entirely on its own. For example, two of Karlheinz Stockhausen's compositions, *Tanze Luzefa* for solo bass clarinet and *Tierkreis* for bass clarinet and piano, are among his most popular and frequently performed music. The possibilities presented by writing for this instrument therefore seemed endless, while pairing it with the oboe also seemed to be breaking new ground.

The oboe with its high, clear sound is a perfect foil for the deep, mellow sounds of the bass clarinet. The combined range of both these instruments is just over four octaves, thus allowing a great diversity of registral possibilities. These instruments further complement one another as they are both melody instruments, capable of displaying a rich sonority and at the same time great agility. The clarity, but also the rich dark colour of the bass clarinet in the low fast passages, makes it a very attractive partner for the oboe whose *vibrato* is highly effective when it plays long notes in slow passages as can be seen in Example 6 above.

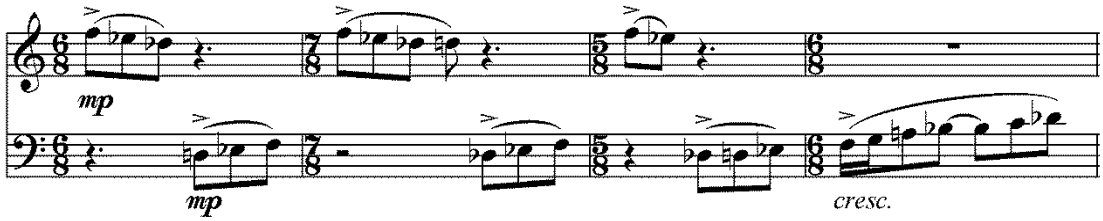
A very different colour is achieved in Movement 1 when the bass clarinet has the melody at bars 65-66. Here it is accompanied by repeated quavers in the oboe. The bass clarinet with its agility and warmth is an able match for the clipped, *staccato* quavers of the oboe.

Ex 13 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*
Movement 1 *Seaside* bar 66



When the two instruments engage in chasing games at bar 43-46 in Movement 1, *Seaside*, we get unity in diversity. They speak with very different voices, the resonance of each is totally distinct and yet they complement one another, with each showing the other off in a different light.

Ex 14 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*
Movement 1 *Seaside* Chasing games, bars 43-46



While the bass clarinet is traditionally prized for the richness of its lower register, it is the upper register which is explored in Movement 2, *Glencomeragh*. The score requests the clarinettist to play at the written pitch and not to transpose down an octave. In other words, it played like a regular Bflat clarinet part. Although these upper notes are clear and warm, they lack some of the darker resonance associated with the instrument and therefore seem ideal for the atmosphere of quiet repose which is developed in this movement. The sound colour and tone achieved in this movement is further enhanced by the fact that both instruments share virtually the same register. Perhaps a reason why composers favoured the lower notes of the bass clarinet is because they are more easily produced. Prolonged playing in the upper register requires great skill. For the final three bars, both instruments play the same notes, demonstrating the beautiful sound that can be achieved when two instruments with very different tone qualities and capabilities are combined, a feature which is also

heard in John Buckley's 'floboe' sound in his *Wind* Quintet[22]. However, in addition to the great demands on the player's skill, a further difficulty encountered through placing the bass clarinet in this register is one of balance. While the oboist is playing in a register where the player is in full control of the instrument, if the bass clarinet is to get the required balance it must control those notes at the extreme end of its upper range. Both the quiet dynamics and the long phrases in *Glencomeragh*, all add to the challenge.

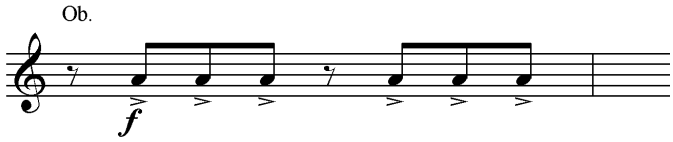
6. A programmatic work Sound/visual pictures – the programme

Each of the three movements in the *Summer Suite* is based on a place and its associated activities. Each has its own set of sound/visual pictures (memories) from which the pitch structure, melodies, harmony, rhythms, mood and drama emanate. While the music is programmatic in nature, it does not attempt to describe detail in the manner of an episode from Richard Strauss' *Don Quixote*, rather it is suggestive, like a Monet painting or a Thomas Hardy character painted with broad brushstrokes. There is no attempt to depict with accuracy any of the memories recalled in this work. The effect is more that of impression and allusion.

For *Seaside,* a number of sound pictures, (visual memories, each with its own internal sound track) are employed, each having a particular significance for the composer who has been fascinated by the sea since childhood. One of his favourite pastimes is walking by the sea and enjoying its sounds. For instance, breaking waves appear to have a number of different sound phases. The three most obvious are, the thunderous sound of the gathering and breaking wave, the *whissh* as the broken wave rolls quickly into shore tailing off as it does so and finally the gurgle of the last remaining water before it begins to run back into the sea. Focussing on the middle phase – the *whissh* phase - one notices the sound is of water running on stones or gravel and then trailing off. It is possible to hear a bright sound at first, which gradually darkens and drops as the sound trails off. The idea of having a major third that transformed into a minor third came from this sound memory. The ambiguity of the major – minor third relationship is the pitch basis for this movement.

The sound of seagulls is an intrinsic part of the sea pictures. Their sound is harsh compared to that of other birds, probably because the sea can often be a noisy place, the seagull must 'shout' in order to be heard. But the seagull, like the oboe, can make very plaintive sounds too. Birds often use repeated sounds and these are heard in the seagull motif.

Ex 15 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*
Movement 1 *Seaside* Seagull Motif, bar 9



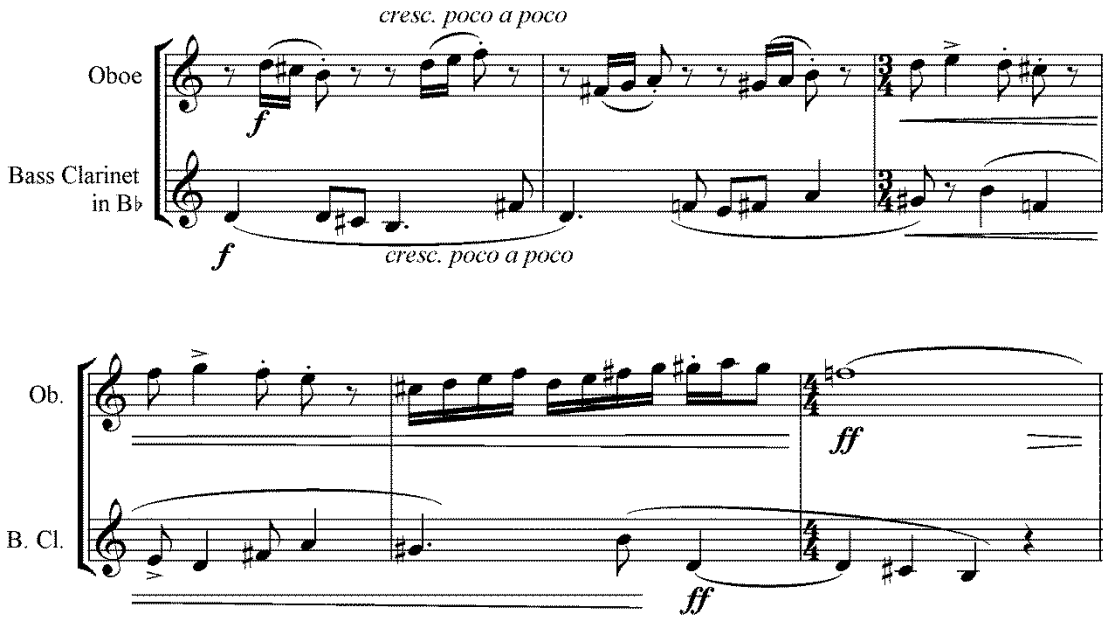
Two of the episodes in the first movement are based on the chasing games which children play at the seaside while splashing in the water; these often result in shouts, screams and laughing, and are depicted by musical dialogue. Movement, energy and lightness are the musical responses to this activity. Episode 1 begins at bar 43 and the game gets under way immediately with the oboe's three descending quavers and the bass clarinet responding with its three ascending quavers, (Ex 14 above). The pace quickens as the quavers are gradually replaced by semiquavers. The canon at bar 51 just adds to the fun. Later in the movement at bars 98-110, Episode 5, the same kind of seaside activity is depicted.

The sound/visual pictures for *Glencomeragh* are very different but no less real. This movement is an evocation of calm and peace, hence the *ppp* dynamic, the slow tempo and the marking *Reflectively*. The inner reflection and introspection which occurs when people go apart can be seen in the use of the darker minor third, this pitch relationship underpins the entire piece. The tonality of the movement is B minor. The main theme or *cantus firmus* is eleven bars long, (Ex 8 above). Although it is broken into three parts by a crotchet rest at the end of bars 4 and 8, the interruption acts less as a division and more as a support to slowing everything down and generating a sense of calm.

At the beginning, activity is kept to a minimum, with semibreve values employed. There is a gradual increase in activity and energy which is suggested in the music by

the gradual shortening of the note values. But this energy is also linked to the quiet time as meditation can cause a feeling of well-being, of calm and peace which is known to facilitate the brain in producing endorphins. The climax of this movement has its genesis in sound memories from walks in the woods at Glencomeragh, memories that are at once, very calming, energising and crowded with the fascinating sounds of birdsong the tree-song. In Example 16, the oboe attempts to evoke these sounds. This is a different approach to that of Messiaen, whose interest in the sounds of birds was so intense that he actually went into the countryside and gardens and graphed down the sounds he heard[23]. On the other hand, the bird-sounds in this movement are new sounds resulting from a reflection on birds singing in the trees.

Ex 16 *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*
Movement 2 *Glencomeragh* birdsong, bars 47-52



In *The Final*, the sound/visual pictures are all about the game. The rhythms and frenetic pace are an attempt to picture a match. All-Ireland day is about the crowd or perhaps more accurately crowds, the crowds on Jones' Road, Dublin, the crowds cheering and singing from parts of the stadium, the bands and of course most importantly the centrepiece is the helter skelter of the game itself. The two teams at war are shown by the total independence of each instrumental line, constantly attempting to outwit one another and gain the upper hand. The interplay between the

two instruments attempts to capture aspects of the game and the tactics. Each has a separate role with its own distinct music. The bass clarinet repeats the first three bars of the movement as an *ostinato*. A subtractive process is utilised with a note being taken away on each repeat. Against this shrinking *ostinato* the oboe part is free, often aggressive and combative with high notes, wide leaps, repeated short *staccato* notes played loudly and stridently. The tonalities are different also, with the bass clarinet centred on B, while the oboe emphasises a C tonality. The bass clarinet suggests a team going about its business methodically, with careful build-ups that break up and must be started again. The oboe, on the other hand, reflects the protagonist who is impatient and always on the attack, refusing to give in. In Example 5, above, we can see the *ostinato* in the bass clarinet centred on a B tonality while the more aggressive oboe part is centred on C and uses repeated notes, repeated figures and accents. The atmosphere of conflict and antagonism is developed through the use of irregular and heavily syncopated rhythms and facilitated by constantly changing time signatures.

Conclusion

Summer Suite for oboe and bass clarinet serves a specific function by providing new repertoire for these instruments. The work suggests that this combination is certainly viable. Indeed, the pairing exhibits a wide range of musical colours and expressive possibilities in the course of the three movements. Movement 1 is a demonstration of unity in diversity where the dark low tones of the bass clarinet are an ideal match for the clearer, nasal timbre of the oboe. In Movement 2 both instruments share the same pitch range with each complementing the other ideally. Movement 3 explores the contrasting timbres of the bass clarinet and oboe, as a means of portraying conflict. The suite also contributes to the repertoire for bass clarinet, taking it out of the orchestra and thereby recognising its immense potential as a solo/ensemble instrument.

The work was written at the request of two professional musicians. It seeks to forge a link between music performance and music composition. The suite attempts to connect the ideas, skills and approaches of the performer with those of the composer. Above all it is hoped that *Summer Suite for oboe and bass clarinet* is a challenging and engaging work for performers and audiences alike.

Children of the Monsoon

Introduction

Children of the Monsoon has its genesis in an environmental disaster which occurred in 2010. In August of that year Pakistan was ravaged by monsoons, causing thousands of people to die and hundreds of thousands to flee their homes. The international media reported on the possibility of a typhoid epidemic due to contaminated water. Around the same time an Irish daily newspaper carried a picture of a father cradling his dying son. The accompanying article explained that children who were de-hydrated had begun drinking water from pools on the streets and that many would die if fresh water supplies couldn't be found. It was this picture which inspired *Children of the Monsoon.* The composer could do little to alleviate the plight of the Pakistani children but he felt that through this composition he was in solidarity with them.

Children of the Monsoon connects in a very real way with the world we inhabit. It describes a world of human misery where parents may have to mourn their dead children. And it causes us to reflect on our increasing vulnerability and susceptibility to environmental disaster, making it especially relevant for these times. This composition seeks to support and complement a worldwide debate on the future of the planet. It is just one other way of keeping before our eyes the consequences of not dealing with climate change. The 2013 typhoon in the Philippines, which killed more than 10,000 people, suggests that such disasters are here to stay.

The opportunity arose for the composer to enter a competition for new works organised by the Crash Ensemble in 2010. Much of the framework of the piece came about as a result of entering the competition. While the total instrumentation was specified, composers were free to write for any or all of the instruments in the ensemble. The maximum duration was set at twelve minutes and the work had to be completed by a set date in October 2010. These boundaries were, in a certain sense, more freeing than limiting, in that they became challenges, challenges to complete the work within the time, to use the available instrumentation and to stay within the twelve minute time limit.

The possible instrumentation included: violin, viola, cello, double bass or electric bass, piano, electric guitar, percussion, clarinet or bass clarinet, flute, alto flute or piccolo, trombone, soprano voice. Compositions for the total ensemble, smaller groupings or solos would be accepted. With the exception of the electric guitar, *Children of the Monsoon* uses all the available instruments and the soprano voice. The double bass is preferred to the electric bass and the alto flute to the concert flute or piccolo. This range of instruments coupled with the soprano voice offered an exciting possibility for a wide variety of sound combinations. In particular, the strings and soprano were appealing in terms of the range of emotions they could represent for a lament. Witold Lutoslavski's *Funeral Music for Strings* was a powerful template. The first movement and the latter part of the second movement are rich in pathos and a poignant tribute to Bartok. The choice of strings was further influenced by their use in Gorecki's *Symphony No 3, Op. 36* (*Symphony of Sorrowful* Songs)[24]. The symphony's First Movement has been described as having a 'sombre and elegiac tone' which is powerfully brought about by the twelve minute string introduction to the vocal section. In *Children of the Monsoon* the muted strings from bars 229-275 endeavour to create a similar atmosphere.

The soprano voice offered the possibility of including text, with the added option of a cultural link to Pakistani or Urdu music, making the connection with the tragedy more obvious and real. Raymond Deane's writing for the alto flute in his *Seachanges* was the main reason for choosing this instrument as opposed to the concert flute or piccolo.

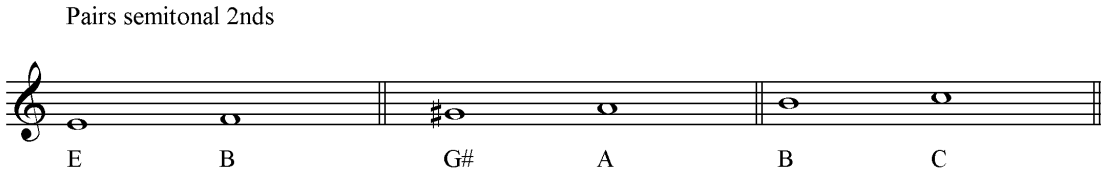
The piece wasn't selected by the Crash Ensemble as one of the pieces to be played in its Spring 2011 Free State Concert. However, the work did get its premier performance in July of that year at a concert which formed part of the Waterford Tall Ships Festival, 2011. The violin, viola and cello parts were played by the Contempo String Quartet, with the other parts being performed by Cork and Waterford based musicians. The work was warmly received by an audience of around three hundred people at the Good Shepherd Chapel on Saturday July 2nd, 2011.

1. Formal Structure

Children of the Monsoon has a two part structure: Part 1, The Children At Play, comprises bars 1-228, while Part 2, The Lament, comprises bars 229-356. Both parts are very different in mood, tempo, instrumental character, use of voice and in terms of their rhythmic, melodic and harmonic approaches. Nonetheless, both 1 and 2 are critically interlinked. The semitones used to build the melody in Part 2, are also used in Part 1 but in a totally different manner. Part 2 was the first music to be composed.

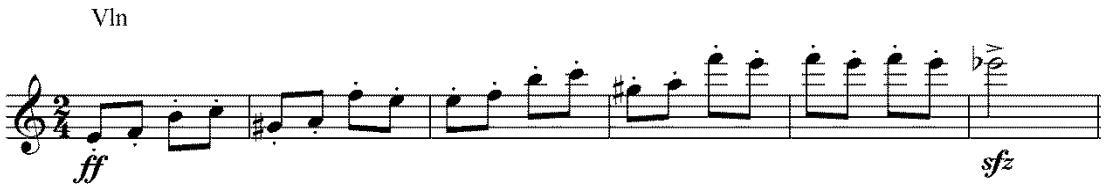
Part 1, bars 1-228, comprises six sections: Section A, A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, with each section being separated by a short episode. Section A is based on the following pitch relationships; E – F, G# - A, B – C.

Ex 1 *Children of the Monsoon* Pitches for Part 1

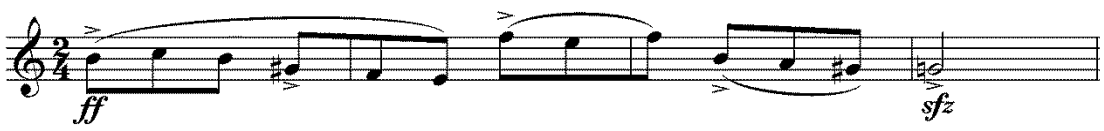


Section A, bars 1-13, comprises two motifs: the first, motif *a*, is heard on violin and clarinet at bar 5, while the second motif *b*, is heard on alto flute at bar 7. The piano accompaniment uses the same pitches creating seconds.

Ex 2 *Children of the Monsoon* motif *a* violin, bars 5-10

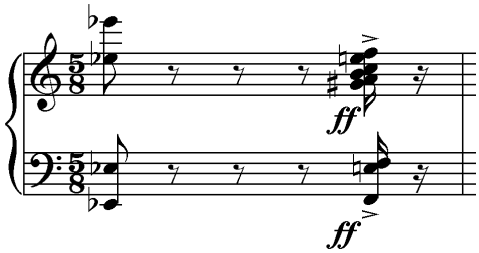


Children of the Monsoon motif *b* alto flute, bars 7-10



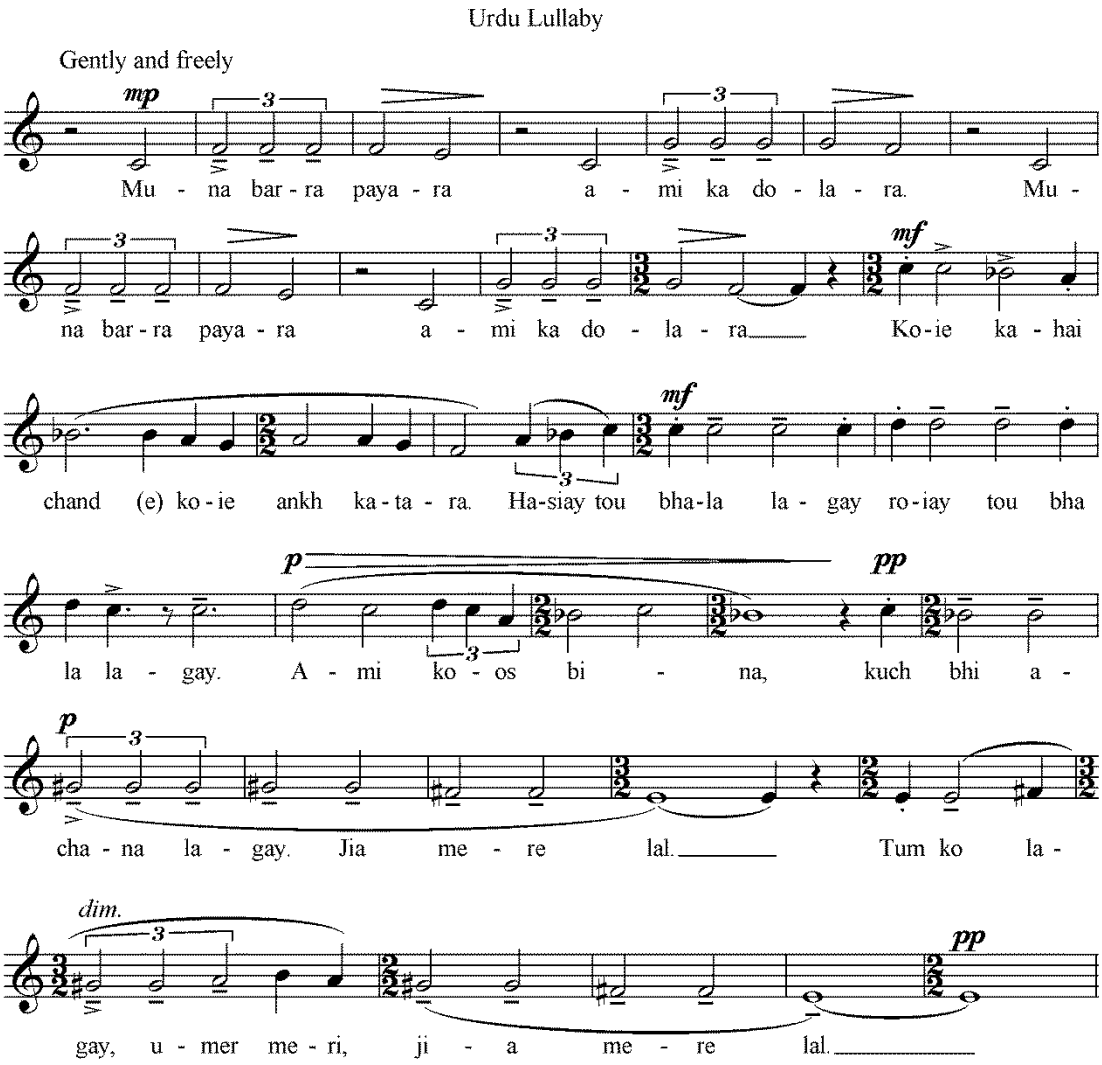
Four of the five episodes are twelve bars in length, in 5/8, and are a step higher at each appearance. A piano cluster which is heard in episodes 1, 2, 3 and 5, moves closer by a quaver to the first beat of the bar on each repeat.

Ex 3 *Children of the Monsoon* Episode 1 Piano cluster, bars 14-25



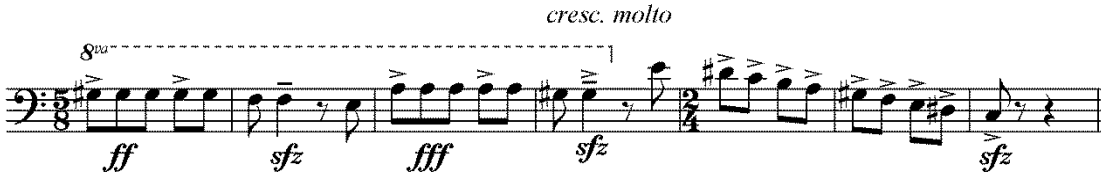
Episode 4 is an arrangement of an *Urdu* lullaby.

Ex 4 *Children of the Monsoon* Urdu lullaby



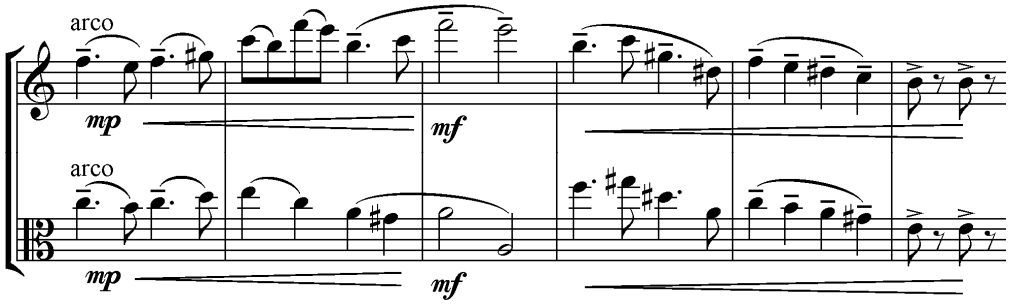
Motif *c* which is first heard on the trombone at bar 20, is varied in each episode.

Ex 5 *Children of the Monsoon* motif *c* trombone, bars 20-26



Motif *d* is introduced in Section A1, bars 26-36 by the violin.

Ex 6 *Children of the Monsoon* motif *d* violin/viola, bars 26-36



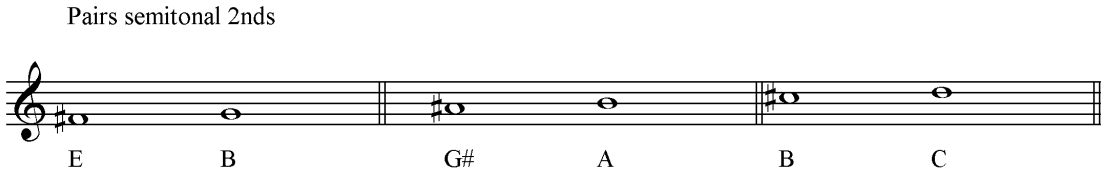
Children of the Monsoon *Chart 1* *Part 1*

Bar	Formal Section	Pitches	
1-228	Part 1	E-F, G#-A, B-C,	The children at play
1-13	A	E-F, G#-A, B-C	3 sets of semitone steps 2nds piano. Motif *a* violin/clarinet Motif *b* alto flute
14-25	Episode 1	Eflat, E, F, Gflat	5/8, String 2nds cluster piano 5th quaver Motif *c* in trombone
26-36	A1	Pitches Section A above	Motif *d* violin/viola Motif *b* alto flute
37-48	Episode 2	F, F#, G, G#	Up step Piano cluster 4th quaver
49-89	A2	Pitches S. A above.	Counterpoint strings -> winds -> ensemble
90-103	Episode 3	Gflat, G, Aflat, A	Up step Piano cluster 3rd quaver
104-121	A3	Pitches S. A above	Alto flute/clarinet 2nds Motif *a* violin
122-154	Episode 4 Lullaby	F+Fm	Strings F Alto flute/clarinet Fm
155-189	A 4	Pitches shown in S. A above.	Piano 2nds Motif *a* canon trombone/clarinet Motif *a* canon trombone/clar/vln Motif *b* alto flute
190-198	Episode 5	D, D#, E, F (Bass)	Rising semitone figure bass Piano cluster 2nd quaver
199-228	A5	Pitches shown in S. A above.	Climax: dotted/loud/accented Screams/*glissandi* voice -> timpani/voice

Part 2, Bars 229-356, comprises five sections: Sections B, C, C1, B+C, Coda.

Section B, bars 229-275, the melodies developed in this section are based on the following pitches: F# - G, A# - B, C# - D

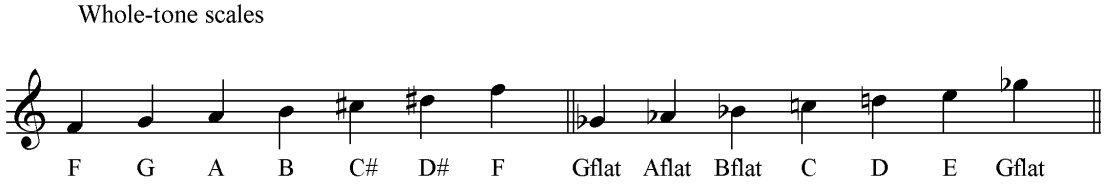
Ex 7 *Children of the Monsoon* Part 2 Section B Pitches



The same sets of semitonal relationships (different pitches) as those in Example 7 are also used for much of Part 1, Bars 1-228. The viola and cello, bars 229-230, play melodies in semibreves, using the semitonal pitches, just quoted, although each melody places the pitches in a different order. The soprano joins the strings at bar 260-271, also using the same pitches and singing line 1 of the Lament *Suan, Suan, Suan a chroi.*

Section C, bars 275-291, is a setting of line 2 *Suan gan cheo go deireadh na hoi(che.)* and it introduces the whole-tone scales which are heard on cello, piano and voice at bars 275-292.

Ex 8 *Children of the Monsoon* Part 2 Section C whole-tones
F,G,A,B,C#,D# and Gflat,Aflat,Bflat,C,D,E



Section C1, bars 292-303, is a short interlude for flute, clarinet, and trombone, also employing whole-tone scales. Bars 301-303 for piano and timpani form a link between Sections B and C.

Section B + C, bars 303-356, combines the wind interlude and string semitonal music, while the piano plays whole tones in the LH and semitones in the RH. As the music progresses, the whole-tone scales are treated as even notes (crotchets) at first, later as long notes and finally as crotchets punctuated by rests. The music played by the viola and cello which begins with the first crotchet of each semibreve followed by a three crotchet rest, gradually evolves into continuous quavers which are built up through additive process. At bar 328 the violin enters with a new melody derived from the semitonal melody it had already played in semibreves from bars 245-275.

Coda Bars 340-356

At bar 340-356 there is a short coda in which the strings and voice recall the lament for the final time.

Children of the Monsoon *Chart 2* *Part 2*

Bar	Formal Section	Pitches	
229-356	Part 2	F#-G, A#-B, C#-D Whole-tone	
229-290	B	F#-G, A#-B, C#-D	Lament
229-244	B	As above	Lament viola and cello
245-275	B	As above	+ violin
260-275	B	As above	*Suan a chroi*…. Voice/strings
275-291	C	Whole-tone scales.	*Suan gan cheo*.. voice/cello/timpani/piano
292-301	C1	Whole-tone	Interlude flute/clarinet/trombone
301-303			-> link piano/timpani.
303-339	B + C	Pitches as above + whole-tone scales	Lament strings/piano RH. Whole-tone wind/piano LH.
340-356	Coda	Pitches shown in B above.	Lament strings/voice

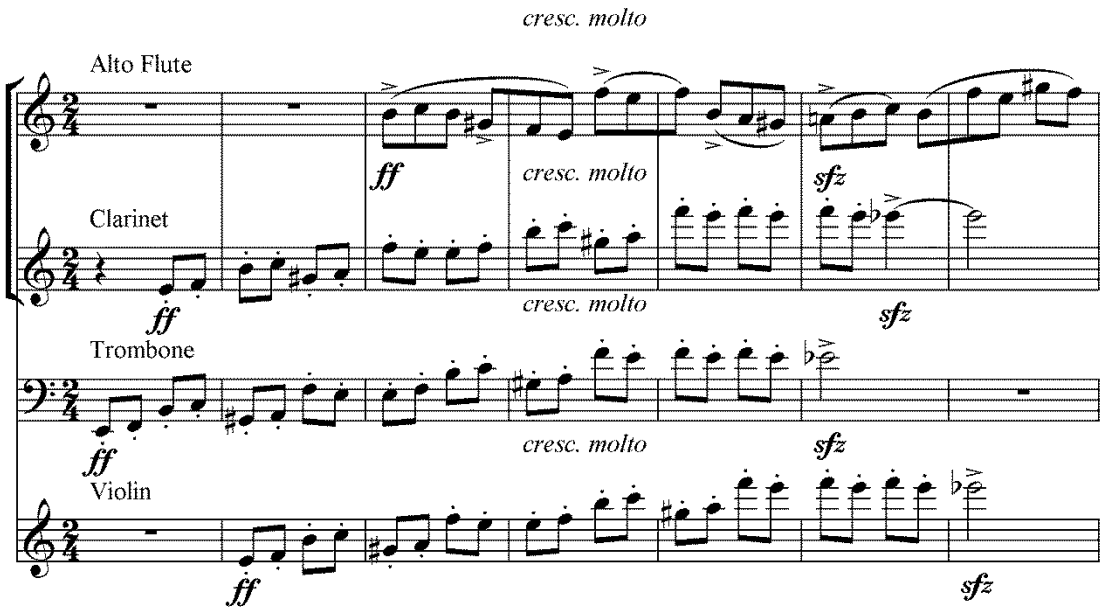
2. Texture

Children of the Monsoon employs a polyphonic texture based on independent lines. In a general sense the following textures are used on their own or in combination:

- Canon
- Free counterpoint
- Heterophony
- Triphonic
- Homophonic + polyphonic

In the light of the programme for Section 1, canon is a very useful technique indeed. It is used here to describe games the children play, picturing them running after one another and darting in many different directions. At bar 137 the canon is between alto flute and clarinet, bars 157/158 features a two-part canon for trombone and clarinet, while a three-part canon for trombone, clarinet and violin begins in bars 169/170.

Ex 9 *Children of the Monsoon* Part 1, Section A1, bars 169- 175, 3 part canon + countermelody in alto flute



The musical image of a group of children chasing one another is vivid, with motifs *a*, *b*, *c* and *d* creating the child characters, while additional rhythmic energy is supplied by both the piano and the bongos. One of the benefits of using canonic texture with

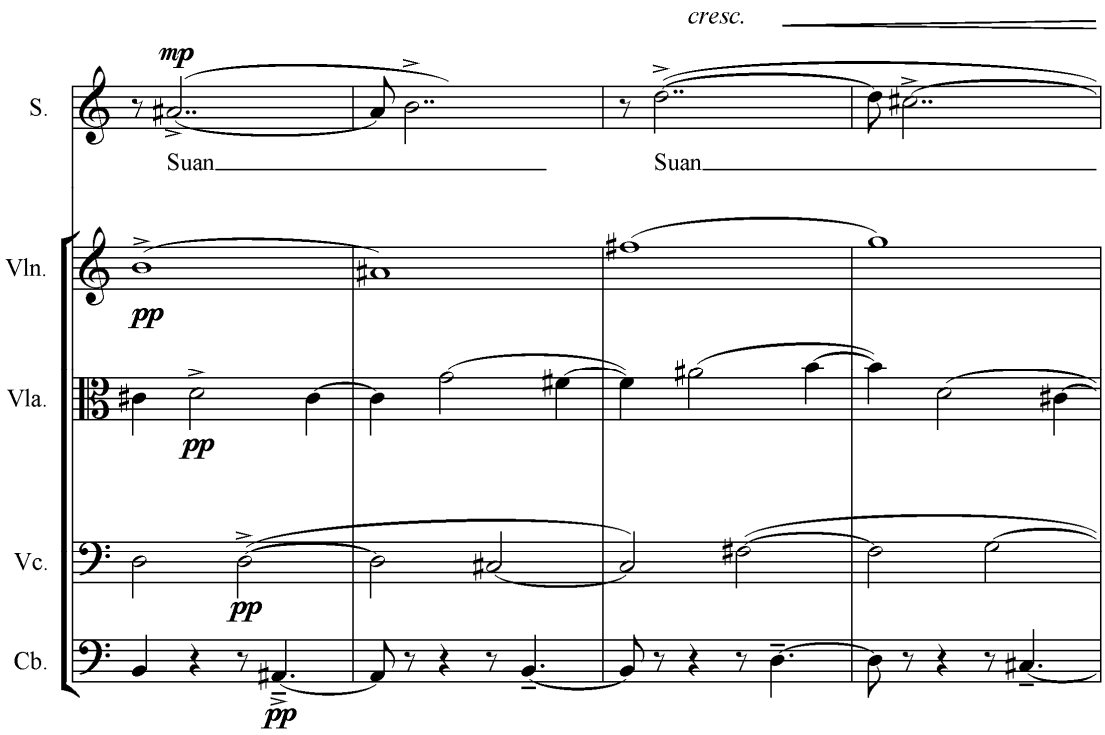
additional independent parts, is that it infuses the texture with lightness. Although there are six separate musical events occurring simultaneously here the music floats with ease. On the other hand, if motif *a* had been harmonised using a six part homophonic texture, the sound would be much more dense.

Much of the work is based on free counterpoint. The lines are drawn freely from the pitch materials selected. This compositional approach, in which simultaneous musical events are derived from the same set of pitches, is apparent from the opening of the work. It is useful because it allows different melodies to be created from a defined set of pitches, while at the same time achieving an overall unity of sound. This is demonstrated well in the opening bars of the work. The piano has the semitonal seconds in the RH, a pattern of rising and falling seconds dominates the bass and the bongos are playing quavers on the second and third quavers of each bar. At bar 5 the violin and clarinet enter with motif *a* while the alto flute makes its entrance at bar 7 with motif *b*. Each instrument or combination has an independent role, as opposed to a supportive role. A similar manner of proceeding is adopted at bar 14. The piano hammers its cluster on the fifth quaver, the maracas set up a pattern of 4 + 1 quavers, and the string instruments have the seconds which were played by the piano at bar 1. However, while the strings act as a unit here, at the start of Part 2, each of the four string instruments has a different melody. Independence of parts is at the heart of the writing, contributing to both melodic interest and rhythmic momentum. This is further exemplified in Section 1 bars 26-36, where there is four-part counterpoint: the alto flute plays an inverted and extended version of motif *b*, motif *d* is in the violin, the cello has a two bar sequential quaver pattern based on repeated notes. At bar 32 the bass takes over the cello sequence and the cello plays an ascending melody in contrary motion with the violin and viola. While each of these lines contributes to a unified sound, each one is also highly contrasted and individual in character.

Heterophonic texture is a feature of Part 2, bars 229-275, with all the melodic lines being derived from the three pairs of semitonal seconds, (Ex 7 above). A number of variations are possible: the order in which the three pairs appear is different for each melody, the two notes making up each pair are interchangeable (either note being sounded first) and the octave at which a semitonal pair is played may vary. Part 2, bars 229-275, begins with the viola followed by the cello, each instrument forming a

melody from the three pairs of seconds. The violin enters at bar 245, followed by the double bass at bar 253, creating new levels of interaction between the pitches. When the soprano begins her lament at bar 260, the pitches are given a new treatment by having a quaver rest precede the first note of each pair, in that way shifting the harmony marginally but sufficiently to create new and interesting harmonic colour. From bar 260, the double bass notes are shortened to a minim with rests placed between each note delaying the resolution and adding to the tension. As in the case of the soprano, the bass note is preceded by a quaver rest on the third beat of each bar. The process therefore involves the creation of a tight-knit set of pitches with strict limitations on their movement resulting in a number of melodies being sounded simultaneously that morph into a homogeneous sound while at the same time the individuality and independence of each line is maintained.

Ex 10 *Children of the Monsoon* Part 2, Section B, bars 260-263



Triphonic texture can be found in Part 1, bars 69-78, in the wind instruments. The trombone has a B pedal while the clarinet plays motif *a* and the alto flute motif *b*. The lighter texture produced here provides a strong contrast with the thicker texture that follows.

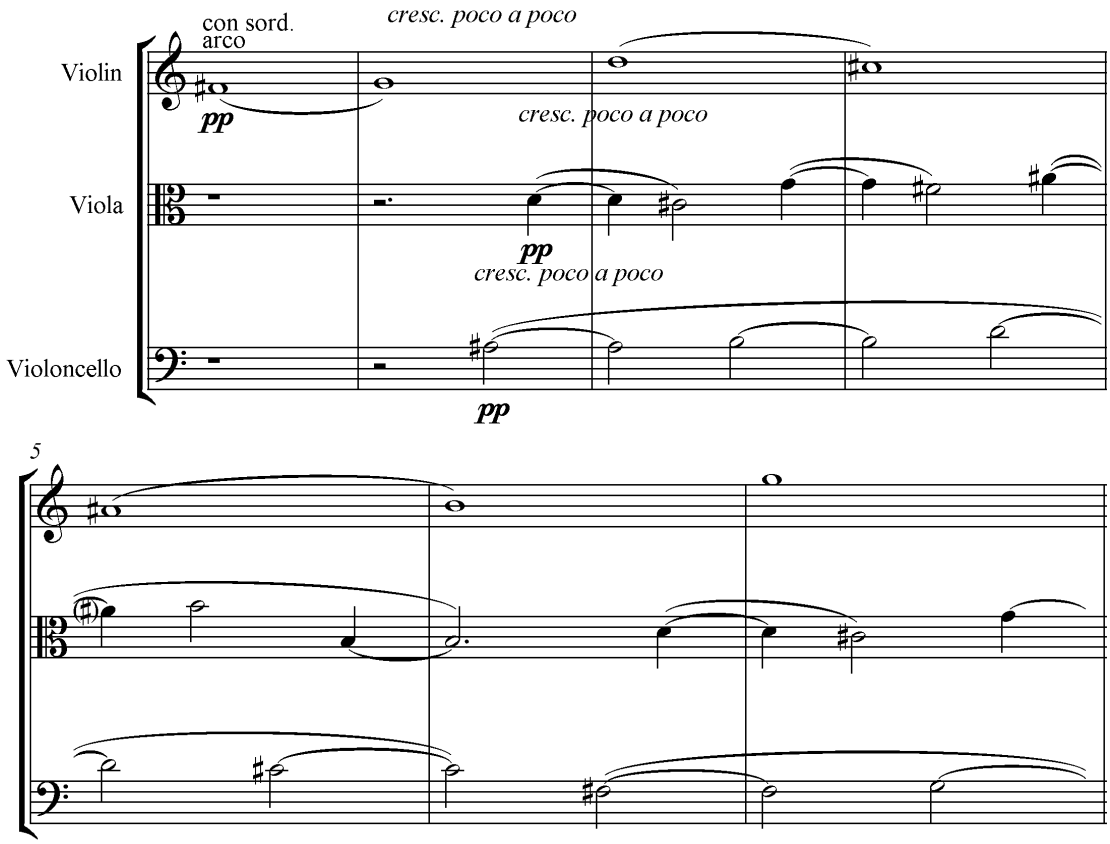
Homophonic and contrapuntal textures are used together in Part 1, bars 122-154. The lullaby, using long notes, is sung by the soprano in *Urdu* over sustained string chords while there are fast, darting countermelodies in both the alto flute and the clarinet. A contrast is achieved between the calmness of the mother, suggested by the soprano part with chordal support in the strings and the wild energy of the children heard in the wind parts.

3. Rhythm

Rhythm is a key contributor to the vastly contrasted moods which define this work. An overriding feeling of excitement dominates Part 1, bars 1-228, through the use of continuous quaver movement. Off-beat rhythms on the bongos and congos, continuous quavers on maracas and pizzicato strings, all serve to drive the piece forward, creating an atmosphere of fun and games. Long notes are used in Part 2, bars 229-275, to evoke sadness. The semibreves in the strings and voice are capable of generating considerable pathos. Although the values are overlapped, (intersected) creating movement at the minim and later at the crotchet and quaver, there is an overall mood of tragedy which is supported by the presence of long notes. The emotion of sobbing or stammering is featured in Part 2, Sections B + C, bars 328-339, by combining crotchets interspersed by rests in the wind parts, with quavers in the viola and cello parts. Finally, rhythm contributes to the atmospheric build-up at the end of Part 1, bars 181-227, with timpani rolls whose purpose is to generate tension, uncertainty and unease.

An approach to rhythm employed in this work and other works in the portfolio, is the use of a rhythmic process where movement is generated through overlapping of values, resulting in rhythmic counterpoint. While each individual line maintains its own value, semibreve, minim, etc., this value is intersected by another line or lines, using the same or a different value.

Ex 11 *Children of the Monsoon* Part 2, Section B, bars 245-248, rhythmic counterpoint in strings



These intersections are gradually made at closer intervals creating an illusion of speed-up and generating rhythmic impulse and increased momentum. The initial values are maintained in some parts and are shortened in others. The use of rests is also used as a means of giving definition to a line and energy to the overall rhythmic structure. Part 2, bars 229-275, is a good example of this process. The viola, using only semibreves, enters at bar 229 with an F# which resolves up to G in bar 230. The cello, also has semibreves, and begins with A# on the third beat of bar 230. The rate of movement at this point is in minims. At bar 245 the violin takes over the viola melody while the cello repeats, an octave higher, the music it played in bars 230-244. However, the viola, now playing minims, enters on the fourth beat of bar 246 changing the rate of movement to a crotchet. The rate is further varied from bar 260 by the introduction of a double quaver bounce in each bar with the soprano entering on the second quaver of alternate bars and the double bass on the sixth quaver of each bar, (Ex 10 above).

Arvo Part uses a similar technique in some of his motets. For example, in his *Da Pacem*[25] motet for SATB, the text-syllables are separated by rests of varying duration in all the voices. Arvo Part by overlapping the voices or in other words, by having different points of intersection, creates a complex rhythmic counterpoint, ensuring continuity of sound and also freshness of attack. The entries of each individual note ring out and yet there is a strong sense that each is still just an element of a much larger canvas. In a similar fashion the rhythmic counterpoint in *Children of the Monsoon* adds both interest and unease to the music, with the points of intersection ensuring forward momentum, refusing to let it settle while at the same time producing interesting harmonic colours and collisions.

The following features are also worth mentioning: piano clusters, cross rhythms, and changing time signatures. Part 1 features a piano cluster which is heard in four of the five episodes which punctuate the A sections. The piano cluster is a repeated semiquaver figure which is short, sharp and percussive and can be delivered very effectively by this instrument. The first cluster is sounded ten times, eight of them on the fifth quaver of each bar between bars 14-25, (Ex 3). As the episodes proceed, the cluster is heard a quaver earlier in each successive episode, altering the rhythmic pattern and creating both excitement and tension.

Changing time signatures are a feature of the work particularly in those sections that feature the *Urdu*[26] lullaby, (Ex 4 above). The tune was taken down from a recording and it was difficult to fit the singer's rhythms into a single metre. As with many Irish traditional slow airs its origin may possibly be found in an oral tradition using free rhythm.

Cross rhythms occur on several occasions in Part 1. Take for example the following bars: 1-9 and 26-36, the time signature is 2/4 and all quavers are equal in value. However, the alto flute has an accent on the first and fourth quaver, thus creating two groups of three or effectively a 6/8 (time signature), against 2/4 in the other instruments. Similarly, at bars 69-89, the time signature is 6/8, with the music dividing 3 + 3 in alto flute, trombone and congas, but with the strings and clarinet playing 2 + 2 + 2 quavers or 3/4. Bars 169-175, shown in Example 9 above demonstrate this rhythmic device also.

These rhythms signify independence within the overall rhythmic structure, thereby mirroring the varied and different roles children take on when playing games and also generating considerable rhythmic tension.

4. Harmony

As previously stated the polyphony employed in this composition is built on three pairs of semitonal seconds and the whole-tone scales. The following pairs of seconds are found in Part 1, Section A, (Ex 1 above). These are transposed in Part 2, Section B and Section B + C, (Ex 5 above). The two whole-tone scales are also used in Part 2, Section C and Sections B + C. (Ex 8 above).

The music is centred on particular tonal areas. All the melodies in Part 1 could be said to belong to an A minor tonality, while the harmonies which build up around this tonality use related notes such as B, C, F. Chromatic notes a semitone above or below the pitches quoted, are also featured in Part 1. Part 2, Section B is broadly centred on a B minor tonality. However, it is more difficult to identify tonal centres for Sections C and C1, when the two whole-tone scales are in use.

Tonal ambiguity is a characteristic of this work. As already stated, the music in the C sections of Part 2 lack tonal clarity. Episode 1, Part 1, bars 14-25, has an ambiguous tonality with E flat being outlined in the strings while the piano has an F tonality. However, the trombone which enters at bar 20 pulls the music towards A minor. Episode 5 is also ambiguous suggesting both D and D minor + E. The lack of tonal clarity is conducive to building an underlying mood of uncertainty, a mood which characterises the work as a whole.

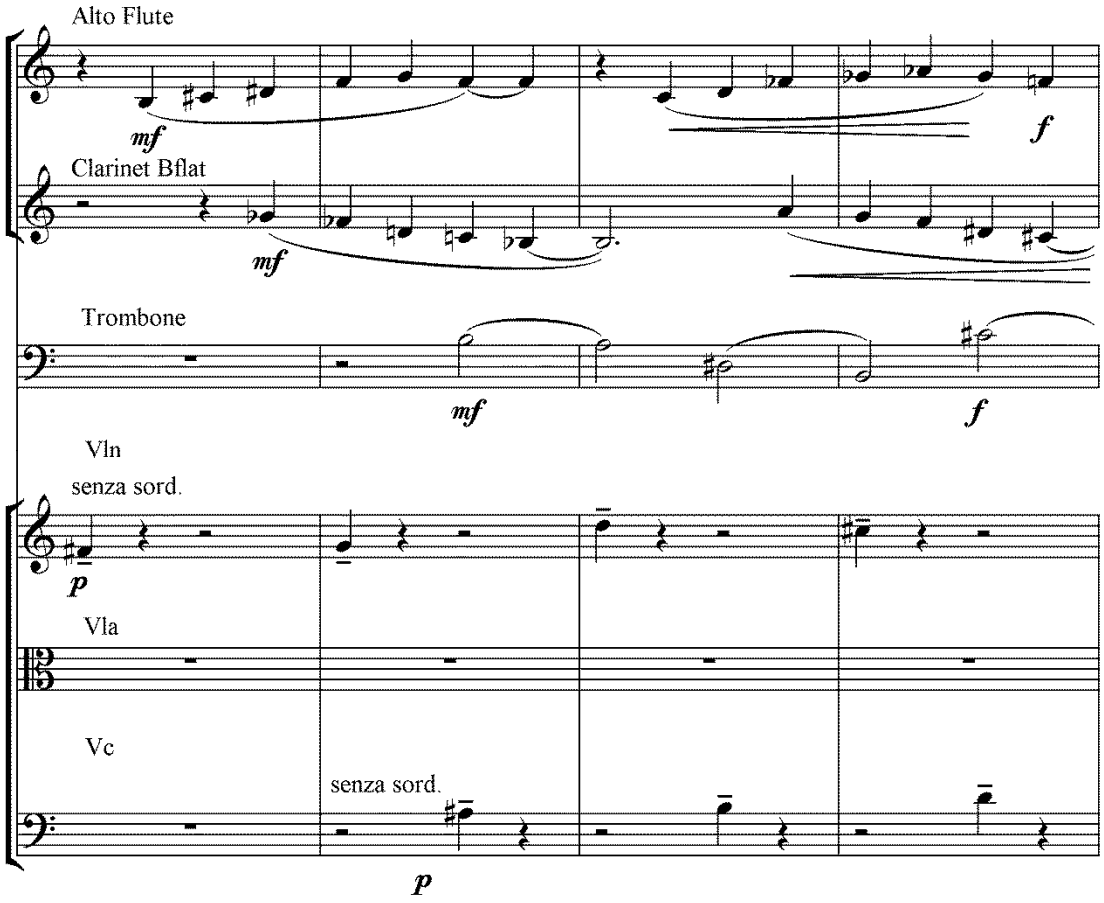
The rising and falling semitones which feature in Part 2, Section B, bars 229-275, are crucial from a melodic standpoint. Their purpose is to generate emotion and pathos. The idea of creating a semi-tonal melody or motif is not original. Bach in the opening movement of his Cantata No 126 *Jesu der du Meine Steele*[27], uses a falling semitonal motif which is sometimes referred to as the 'grief motif'. Purcell's hauntingly tragic aria 'When I am laid to earth'[28] from *Dido and Aeneas*, concludes with the music descending from the tonic by a sixth in semitones, before cadencing on the lower

octave. Falling semitones are seen in these examples as depict descent into the grave. On the other hand, *Children of the Monsoon* uses falling and rising semitones to build and sustain an atmosphere of sadness.

The use of the whole-tone scale links Part 1 and 2, through the Pakistani lullaby. This scale is found in the lullaby's fifth phrase, bars 143-148, where the melody has a descending line, (Ex 4 above).

However, the whole-tone scale is also used in Part 2, from bar 276, to create a stark contrast with the semitonal bars which precede it. It is capable of evoking a certain numbness, which is the desired quality here. The angular nature of the writing emphasises a frozen, shocked atmosphere. At bar 275, the soprano followed by the cello slowly stretch their pitches to form whole tones and then proceed to use both whole-tone scales for alternate phrases. The vocal line is punctuated by piano-clusters which feature the two whole-tone scales, a different scale being played by each hand. When the alto flute and clarinet enter at bar 292, followed by the trombone in bar 293, the counterpoint expands to three parts and there is a real sense that desolation has overtaken the music.

Ex 12 *Children of the Monsoon* Part 2, Section B+C, bars 303-306, desolation



This is grey music which attempts to describe the emptiness felt by the mother of a dead child, an emptiness expressed so poignantly in Seamus Heaney's poem Mid-Term Break[29], in a line describing his mother at the wake of her four year old son: 'She coughed out angry, tearless sighs.'

Clusters are used on a number of occasions in this composition. For the most part they are sounded on the piano which is an ideal vehicle for this technique. Clusters amplify the harmony, giving breath to the sound. Because so many notes are struck at once, they can cause disturbance and ambiguity in the sound shrouding it with a degree of mystery. The repeated piano-cluster, bars 286-292, is the most interesting because of the softening dynamics, the shortening, then lengthening of note values and the use of pedal to sustain the sound mix. The cluster sounded on the upbeat to bar 290 is allowed to ring for three bars sounding like a giant gong which has been given the

gentlest of strikes. This is sound ringing in the heavens for eternity and it accompanies the soprano as she sings *Suan go deireadh na hoi(che)*, meaning 'Sleep until the end of the night' or in the case of this composition, 'Sleep forever.'

In Part 2, Section B + C, bars 303-309, the pitches are combined freely resulting in multi-tonal music. On the one hand, the semitonal music is gradually re-assembled in the strings from bars 303-339, while the three whole-tone melodies are disassembled. The double bass notes from bars 329-335, create a vague sense of B minor but tonal confusion abounds in the bars immediately before that. It is not so much that there is no tonality, it is more that there is no obvious or clear tonality. Perhaps, expressed positively, there are many tonalities.

The *Urdu* melody used in Part 1, bars 122-154, is a simple folk tune, (Ex 4 above). It is used here to link the work to Pakistan where the monsoon disaster originally occurred. It is appropriate too because the text describes the love of a mother for her child, while the picture that inspired the composition showed a father cradling his dying child. The lullaby melody contrasts with the music around it bonding with it very effectively. The soprano, representing the mother, is supported by the strings playing sustained and slow moving chords in F, while the dialogue motifs in the alto flute and clarinet suggest the children at play.

The contrasting Irish lullaby *Suan, suan, suan a chroi* sung in Part 2, from bar 260 onwards, is not a lullaby sung to a sleeping child but one sung for a dead child, where the mother is rocking the child to an eternal rest. This is an original melody, as opposed to a folk melody, with the soprano singing the semi-tonal pitches found in the strings, (Ex 7).

Special effects such as screams and *glissandi* contribute to the drama of the piece. Bars 217-228 come at the climax of Part 1. The ensemble reaches its loudest point at bar 217, shouts of desperation from the soprano as music climaxes on *fff*. The contrast with the earlier, gentle singing of the lullaby is especially obvious. The *glissandi* in the voice part allow for a gradual coming down from the emotional high, representing a slide into oblivion, with the timpani rolls confirming the sense of destruction, as the voice runs out on a hushed E.

5. A Programmatic Work

Children of the Monsoon is a programmatic work. It is a work in two main parts, with each having its own programme.

Part 1, bars 1-228, is a description of children playing games, completely oblivious to the horrors that will soon envelop and destroy them. The tempo here is fast and the mood is playful and energetic. The light *staccato* quavers in the piano and later in the *pizzicato* strings, offbeat quavers in the bongos and the ascending *staccato* melody in the violin and clarinet, set a playful tone immediately. From bars 14-25 this mood is compounded by the repeated semiquaver interjections from the piano and by the new melody on the trombone at bar 20. The atmosphere of excitement builds as the episodic music is raised a step on each appearance. Later from bars 122-154, a mother is heard singing a lullaby which expresses her love for her child.

The First Lullaby *Muna bara payara*

Muna bara payara, ami ka dolara.
Koie kahai chand koie ankh katara.
Hasiay tou bhala lagay. Roiay tou bhal lagay.
Ami ko os kai bina huch bhi achana lagay.
Jia mere lal.
Tum ko lagay umer meri, jia mere lal.

My son is beautiful – he is his Mom's love.
Some say he is the moon and some say he is a star.
When he laughs he looks good, when he cries he looks good.
His Mom loves him more than herself.
May my son live a long life.
I give my life for you.
May my son live a long life!

One can picture the mother watching her child playing, her heart full of love and pride. However, the accompanying music for the lullaby displays a certain ambiguity,

which might suggest that all is not well. The string accompaniment is essentially in F major while the scurrying countermelodies in the alto flute and clarinet, which take the form of a dialogue, are in F minor, creating a tension in the music. Similarly, when the lullaby ends at bar 154, the instruments and voice split between F and E. When the voice returns at bar 180-190, it is at odds with the double bass, following it at a distance of a compound minor 2nd above. There is a certain irony in the final lines: *May my son live a long life. I give my life for you.* This melody is a traditional Pakistani folksong. It was notated by the composer and the text translation was made by a Pakistani student studying in Ireland, thereby grounding it in and connecting it to the tragedy in a more real manner.

Episode 5, bars 190-198 depicts the beginning of the storm using *ff* piano-clusters while the trombone plays in its upper register. Loud dynamics, hammered notes, erratic figures and the soprano singing repeated, accented E5 notes, are all employed as the music becomes more frenetic and disjointed. It hurtles towards disaster, with screams and descending glissandi from the voice accompanied by a solitary roll on the timpani. At bar 228 the mother pauses on an unaccompanied E. Destruction is total. There is nothing left behind but a wilderness of water.

Part 2, bars 229-356, is a lament for a dead child. The programme centres on the creation of different, even contradictory emotions: sorrow, emptiness and anger.

The Second Lullaby *Suan*

Suan, suan, suan a chroi.
Suan gan cheo go deireadh na hoi(che.)

Rest, rest, rest my darling.
Rest without disturbance ‘til the end of the night.

This second lullaby or lament is very slow and sustained and is initially built on the three semi-tonal relationships given in Example 7 above. The music for Part 2 was composed first and the semitones were chosen deliberately as a vehicle for the expression of grief. A number of other elements also combine to elicit this mood.

These include, the slow tempo, the very soft dynamics (the music is marked *ppp*), the use of long notes to keep movement to a minimum, (at funerals people mostly walk slowly) the use of rests to create an effect of faltering or stumbling, the lullaby melody in the soprano voice and the use of the strings. It is the strings that set a mood of utter desolation. When the strings are joined by the soprano singing the lullaby in Irish, cradling, as it were, the dead child to its eternal sleep, the feeling is one of intense sadness, grief, even anger, and a profound sense of hopelessness at the horror of the situation. The music makes all the more real the loss and emptiness felt by the mother.

6. Conclusion

The stimuli for music composition are many and varied. Marian Ingoldsby is working on a set of piano pieces inspired by the demise of the Celtic tiger. John Adams wrote a work that was based on the notes left at Ground Zero by loved ones of people who died in 9-11. *Children of the Monsoon* emerged from a natural disaster. The work sought to be in solidarity with those who suffered.

While that event has probably been largely forgotten by now, the issue is perhaps even more relevant than ever. This composition attempts to connect with and highlight a significant world-issue, making a bond with displaced and endangered people, those concerned with climate change and the music community.

Children of the Monsoon was a valuable learning experience, in that it involved composing music in response to a given set of parameters. Often composers can decide themselves on all aspects of a work, the theme, instrumentation, length. Working within a confined boundary is useful. One quickly learns that rules need not be a straitjacket, they can create a really helpful framework. Boundaries free the composer from spending unnecessary time on every possible detail and instead allow them to focus on what is most important.

The Tall Ships Suite

Introduction

Among the principal objectives of *The Tall Ships Suite* was an exploration of traditional music in a new environment, using contemporary classical compositional techniques and processes. A further aim was to evaluate the flexibility of traditional music in a modern musical setting and to assess how traditional players would cope with and react to new sounds and new ways of treating traditional music. The work attempts to connect what appears at first to be two very different worlds; that of the traditional sound and that of the contemporary sound, embracing also the vastly contrasted processes and techniques employed by these two styles. Perhaps the initial concept was mistakenly based on the belief that the traditional musicians would be the main beneficiaries of the collaboration by being 'introduced' to a new world of music. However, a study period with the Latvian Radio Choir in August 2011 demonstrated just how much is being learned from traditional techniques by living composers and musicians.

As the work emerged it seemed less important to discover how classically-trained musicians might perform traditional music. There appeared to be a tacit acceptance that traditional music would be best performed by traditional musicians, limiting the classically-trained musicians, in this case the string quartet, to treating the traditional tunes in a new, as opposed to traditional, manner.

The ensemble used in the work comprised two distinct groups: Craobh Nua, a group of young traditional players from Waterford and the Contempo String Quartet who had a residency in NUI Galway. While Craobh Nua commissioned the work, it was the composer who chose to include the string quartet in the composition. This choice was based largely on the belief that traditional musicians might not be readers of music, a fact that would influence and possibly limit the composition. With the benefit of hindsight it would be interesting to make a contemporary work purely for traditional players.

Craobh Nua consisted of twelve traditional players, most of whom were capable of playing at least two different traditional instruments. All the instruments played by the

traditional players were used in the composition: fiddle, uilleann pipes, whistle, traditional flute, tenor banjo, concertina, bodhran, bongos and piano. No attempt was made to alter the playing styles of the traditional players and much of the music they were required to play in this suite was traditional in character. However, the organisation of the music and the manner of linking the instruments together was vastly different to the way traditional players would normally play a tune. The textures were new, with instruments playing in harmony and counterpoint, using extended canon or being part of clusters, dissonant groupings or linear structures, involving additive or retrograde processes. Most of the young players were music readers, many of them had formal training in a 'classical' instrument. They were a keen and skilful group of musicians who had the ability to deal successfully with the processes listed above, ultimately delivering a highly successful performance of the work. The writing for the piano throughout the suite is in both traditional and contemporary styles.

The string quartet on the other hand, was required to play music it would not have found hugely challenging. However, it had its own particular role: to act as a counterpoint to the traditional group by providing a contrasting background, a strong melodic, rhythmic or harmonic counterpoint, through the use of additive, subtractive and retrograde processes. It also generates a wider range of dynamics and registers, creating dissonant clusters and unusual harmony. In the second movement the strings, through their sustained chords, offer support for the slow airs as they unfold. However, there are points in both the outer movements where the string quartet and piano music is completely at variance with the traditional tune in a manner that may even be unsettling for the traditional players.

1. Form

The Tall Ships Suite comprises three movements: Reel – Slow Airs – Jig

Movement 1 Reel

Movement 1 is a set of variations and theme based on the traditional Irish reel *Sporting Paddy*. The traditional reel is deconstructed and re-built through a series of five variations. The variations are joined by a series of short links using material from the *Sporting Paddy* tune. The variations consist of contrasting treatments of the tune or aspects of it, which explore processes used in new music which are not usually found in traditional music. The movement ends with a playing of the complete reel by the traditional instruments, followed by a short three-part canon for the traditional instruments, piano and quartet.

Chart 1 *Movement 1 Reel* *The Tall Ships Suite*

Bar	Section	Tonality	Materials
1-12	Variation 1	Am	*Sporting Paddy* reel in trad. Multiple pedals Reel motif in quartet
13-19	Link 1	Em	3 note motif in trad.
20-45	Variation 2	G -> D - > Em	Pitches from reel bars 4-5 Repeating 4 bar rhythm
46	Link 2	Am	
47-70	Variation 3	G	Pitches from reel bars 3-4 Micropolyphony in quartet Slow air in trad. and piano
71-72	Link 3	G ->Am	Clusters in piano
73-115	Variation 4	Am	Jig based on reel tune Countermotif in piano
116-117	Link 4		4/4 in percussion
118-151	Variation 5	G + Am -> G + A	G + A pedals fragments of reel in G and A simultaneously
152-156	Link 5	Am	Bars 1-2 reel in trad. and quartet
157-176	Coda	Am	Reel re-assembled in trad. Quartet retrograde motif Var. 1 Piano countermotif Var. 4 Canon in trad. piano, quartet Pitches final 6 quavers reel

Movement 2 Slow Airs

Two different airs are combined and played in a double canon by four different traditional soloists playing; fiddle, whistle, traditional flute and uilleann pipes. A sustained accompaniment of slow moving chords is provided by the string quartet. Movement 2 is very loosely palindromic in that it builds to the centrepoint in terms of intensity, thickness of texture and dynamics.

Chart 2 *Movement 2 Slow Airs* *The Tall Ships Suite*

Instrument	Graph of entries in trad. + Accompaniment in Quartet
Fiddle	1A 1A 1B 1A 1A 1B 1A
Whistle	1A 1A 1B 1A 1A
Trad. Flute	2A 2B 2A 2B 2A 2B
Uilleann Pipes	2A 2B 2A 2B 2A 2B
String Quartet	Sustained 2/3/4 part –> Block chords -> Sustained chords muted *pp* chords -> *cresc* -> *mf* -> *dim* -> *ppp*

Movement 3 Jig

Movement 3 is based on a jig comprising two four-bar phrases with an AA1 form. The movement has a binary form: AB + Coda. In Section A, the first phrase of the jig (A) is gradually assembled into a patchwork of six motifs, each being introduced by a traditional instrument which plays the motif repeatedly in combination or alone, before moving to a different one. In Section B, the retrograde of the jig's second phrase (A1) is assembled in a patchwork of four motifs by the string quartet. The movement concludes with a short coda in which we hear the original and retrograde of the jig played in a double canon. The complete jig is then played in octaves by the entire ensemble.

Chart 3 *Movement 3 Jig* *The Tall Ships Suite*

Bar	Section	Tonality	Materials
1-29	Section A	G	Jig bars 1-4 divided into 6 overlapping motifs in trad. Chords in quartet + chromatic notes in cello
30-72	Section B	G	Jig bars 5-8 retrograde in quartet divided into 4 overlapping motifs Multiple pedals in trad. Piano chords + chromatic notes Fragments of motifs heard in trad. Section A recalled
61			Descending clusters in piano
62-72			Double canon: Jig 2 part canon in trad. Jig retrograde 2 part canon in quartet Piano chords + chromatic notes
73-77	Coda	G	Jig bars 1-4 in octaves by ensemble

To a certain extent the overall form is cyclical, because in both the outer movements the dance tunes are examined in small segments, before being re-assembled and played in full at the end of each movement.

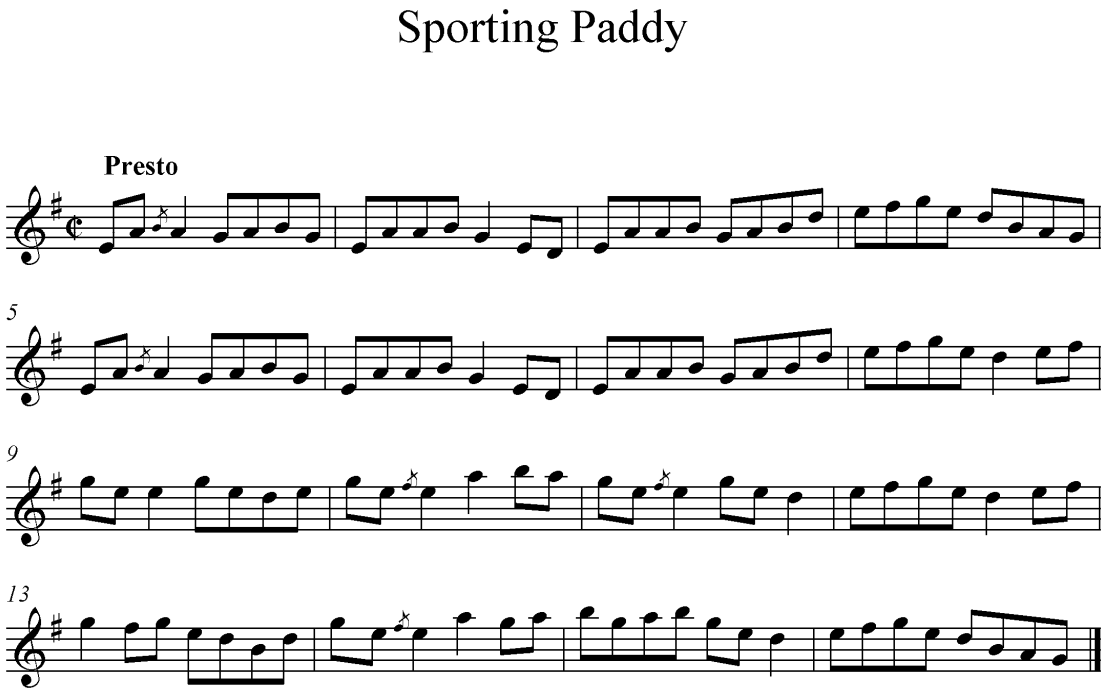
2. Traditional Tunes used in the Suite

Irish music is tune-based. A central consideration in the use of traditional tunes is the manner of performance which traditional players bring to this music: the ornamentation and the swing or lilt which are accepted as integral parts of the style. This suite features four tunes: *Sporting Paddy*, a traditional reel, two slow airs and a jig. While the slow airs and jig were composed specifically for this work, they are traditional in character and style. The dances were chosen as fast outer movements with the slow airs of the central movement providing contrast.

Sporting Paddy, the basis of Movement 1, is a popular Irish reel and it was chosen because of its interesting melodic line and also because the tune features some crotchets offering relief from the continuous quaver movement usually associated

with reels. The crotchets are placed on different beats and in the B phrase there are two crotchets in bars 10 and 14, which add to the rhythmic interest. This reel is in the re (dorian) mode and uses a gapped scale omitting the note C. The reel, which is quoted in full in Example 1, has a simple AABB1 form.

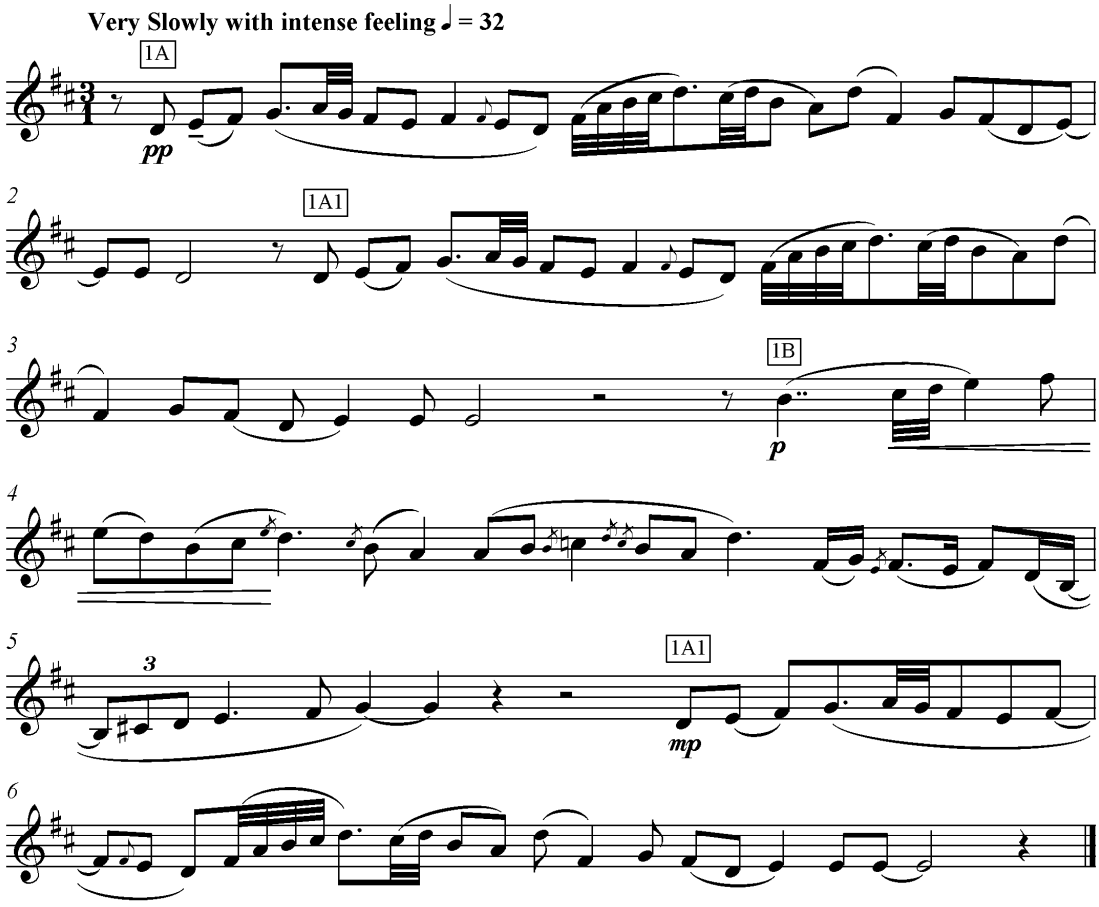
Ex 1 *The Tall Ships Suite* The traditional Irish reel *Sporting Paddy* (basis for Movement 1)



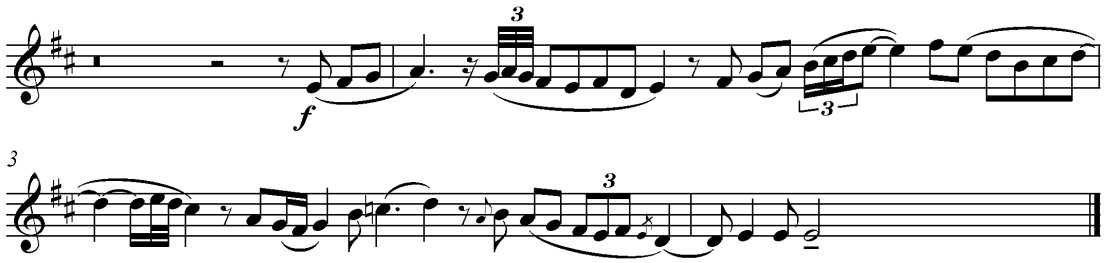
Two slow airs are played simultaneously in Movement 2. A slow air is usually sung or played unaccompanied by a soloist. However, it is not uncommon for the tune to have a very simple harmonic support. To some extent this movement challenges the accepted approach and endeavours to do something quite different. Firstly, there are two slow airs. Secondly, each air is played in canon by two players, with both airs overlapping, in what is essentially a double canon. Thirdly, the tunes were written largely without bar lines, but using different note lengths, groupings, phrasing and occasional stresses, to indicate the rhythmic and melodic shape of each air. The tunes were graphed in this manner primarily for two reasons: firstly, to allow the performers freedom to express the tune in a deeply personal way and secondly, to evoke the spirit of rhythmic freedom and creativity which characterise the traditional air and plainsong. Rhythm in these forms appears unaffected by what Stravinsky described

as 'the tyranny of the bar-line[30]'. While it is true that the airs are both written in 3/1, the speed of the quaver movement in each air is so slow it is very difficult to maintain a regular pulse. 3/1 made it possible to write long phrases without many bar-lines while at the same time giving a broad indication to the string players where their long sustained notes would change.

Ex 2 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 2, slow air 1



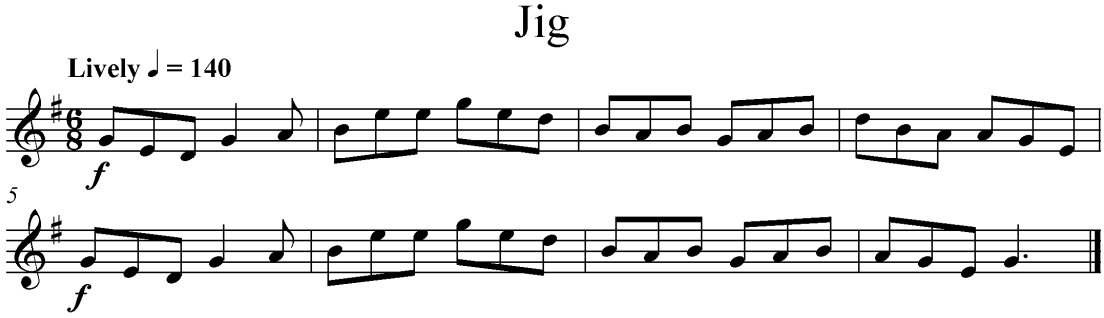
Ex 3 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 2, slow air 2



Both airs are in the re (dorian) mode and were composed after a short study of those songs in the re mode found in *Ceolta Gael* by Seán Óg & Manus Ó Baoill, Cló Mercier[31] and *Ceolta Gael 2* by Manus Ó Baoill, Ossian Publications[32].

The final movement, also composed for the suite, is a lively jig and is designed to give the work a bright, cheerful ending. The jig is an eight-bar melody in G major pentatonic. It consists of two four-bar phrases and has an AA1 form.

Ex 4 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 3, Jig

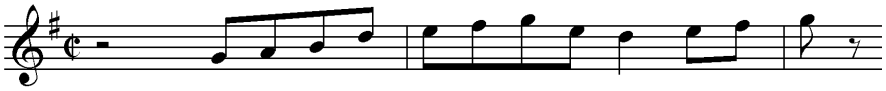


3. Texture

A variety of textures are used in this work. However, in the main the suite is linear in conception. While each movement has some canonic writing, there is also a strong predominance of free counterpoint.

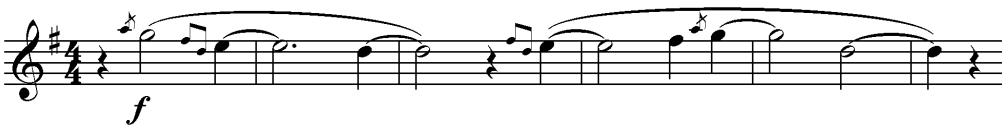
Micropolyphony is the basis of the string quartet music in Variation 3, bars 47-70 of Movement 1. A four-part canon at a quaver is developed which is based on a gapped scale figure taken from bars 3-4 of the original *Sporting Paddy* reel.

Ex 5 *The Tall Ships Suite* Pitches from original reel, bars 3-4
(basis for Movement 1, Variation 3, bars 47-70)



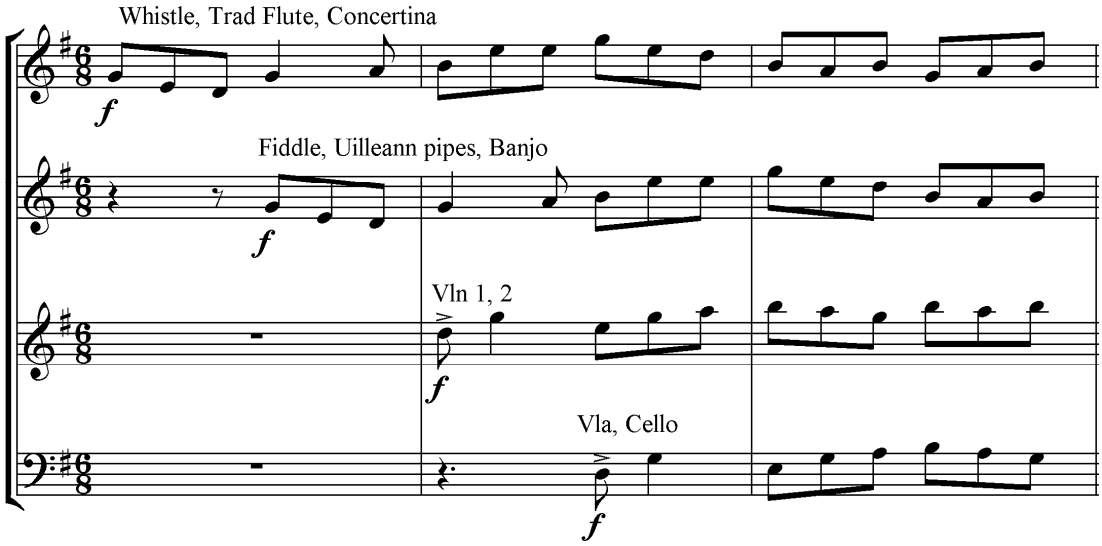
Above this web of quaver movement the traditional instruments play a highly ornamented two-phrase tune in long notes that is also developed from the gapped scale figure.

Ex 6 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 1, Variation 3, bars 54-58



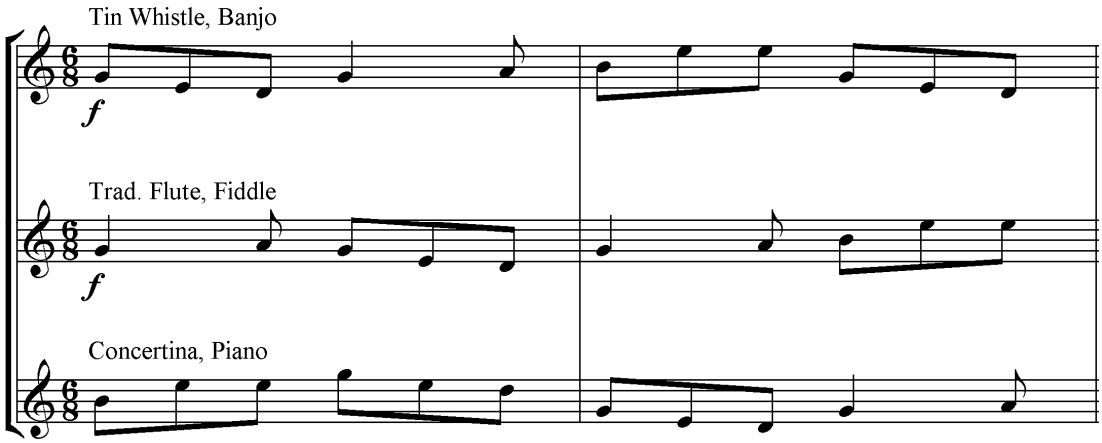
Canon features in Movement 2 also but in its own distinctive manner. While the intention in using micropolyphony in Movement 1 is to create a web or carpet of sound where it is difficult to hear the imitation because the entries are so close, the intended effect in Movement 2 is to create slow-moving waves of sound by the successive entries of the two tunes. It is difficult to hear the imitation in Movement 2 because the entries are very far apart, almost destroying the sense of overlap which we usually associate with imitation and giving the impression that each is a new melody rather than an imitation of a melody we have already heard. Movement 3, Section B bars 62-71, concludes with a double canon at a half bar. The jig is played by the whistle, traditional flute and concertina, followed by the uilleann pipes, tenor banjo and fiddle. The retrograde follows in bar 63, first in the violins and then in the viola and cello.

Ex 7 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 3, Section B, bars 62-63, double canon in trad. and quartet



Free counterpoint is an approach that seems to suit traditional/modal music where the melodic strands can be blended very effectively. In Movement 1, Variation 4, bars 71-115, three different lines emerge: the traditional instruments play the 'jig' melody, the piano interrupts with a completely new tune while the string quartet forms a further independent harmonic and melodic counterpoint. The patchwork created in Movement 3, Section A, demands the traditional instruments create four and five-part counterpoint and while this approach is most unusual for these instruments, it does seem quite effective nonetheless.

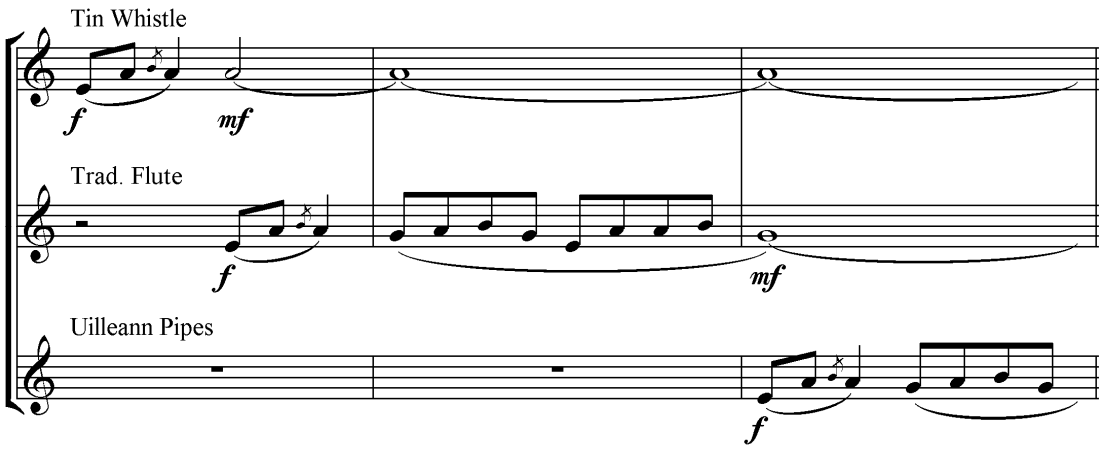
Ex 8 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 3, counterpoint in traditional instruments, bars 7-8



Heterophony is a textural feature of Movement 1, Variation 3, bars 47-70, where a repeating twelve-quaver note row in the string quartet is used to form the slow air in the traditional instruments, (Ex 5, Ex 6 above). Another example can be heard in the Coda, from bars 159-172. Here the traditional instruments play the reel while the first violin plays a six-note motif taken from bars 1-2 of the reel. These six notes are played in a different order by the cello while the second violin and viola follow the contour of the first violin at a second and fourth below. Subtractive and additive processes are used to reduce and expand the six-note motif.

Bi-phonic texture usually refers to two lines, a single melodic line with a second providing a pedal-style accompaniment. This occurs in Movement 1, Variation 2, bars 32-46, where the first phrase of the *Sporting Paddy* tune is supported by a pedal that gradually rises through B3, D4 and E4. This texture is expanded in the first and third movements through the use of multiple pedals. For example, at the beginning of Movement 1, *Sporting Paddy* is unfolded in stages: the whistle plays the first three notes E5, A5, A5 holding the last note A5 as a pedal, the traditional flute plays the first twelve notes holding the final note G4 as a pedal, the uilleann pipes play the first four bars and hold the final note G4.

Ex 9 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 1, Variation 1, bars 1-3, Multiple pedals



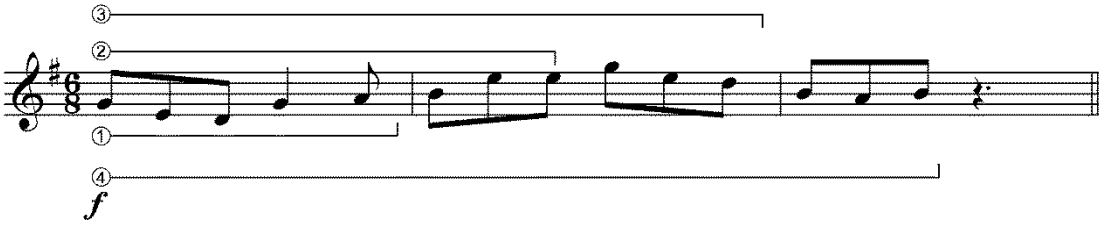
The concertina, fiddle and banjo follow suit, gradually revealing the retrograde of the first phrase. Five pedals are held across while the complete phrase is assembled in original and retrograde forms.

A mirroring of this technique is found in Movement 3, bars 31-48 where a four-part pedal cluster is built using the whistle, traditional flute, uilleann pipes and concertina. Over this pedal, the retrograde of the jig is stitched together as a kind of patchwork in the string quartet, while the piano plays a new version of the counterpointing music played by the strings in section A.

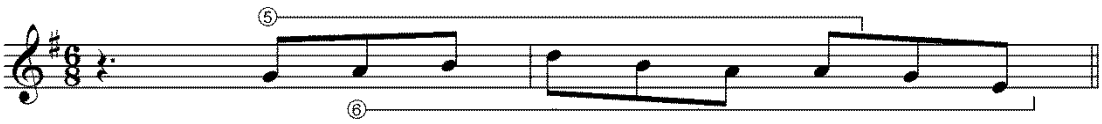
Additive/subtractive process is used to support the linear style, especially in the dance movements, (Ex 9 above). A three-note accompaniment motif in the quartet is developed additively in Movement 1, bars 1-12.

Movement 3, the jig, is given a layered treatment. The first phrase is divided into six motifs of varying lengths that are then played by the traditional instruments in an overlapping patchwork with new motifs entering and earlier ones dropping out.

Ex 10 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 3, Motifs 1-4, bars 1-3

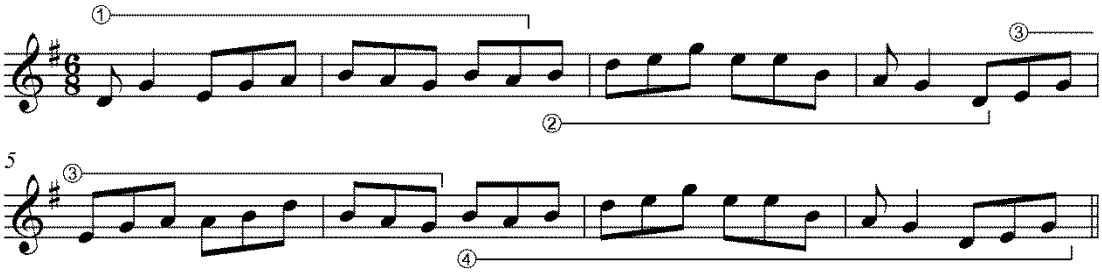


Ex 11 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 3, Motif 5 and 6, bars 3-4



When all the motifs which make up the first phrase of the jig have been heard, the entire phrase is played by all the traditional instruments together. A similar patchwork based on the retrograde of the jig is then played by the string quartet.

Ex 12 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 3, Retrograde motifs



The creation of a patchwork of motifs in Movement 3 mirrors the gradual unveiling of the reel in Movement 1.

Polyphonic and homophonic textures are combined in the second movement, with the string quartet providing a chordal accompaniment for the double canon in the traditional instruments.

5. Rhythm

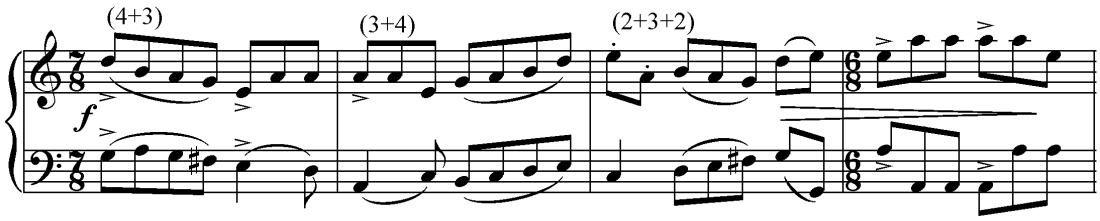
Traditional music has always been strongly linked to dance music. Rhythm is a key component of all Irish music, even the slow air, where the text determined the rhythmic stresses used by the singer. Rhythm is also a vital aspect of the *Tall Ships Suite*. Although traditional Irish dance music has its own internal rhythm, the repeating four-bar phrases coupled with specific rhythmic patterns, tend to make it somewhat repetitive. Both challenges and opportunities presented themselves in the organisation of rhythm, and for that reason the suite adopts a variety of approaches to this aspect of the music.

Firstly, two of the Movements have dances as their basis. Movement 1 is a reel and Movement 3 is a jig. This immediately creates a rhythmic context but as already stated a challenge too. Various rhythmic approaches are employed in Movement 1, each aimed at creating a new rhythmic feel which is different from that expected in a traditional reel. Denying expectation creates an unease that produces drama and in turn a sense of fulfilment when the dance rhythm of the reel is restored at the end.

Movement 1, Variation 1, is in cut common time. From bar 1 the traditional instruments play continuous quavers associated with this dance, however, by contrast, the pedal notes provide a sustained sound against the moving notes, making it difficult for the reel to settle, (Ex 9). The quavers in the string quartet accompaniment, interspersed by rests, provide the music with a further sense of discontinuity.

An aspect of this work which traditional players might find unusual is the use of changing time signatures, particularly in the first movement. Variation 2 bars 20-45, uses 7/8 and 6/8 time-signatures with irregular groupings which give great energy to the section. There is no feel of a reel here at all and the rhythmic bounce created by the irregular groups of 4 + 3, 3 + 4 and 2 + 3 + 2 links it to works by Michael Ó Suilleabháin such as *Oíche Nollag* and *Idir Etarthu*.

Ex 13 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 1, Variation 2, rhythmic pattern
In piano, bars 24-27



There are almost continuous quavers in the string quartet parts for Variation 3, bars 47-70, which do not have the accentuations or swing normally associated with a reel. The dense texture obliterates any clarity in the accents. The air which is played in long notes on the traditional flute at bar 49, further distances this music from the rhythm we usually associate with a reel.

Reconstructing the reel as a jig in Variation 4, bars 73-115 involves a process of rhythmic transformation. All the pitches of the reel are maintained in the same order while the rhythm is re-configured. The original four-bar phrases disappear as new phrases emerge which ignore the original points of cadence. For example, the first eight bars of the jig has a 3 + 3 + 2 bar shape, with the pitches being selected from bars 1-6 of *Sporting Paddy*. The new dance creates its own boundaries ignoring the

ones normally expected, and in the process obliterating the reel, while the new jig has a very authentic sound.

A rhythmic technique associated with minimalism occurs where a pattern is subjected to rhythmic variation by lengthening or shortening a note in the pattern. This device is also used in Movement 1, Variation 3, bars 47-70. The motif consists of twelve notes all of which are quavers except the ninth note, (Ex 5). As the music progresses the crotchet shifts to the third and eighth notes and later to the fourth and fifth notes, giving the music bounce and ridding it of regularity. This effect is added to since the motif itself comes on a different part of the bar at each repeat. The patchwork of motifs employed in Movement 3, is based on another minimalist technique which is sometimes referred to as 'cyclic rhythm'. This is a traditional Indian technique where two or more lines or cells (motifs) of different lengths are repeated at the same time. This technique was favoured by Philip Glass who described its effect as 'wheels within wheels.[33]'

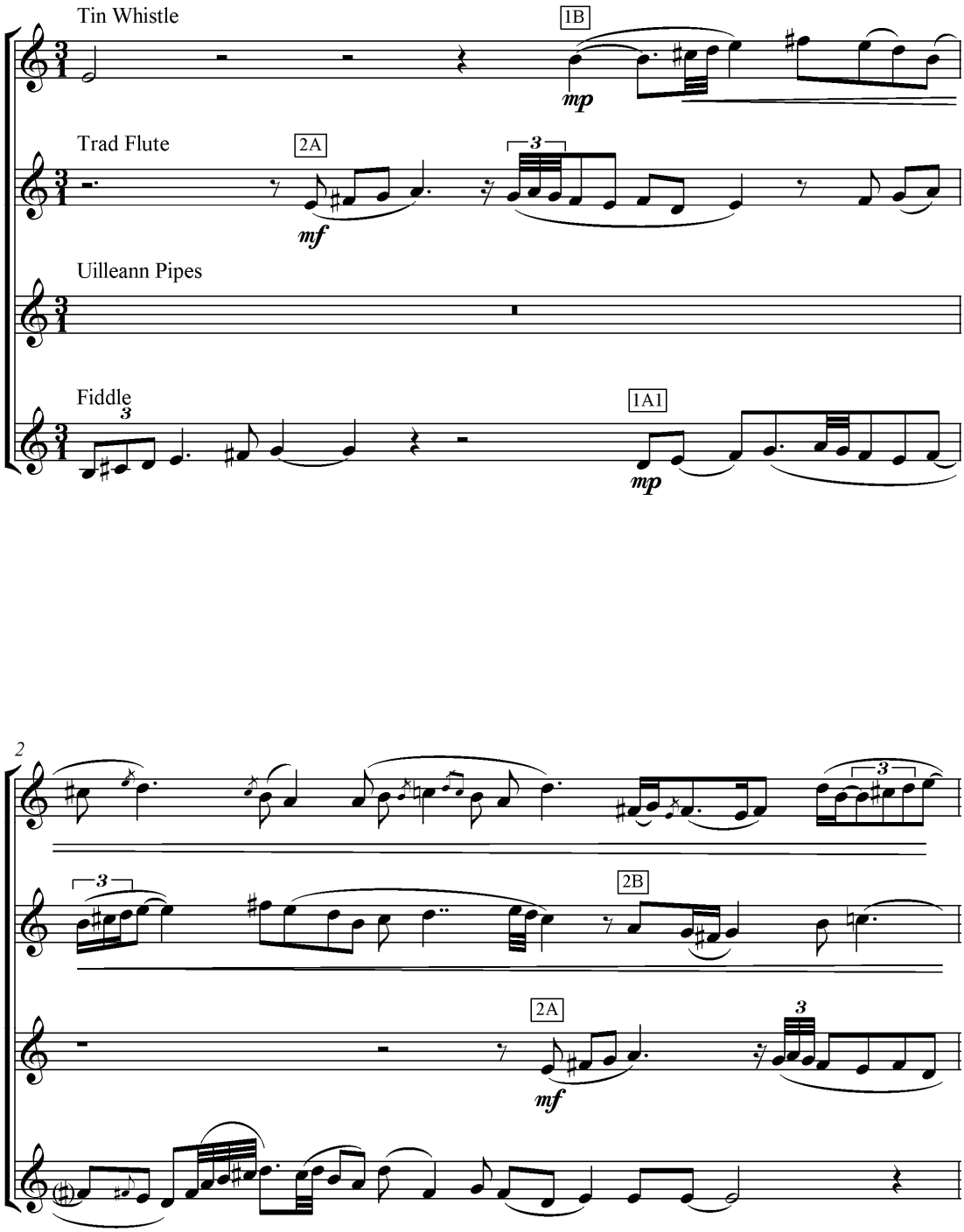
An experimental approach to rhythm occurs in Movement 2. There are a number of important elements here: very slow pulse, crotchet = 32, a 3/1 time signature, a string accompaniment in both sustained and long notes and two highly ornamented melodies which move mainly in quavers.

The time signature was designed as a framework to give the quartet and the conductor a general idea of where the sustained accompaniment notes change. The hope for the two traditional-type melodies was that they would be played from memory or by (from the) heart. The slow pulse (crotchet = 32) indicates slowness or without rushing. Essentially, the quaver movement of the slow airs sets the pace. This is foreground in the Schenkerian sense while the sustained clusters in the strings are simply background support. There is a strong contrast between the almost static background and the free movement of the melodies.

The melodies in their own right are interesting from a rhythmic standpoint. In addition to the basic quaver movement there is also a high degree of ornamentation, adding to the freedom of the rhythm. This music is not metred in the accepted sense of the term, accents which normally happen after bar-lines in a patterned manner are not felt due

to the length of the bars and the slow pulse. The slow airs, in keeping with tradition, have their own internal rhythm. Indeed, the quavers which form these slow airs are for the most part made up of groups of two or three quavers. It is possible that these 'natural' groupings in a slow air are a result of Irish words using groupings of two and three syllables. The treatment of rhythm in this movement bears similarities to the approach taken in Movement 3, *Summer Suite for Oboe and Bass Clarinet*. Neither movement requires absolute, precise rhythmic alignment. A higher value here is to facilitate individual freedom of expression in the interaction between the four soloists.

Ex 14 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 2, bars 5-6



The rhythmic energy of the music particularly in Movements 1 and 3 is significantly enhanced by the use of articulation – accented and *staccato* notes, specific tempo markings, instrumental techniques such as *pizzicato*, phrasing and even dynamics, all features which are not associated with traditional performance.

A significant approach to rhythm not only in this work but throughout the music which forms this portfolio, is the creation of counterpointing lines where the rhythm is as important as the melody or harmony. The development of rhythmic material that is independent, which can even have a conflicting role with the rhythms around it, remains a key objective. Take for example Movement 1, Variation 4, bars 73-93, the repeated figure in the strings falls on different beats of the bar as it grows and expands, allowing the syncopation and cross rhythms to almost destabilise the sense of beat.

6. Harmony/Pitches

Harmonic movement in the traditional manner of functional harmony, where chord progressions, cadences and keys determine the overall direction of the music, is not employed in this work. At the same time the approach to harmony here is not random. A number of underlying principles appear to govern what is happening:

- The music is modal
- All the pitches in the mode(s) or diatonic scale used in a particular movement can be combined freely in that movement
- A particular tonal area is maintained while a motif or passage of counterpoint is developed
- The same musical idea, motif or passage can be repeated with a changing bass
- A repeated chord can be combined with moving parts or countermelodies
- Clusters – using all or many of the notes within an octave
- Multiple pedals can be sustained against a moving line
- Where a tonal centre is maintained all the notes of the tonality can be used resulting in harmony that favours seconds and fourths
- Occasional use of chromatic notes to disturb and create tension
- Occasional use of bitonality

The Tall Ships Suite is a work in three movements. Each has a different tonal centre. Movement 1, Reel, uses the re (dorian) mode, beginning on A. It employs a gapped scale with C omitted. Movement 2, Slow Airs, is in the re mode beginning on E. It

features both flattened and sharpened seventh, C# and C natural. The work concludes with Movement 3, Jig, which is in G pentatonic with C and F# omitted.

For the most part the harmony is modal or diatonic. Given the linear nature of the writing, the basic approach is to develop lines where the notes of the mode combine freely. There is no attempt to assemble specific chords and the primacy of line is what matters. Movement 1 is based on the reel *Sporting Paddy* which uses the following notes: A, B, D, E, F#, G. All the melodies and harmony are derived from these pitches. It is like a painter who puts a particular set of colours on a palette which can be used in any combination for the painting.

Tonal areas are often maintained while a particular idea is developed. Movement 1, Variation 2, is a good example. G is established at bar 47 in the string quartet music. When the traditional instruments enter at bar 49 their slow air is in G and this tonality is maintained until the variation concludes at bar 70. Movement 3, Jig, has a G tonality and this is never in doubt in Section A of the movement bars 1-29. The presence in the cello part of an Aflat 2 in bars 13-14 and a Bflat 2 in bars 16 and 18 are simply irritants, which draw attention to themselves, causing disturbance without seriously questioning the G tonality.

Movement 1, Variation 2 bars 20-45, demonstrates how changing a repeated bass note can give the harmony a completely new aspect. As the reel is played the accompanying pedals shift from G->A->B->D->E, and in the process give new colour to the harmony. This is an effective technique enabling the composer to transform the same image by varying the background. It is used in a different manner in Movement 2 where a series of slow moving chords are used to accompany the slow airs. While the airs which move in slow quavers are clearly rooted in an E tonality, this is challenged somewhat by the slowly evolving sustained supporting chords in the string quartet, which unfold over a repetitive pitch pattern of E3, D3, B2, C#3, D3, in the cello, thus enabling the sense of transformation referred to above.

On occasions a chord is repeated while melodies are worked freely above or below the chord. This occurs in Movement 1, Variation 4, bars 73-115. From bar 73, the violins and viola have a repeating chord comprising A4, G4 and E4, while the jig

melody is heard in the traditional instruments with countermelodies heard in the cello and later the piano.

Another harmonic device can be found in clusters especially those found in the piano part. Their function is to add breadth to the sound by filling it out. They are particularly evident in Variation 4. In total the piano interjects with a developing cluster motif on five occasions during this variation. With each appearance the cluster motif becomes more intense, more dense and louder, forming an added layer of sound. The piano repeats the cluster motif in bars 160-169, while the complete reel is played by the traditional instruments. Clusters enrich the harmony and demonstrate that all the notes of the mode can be used at once.

Pedals or drones have always been a part of traditional music. What is different in this suite is that a number of different pedal notes are sounded simultaneously, creating a kind of sustained cluster. These pedals occur in both Movement 1 and Movement 3. The reel is introduced in a teasing manner: additive process is used to build up the opening phrase of the reel, as the whistle, traditional flute, uilleann pipes and concertina play varying numbers notes before sustaining their final note. The first nine notes of the retrograde are then played by the fiddle, which sustains a D5, completing a five-note pedal cluster which comprises A5, G4, G4, E5, D5. The banjo completes this section by playing the retrograde of phrase A of the reel. A three-part pedal in the traditional instruments in Movement 3, bars 31-48, mirrors their use in Movement 1. A three-part pedal heard in the violins and viola at bars 73-91, is broken by rests and erratically interrupted by a quaver chord. Finally, the use of pedals in Movement 1, Variation 5, as a means of establishing two different tonalities, has already been discussed.

Limited use of chromatic harmony features in the cello part in Movement 3, Section A, bars 1-25, where its function is to disturb a totally modal environment. This music is repeated with variation by the piano in bars 36-44 and again at bars 66-72.

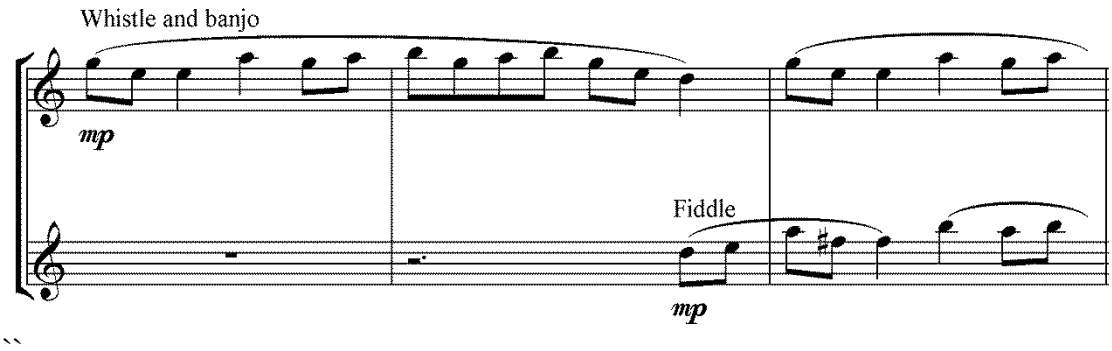
Bitonality is unusual in traditional music which is mainly modal in character. With the exception of the flattened seventh, chromatic notes are rare in traditional tunes. The harmonies employed in Irish arrangements are for the most part tonal or modal. In the

case of modern arrangements using chords with added notes, the predominant sound remains tonal or modal. Therefore, sounding the key of G and A simultaneously as a means of harmonising a traditional Irish tune may well be breaking new ground. Movement 1, Variation 5, makes use of this harmonic approach by having some of the instruments (mainly the traditional instruments) play in the existing key of G, while others (the quartet and piano) are divided, playing in G and A simultaneously. At bar 118, a double pedal, G4 and A4 is first heard on the concertina and traditional flute, while harmony in seconds is developed in the other instruments. This music prepares the listener for a move to bitonality. With the appearance of C#5, initially in the fiddle at bar 131 and also the G#5 in the violin 1 part at bar 136, the tonality shifts to G+A with both being sounded simultaneously up to bar 151. A bitonal variant is introduced at bar 142 when the traditional flute leads off in G and is echoed in A by the concertina. The uilleann pipes and tin whistle repeat this process.

7. The Instrumentation/Performance Style

Craobh Nua commissioned *The Tall Ships Suite* in 2010. It was decided to write for all the instruments available in the group: whistles, traditional flutes, fiddles, uilleann pipes, concertina, banjo, bodhran, and piano. Bongos and castanets were played by a percussionist who was not a member of Craobh Nua. The traditional instruments feature in a number of different ways: as a solo instrument/instrument group, two or more instruments/instrument groups are combined playing the same line, the full traditional ensemble plays together the same line. For the most part these instruments play in unison or in octaves in the first movement. There are some examples of two-part writing, which are mainly confined to tune with pedal accompaniment. However, in Variation 5, the whistle and banjo play a fragment of the tune in G at bar 118, while the fiddle joins them in the following bar playing mainly a major second higher.

Ex 15 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 1, whistle, banjo, fiddle, bars 118-120



In the final movement the traditional instruments have much greater independence. The patchwork motifs which make up the jig tune are developed by the traditional instruments in the first twenty five bars mainly in four-part writing. A new set of patchwork motifs derived from the retrograde of the jig tune is developed in the second part of the movement by the string quartet while the traditional instruments play sustained pedal notes in five parts. Part-writing of this kind is unusual for these instruments and possibly original in approach, and shows the capacity of traditional players to work with independent lines. It also demonstrates the flexibility of the music to sustain contrapuntal treatment, (Ex 8).

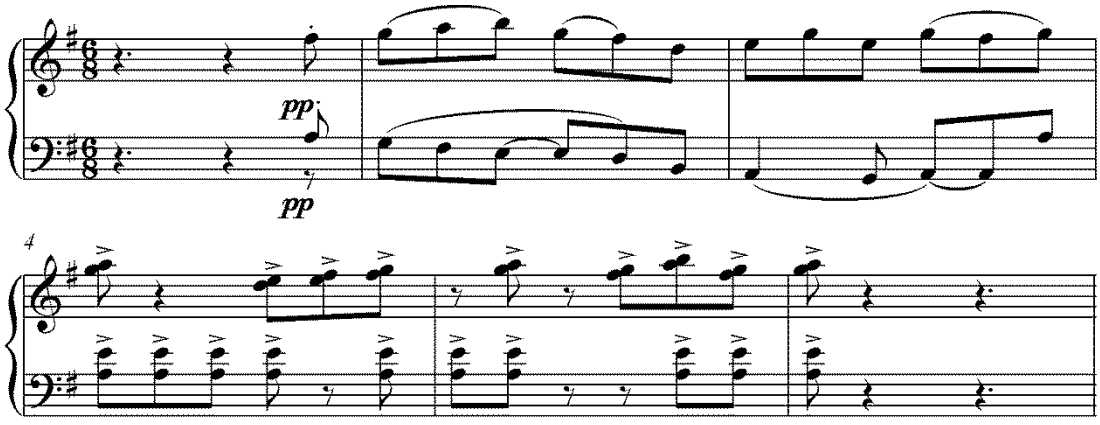
Perhaps the most authentic writing for the traditional instruments occurs in Movement 2. The whistle, traditional flute, fiddle and uilleann pipes each play their air without interruption, supported by an unobtrusive accompaniment. At the same time the fact that both airs and their imitations are being played simultaneously presents a huge challenge for players who usually play a slow air as a solo. A single instrumental sound is replaced by four, changing the musical context completely for both player and listener.

Although each traditional Irish instrument has its own unique and distinctive sound, for example the uilleann pipes have been described as 'one of the world's most distinctive multi-reed instruments,[34]' it is the added quality of a highly skilled performing style which makes traditional music so attractive. Performers are expected to use 'improvisation, an implicit musical skill which requires subtle changes in rhythm, ornamentation and timbre.[35]' It is interesting when Irish music is notated

using computer programmes, the result, especially in slow airs, is very different to that of a live performance. 'Experienced performers use improvisation in their interpretation of tunes, songs and dances. This involves ornamenting and varying the basic melodic structures in dance music, as well as in traditional songs.[36]' Each traditional instrumentalist in *The Tall Ships Suite* not only brings the distinctive sound of their instrument to the performance but also their own unique manner of performing the music.

The piano was included above in the list of traditional instruments because the player was a member of Craobh Nua. However, for the purposes of this work, the piano was treated independently from both the traditional ensemble and the string quartet. The percussive qualities of the piano made it an ideal vehicle for providing independent lines that contrasted effectively with the traditional writing. This is particularly the case in the first movement, where much of the writing for the traditional instruments involves unison versions of the *Sporting Paddy* tune with rhythmic variations. But the piano is rarely part of this preferring instead to develop independent material that will contrast melodically, rhythmically and harmonically with both the traditional instruments and the string quartet. A good example can be found in Movement 1 bars 73-115, Variation 4. The piano makes five interruptions, each growing in intensity as the range, texture, harmony and dynamics are all expanded.

Ex 16 *The Tall Ships Suite* Movement 1, piano motif, bars 73-115



A different style is used for the piano writing at bars 64-70, Movement 1, where the piano plays the slow air with the whistle, traditional flute and concertina. The piano

version uses rich cluster chords which show off the melody in a new light. The left hand part is played up an octave so that the complete cluster is heard in a high register giving the sound a resonant bell-like quality and contrasting it powerfully with the whistle, flute and concertina. Later in the first movement the piano and quartet engage in a bitonal dialogue. Violin 1 and the piano LH play in A while Violin 2 and the piano RH play in G. In the closing section of this movement bars 160-169, the piano plays the jig countermelody which had already been heard in bars 73-115, while the quartet and traditional ensemble play the reel rhythm against it. This example of cross rhythm, further demonstrates the piano's ability to function as a separate independent voice, always enriching the texture, the harmonic and rhythmic colour and helping maintain musical interest.

The role of the quartet is similar to that of the piano. Its function is not to play the traditional melodies or to accompany them in the traditional manner but rather to act as a counterpoint to the music played by the traditional instruments. For example, the quartet frequently has a motif developed from the tune in Movement 1, which is then treated linearly, or using additive, subtractive or retrograde processes. In Movement 2 the quartet provides a sustained accompaniment using notes freely to form mildly dissonant chords derived from the re mode (E). The quartet is also capable of four-part counterpoint, which provides a total contrast to the other instruments. We see this in the first movement in the micro-polyphony of Variation 3 at bars 47-70, and also in the second part of the Movement 3, where the strings play the spliced up jig in retrograde at bars 30-60.

8. Conclusion

The goal in writing *The Tall Ships Suite* was to explore traditional music by looking at it through an alternative musical lens.

The players welcomed the new treatment of traditional music and enjoyed its performance. They particularly enjoyed the interaction with the string quartet because it gave their music a new life, suggesting a totally different context and introducing them to processes of which they had little previous experience. Craobh Nua generated a new sound set and in doing so broadened their perspective in terms of traditional

and contemporary music. Nowhere was this more obvious than in Movement 2 where the quartet had the background, accompanying role. However, the chords, the dynamics, the timbre and the rich sound generated by the four string quartet instruments totally transformed the already beautiful sounds created by the four traditional soloists. While the Chieftains have shown that it is possible to fuse Irish music with rock music, Chinese music and jazz, the *Tall Ships Suite* shows that traditional musicians can work successfully and effectively with classically-trained musicians, exploring and enjoying contemporary idioms.

Traditional Irish music does not need to be enhanced. It is a valid musical tradition in its own right and has already withstood the ravages of time. However, it is certainly plastic and pliable and could readily become a catalyst for future composers through its deconstruction and reconstruction. Tunes are capable of endless variation: they can be dissected into micro-motifs, or longer figures, broken into a patchwork of short phrases and put back together in the original form. A dance tune can be taken and shorn of one of its most precious qualities – rhythm, and transformed into a totally different dance. Dynamic colour, contemporary harmonic and contrapuntal techniques can all enhance traditional Irish music and help it find another voice into the future.

The original hope for Movement 2 was that each of the four soloists would memorise their tune and their points of entry and that the four-part counterpoint would be completely at ease with itself when it was being performed. Each performer would concentrate on their own line, its expression, articulation and ornamentation, conscious of the other performers and yet almost oblivious to them. Since the rhythmic values were not completely strict and there was no metre as such, the synchronisation of the various lines as shown on the score was primarily an indication of a possible performance rather than an exact graph of a particular performance. In reality, however, achieving this freedom of expression proved difficult.

This suite has a distinctive traditional quality for two main reasons: the instrumentation and the dance rhythms. If one were to listen to a piece by the contemporary folk band Kila, the same conclusions could be reached for the same reasons. On the other hand, while Gerald Barry uses traditional Irish melodies in his *Piano Quartet No 4*[37], there is little to suggest a traditional connection on hearing it.

Traditional dance music has its own internal rhythmic structure that makes it attractive to both the dancer and the listener. It is not surprising therefore, that the young players thoroughly enjoyed the syncopated rhythms which resulted from the different 7/8 groupings employed in Variation 3, moving effortlessly and seamlessly to Variation 4 which is a reconstruction of the reel tune in the form of a 6/8 jig.

The Tall Ships Suite is one of a number of works to apply new musical processes to traditional Irish music. Marian Ingoldsby in her composition *Famine* for String Quartet and Uilleann Pipes (1995)[38], juxtaposes strictly atonal sections for the quartet, with music for the uilleann pipes and quartet which employs simple, modal harmonies. *The Blackberry Blossom* for piano by Eric Sweeney is based on an Irish reel of the same name. He uses 'such devices as the highlighting of certain notes in the tune to form sub-themes, sustained pedal notes as drones and the development of melodic patterns by additive and subtractive rhythms.[39]' Michael Ó 'Suilleabháin appears to leave the traditional melody intact and concentrates on giving an added bounce to the rhythm in his reconstructions of traditional tunes. Iarla O Lionaird's Afro-Celt System and more recently his collaboration with the Crash Ensemble is an exploration of sean-nós song in a contemporary context. Donnacha Dennihy's *Grá agus Bás* incorporates 'intricately ornamented lines sung by Iarla O Lionáird into a swirling instrumental maelstrom.[40]' Traditional music is also an important source of inspiration in Bill Whelan's concerto for flute and orchestra, *Linen and Lace*, which will be premiered in June, 2014.

The Tall Ships Suite attempts to make an original contribution in a number of ways: by writing for a traditional group, (as distinct from a soloist) by having the traditional group play the deconstructed tunes and by the involvement of the traditional group in new processes such as imitation, layering, closely-spaced chords, dissonance, irregular rhythms and bitonality. This experiment was certainly worthwhile.

One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once

Introduction

One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once received its premiere performance on Friday April 20th, 2012, in WIT Chapel, as part of Waterford New Music Week, 2012. The performers were: Louise O Carroll, soprano, Andrea Kavanagh, contralto, Cian O Carroll, tenor, Damien Kehoe, baritone, Fergal Kelly, bass**,** John Kennedy, bass, Stephen Mackey, clarinet in B Flat.

One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once[41] is based on a poem of the same title by the poet Mark Granier. It is a humorous poem written after a friend of the poet offered to take a German lady on a tour of James Joyce sites in Dublin. After a few hours and many houses later she was thoroughly fed up and never wanted to see a James Joyce house again.

The piece was composed in Autumn 2011, soon after the composer had attended the Ostrava Days, New and Experimental Music Festival in Ostrava, Czech Republic in August 2011. The three-week festival was a powerful learning experience, creating an environment where over the course of twenty one days the participants were completely immersed in a world of new music. Composers in attendance included Carola Bauckholt and Rolf Riehm, Germany, Berhard Lang, and Kurt Schwertsik, Austria, Petr Kotik and Martin Smolka, Czech Republic, while performers included the Jack Quartet from New York and the Janacek Philharmonic Orchestra from the Czech Republic. Soloists included Conrad Harris violin, New York, Pauline Kim, violin, New York, Theo Nabict, bass clarinet, Berlin and Karel Dohnal, clarinet. Prague. Many new works received first performances. Recognised composers and compositions from the last fifty years were also included in concert programmes. Memorable performances included, Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Harlekin* (1975) for solo clarinet, *Structures* (1962), Morton Feldman, *Emil will nicht schlafen..*(2009-10), Carola Bauckholt, *Hamburg Concerto* (1998-99, revised 2002), Gyorgy Ligeti, *Kottos* (1977) Iannis Xenakis and *Entropic Symphony* (2011) by Petr Cigler.

The work was influenced by a number of different events which occurred during the festival. Two American composers, Larry Polanski and Phill Niblock had a particular interest in exploring fundamentals and listening to the partials which resulted when one listened for prolonged periods (sixty minutes on some occasions) to a single pitch. For example, Phill Niblock's *Boabab* (2011)[42] which was first performed at Ostrava, uses just three pitches, Bflat, B, C. The piece (30 minutes in length), fills in the gaps between the three pitches as it develops. Discussions over the three weeks included consideration of the harmonic series, the significance of quarter tones and harmonics, all of which were sources of inspiration in the composition of *One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once*. It led to a determination to write a piece which explored these three aspects: the harmonic series, quarter tones and harmonics.

The performance of Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Harlekin* (1975)[43] by Karel Dohnal, clarinet, was both significant and rewarding. Apart from the playing, which was enthralling, what was also revealing was the how the comic aspects of the work were brought out in Dohnal's performance. He was dressed as a clown and moved about the performance area making the audience feel like we were at the circus and not at a concert. This was so obvious, particularly to the young people who laughed and cheered the player's antics. The lesson seemed to be that a long and extremely complex piece of music could still be fun and be enjoyed. This led to a second determination to develop a fun aspect to the composition which the audience could relate to and enjoy.

The poem from Mark Granier's second collection titled *Fade Street*, is quoted below.

One of the Houses James Joyce Lived in. Once.

James Joyce ivy,
On James Joyce plaque,
James Joyce pebbles,
On James Joyce dash.
James Joyce knocker,
On James Joyce door,
James Joyce dust,
On James Joyce floor.
James Joyce windows,
On James Joyce glass.
Waiting for James Joyce
clouds to pass.

Fade Street
Mark Granier
Salt Publishing 2010
(used with permission)

1. Form

The broad shape of the piece is A B B1 Coda.

One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once *Form Chart*

Bar	Section	Pitches	Rhythm	
1-30	A	F		
1-2			Free 60 seconds	Harmonics Baritone/Bass->T
3-7			Changing time sigs	Hum + lip slaps TBB
8-9			Free	Clarinet added
10-19			2/4 quavers in alto	*James Joyce* in quavers
			minims in TBB	spoken + voiced C in alto
20-			2/4 quavers in alto	*James Joyce* in quavers
30			minims in TBB	spoken + voiced C alto
				spoken + voiced F soprano
31-41	B	F		Lines 1-5
31-32			Free – chant	Poem Title chanted by all
33-34		Motif *a*	Free – soprano decides	Line 1 melody in soprano
				ivy echo in alto
35		Motif *b*	Free – tenor decides	Line 2 melody in tenor
36-37		Motif *a*		Line 3 soprano + noises p,b,s
38-39		Motif *b*		Line 4 tenor+SA harmony+ssh
40		Motif *a*		Line 5,6 motif *a* inverted
41			Free	Clarinet solo
42-48	B1	F	Strict	Lines 7-11
42-43		Motif c	3/1	Lines 7, 8 F chord with related
				notes + clarinet
44		Motif *a*		Line 9 SAT canon
45-46		Motif *b*		Line 10 STA canon
47-48		Motif *c1*		Line 11 SAT chords + rests
49-51	Coda	Motif *a*	3/1	Line 11 motif *a* sop +ATBB
				chords + clarinet

The piece derives its unity from the single pitch F which is used throughout, the repetition of three core motifs, *a*, *b*, and *c* and an integrated approach to line design throughout.

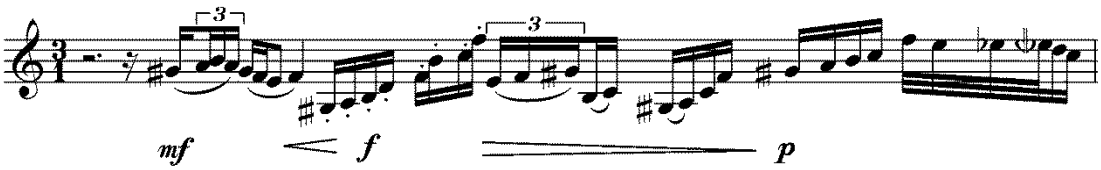
2. Texture

It is possible to approach texture in this ensemble piece on different levels. At times it is monophonic, bi-phonic, polyphonic and homophonic. It is certainly possible to consider this as a polyphonic work comprising independent lines or blocks. For example, the clarinet part is at all times a completely separate line. Similarly, it is possible to consider the bass/baritone lines as separate, with the soprano, alto and tenor parts unfolding over them. Having said that, there are times when the upper parts (SAT) create a homophonic sound with chordal harmony such as in bars 42-43 and bars 47-48. In general however, the work has a linear texture, (See Ex 6 below).

3. Rhythm

Rhythm is treated in a number of ways in the course of this composition. While the rhythm is free in the opening two bars there is a time stipulation for each bar of 30 seconds. A section marked **In strict time,** follows at bar 3, setting up a pattern of alternating free and strict time sections. Those sections marked **In strict time,** usually feature rhythmic patterns and in the case of bars 3-7, a series of changing time signatures. The free sections include chanted bars for example bar 31, where each part chants on its own particular note, the title of the poem. At other times when the soprano and tenor are singing motifs *a* and *b*, they are free to choose the speed and relative length of the notes, even though approximate note lengths are indicated in the score. The B1 section, bars 4-48, is in strict time but the time signature is 3/1, making it somewhat difficult for the voices. Although strict time must be maintained, this time signature was chosen to encourage greater fluidity in the phrasing. Finally, the clarinet part is highly decorated with the rhythmic freedom of a sean-nós song.

Ex 1 *One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once* Clarinet solo, bar 41

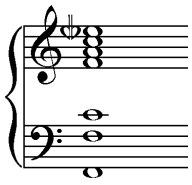


4. The harmony/pitches

As already stated this composition emerged from a desire to explore the harmonic series, harmonics and quarter tones in vocal music. A fairly straightforward but also experimental approach was adopted.

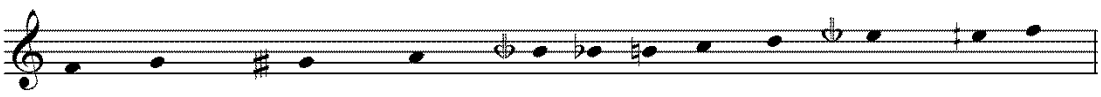
An F tonality was decided upon, largely because it suited the production of rich harmonics in both the bass and baritone parts. Choosing F meant that the basic notes of the harmonic series would be F2, F3, C4, F4, A4, C5, Eflat5, F5.

Ex 2 *One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once* The harmonic series



The Eflat is always tuned on the flat side, approximately a further quarter tone flat. In addition to the pitches of the harmonic series quoted in Example 1 above, the related notes, or those which fill in the intervals, are also employed.

Ex 3 *One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once* Series + related pitches



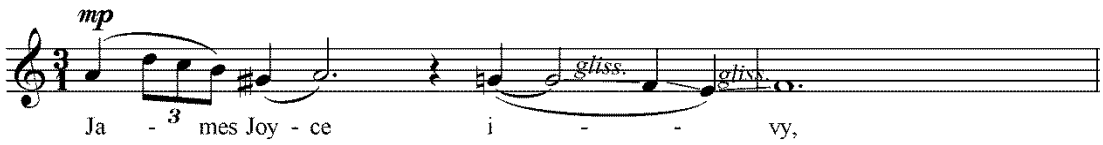
Quarter tones were explored firstly by tuning certain notes more on the sharp or flat side: resulting in Eflat+, G#+, E#+ in the voices and Bflat+ which is used in the clarinet part. Slides or *glissandi* are also used in both the vocal and instrumental parts, while the lower voices are encouraged to 'Freely oscillate quarter tone above or below', at bar 10.

The bass notes F – F, are sung as harmonics using a simple vocal technique where the singer moves slowly from ee to oo and then reverses the process. The gradual changing of the mouth shape and the manipulation of the lips, produces harmonics which add a considerable richness, depth and colour to the sound, making tuning easier for the upper voices.

The choice of clarinet was influenced in part by Stockhausen's *Harlekin*. The dexterity of the instrument and its ability to weave independent and florid lines, made it an attractive choice. In addition its particular timbre, especially the dark, mellow, chalumeau tone, suited a work where harmonics played an important role. The clarinet part is derived from the notes of the harmonic series and the related notes quoted above in Example 3.

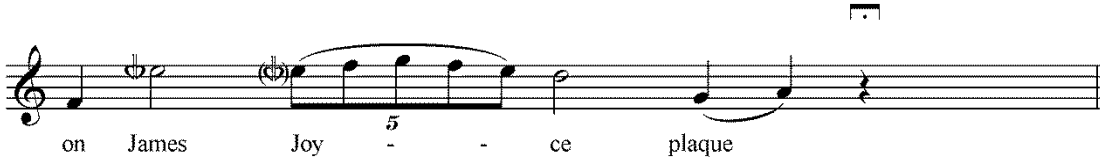
The voice parts, including the three short motifs *a*, *b*, and *c* are all derived from the pitches of the harmonic series and related notes quoted in Example 3. The motifs are used to give variety and contrast to the setting of the twelve lines of text.

Ex 4a *One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once* Motif *a,* bar 34



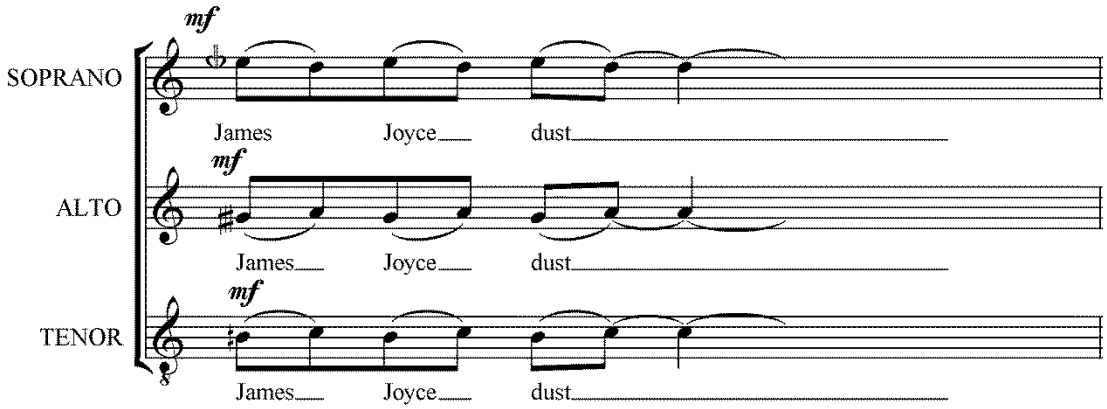
Motif *a* has an ascending fourth as its first two notes. This motif is sung by the soprano. A series of slides join the final pitches, G, F, E, F.

Ex 4b *One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once* Motif *b,* bar 35



Motif *b* is heard in the tenor and it has the characteristic leap of a seventh, with the Eflat sounding as though the singer is not capable of pitching his notes.

Ex 4c *One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once* Motif *c,* bar 42



Repeated ascending and descending steps characterise motif *c*, offering a contrast to the melodic shapes employed in motifs *a* and *b*.

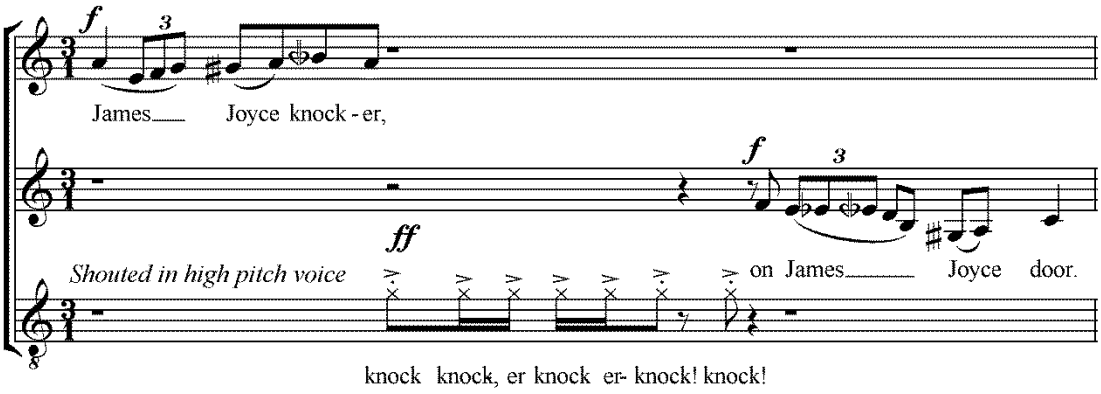
5. Approach to word-setting

James Joyce loved word play and it is attempted in this work also. The hope was that this might create humour and fun for the audience. Of course, the poem itself is intended to be funny and not taken too seriously.

Word-play is firstly brought about by a play on the two words James and Joyce. From bars 11-29 the alto who is later joined by the soprano, speaks and sings these two words using C4, F4 pitches and rhythms interspersed by rests. At the same time the three lower voices, using minims, repeat the vowels *ay* and *oi* which form the words James Joyce. The declamation of the title, freely in a chant style, at bar 31, has an

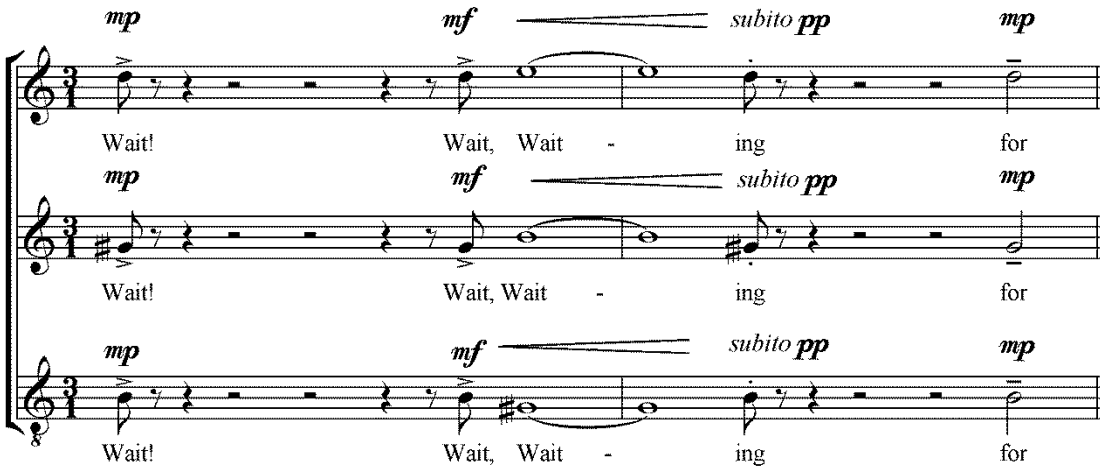
almost religious feel investing it with a pseudo-seriousness, thereby making it a source of comedy. As the works progresses, different words from the text of the poem are repeated usually as echoes but always in a humorous manner. A good example occurs in bar 40 when the tenor rhythmically shouts the word knocker, in imitation of someone knocking on a door.

Ex 5 *One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once*
knocker echoed in tenor, bar 40.



It seems unlikely that Mark Granier had in mind the splitting of the word ‘waiting’ in the final two lines of the poem. His original line reads: ‘Waiting for James Joyce showers to pass.’ However, in the musical setting the word ‘waiting’ is split to read; ‘Wait…wait, waiting’. It is almost as though the singers say ‘Stop..let us check the weather!’ After a dramatic pause it is decided to ‘Wait..’ until the ‘James Joyce shower’ has passed. The long rest after singing the first ‘Wait..’ in bar 47, supports this understanding.

Ex 6 *One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once*
homophonic texture, bar 47



Unpitched sounds using lips and mouth are explored in different parts of the work. Lip slaps combined with hummed notes are used in bars 3-7. At bar 35, singers are asked to 'Improvise freely on the word plaque using explosive spoken sounds at different pitches.' At bar 39 singers continue the *sh* of the word dashshhshshshh……..

6. Conclusion

One of the Houses James Joyce lived in. Once was a strongly experimental work if compared to other works in the portfolio. It differed in particular because the outcomes of the approaches taken seemed less assured at the time. For instance the technique for singing harmonics was learned expressly for this composition and its success could not be guaranteed. Similarly, the inclusion of several quarter-tones in the piece was a risk. Would the singers be able to maintain pitch, given that they were working in largely uncharted territory. None of them had any direct experience of quarter-tone music.

One of the lessons learned early on was that the slides used in Irish music, particularly in sean-nós singing, had already attuned the ears of the group to quarter-tone music. It was simply that they had not realised it. As rehearsals progressed the ensemble became familiar with the demands of the music and succeeded in creating a very homogeneous sound.

It is difficult to assess the success of the attempt at creating humour. Certainly it has great potential as Stockhausen's composition testifies but maybe the trick is to make it very obvious when it is used.

Bust

Introduction

Bust was conceived and written over a period of two years. The librettist, Alec McAlister, had already created a monologue dealing with a soccer player returning to Ireland, whose career lay in ruins after a serious injury. It was decided to base the libretto on this story.

Work on the text began in early October 2010. A rough outline of the opera as a whole was produced at the outset, each successive scene was set without prior knowledge of what would follow or what the end would be. The text of the first scene was delivered in late October and composition began immediately. For the following year and a half, the text of the other scenes arrived intermittently. It was almost like waiting for the next episode of a Dickens novelette. The opera was completed in February 2013.

At the end of the first year of composition, a production team comprising three performers and a producer/director met to organise the staging of the opera. Garter Lane Theatre, Waterford, was booked for July 2013 and auditions were arranged. The main characters and chorus members were selected in September 2012. The cast comprised a group of young people between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one. The young singers were anxious to experience a new work for stage, a contemporary work that would be different from the musicals with which they were already familiar. The project would be self-financing and all services apart from the theatre cost, given on a voluntary basis. The chorus, a key component of the opera, (it features in seven of the nine scenes) comprises thirteen singers: three sopranos, three altos, four tenors and three basses. There are five principal characters: Joey, Robbie, Jenny, Mother and Father.

Rehearsals began in October 2012 while the opera was still being written. It soon became apparent just how significant was the role of the chorus. It became necessary to make some additions to the score. As rehearsals continued over the winter, composition continued simultaneously.

A concert performance of Scenes 1 and 2 in February 2012, as part of Waterford New Music Week, was well received, lifting the spirits of the young cast. A two-week workshop was undertaken by the cast in June/July 2013, under the stage direction of Tara Ann Byrne and Bryan Flynn and with musical direction by Dr Marian Ingoldsby and Billy O Brien. The workshop culminated in concert performance of the complete opera at De La Salle College Chapel, Waterford, on July 12th, 2013, conducted by Marian Ingoldsby and accompanied on piano by Billy O Brien. The performance was warmly received. A recording of this performance is included in the submission.

Two fully-staged performances took place in Garter Lane Theatre, Waterford, playing to full houses on September 13 and 14, 2013. The DVD recording of the opera is included with the submission.

A chamber opera

Opera is a very costly medium, sometimes requiring large numbers of principals, a chorus, perhaps even a troupe of dancers and often a large orchestra. Contemporary operas such as *The Tempest*[44] by Thomas Ades and *The Minotaur*[45] by Harrison Birtwistle both require large forces. But operas without a chorus are also popular nowadays. Birtwistle's *Punch and Judy*[46] is an ensemble opera which can be performed by about ten performers while Lennox Berkeley's *A Dinner Engagement*[47] (1954) was recently performed at the Wexford Opera Festival (2012) with a total cast of seven singers and piano accompaniment. Some composers, in order to make their work more attractive to would-be producers, write chamber operas as these are less costly to produce. Since a key objective in the writing of *Bust* was to have the work performed, the chamber option was preferred, as it required just five principal singers and a small chorus.

A youth opera

Bust is at once a chamber, chorus and youth opera. The theme of the opera resonates with young performers and young audiences. For example, it would be difficult to imagine the chorus parts being played by more mature singers. For the first production all the performers were under twenty two years of age and their voices

were still developing. Indeed, for the majority of them, *Bust* was their first experience of singing in an opera. The work seeks on the one hand, to challenge the young singers, but at the same time not to crush them. *Bust* is written in an approachable style that can be managed and enjoyed by youthful performers.

The Story

We first meet Joey Power, the main character in the opera, as he is about to board a plane at London Airport. He tells us how the fulfilment of his childhood dream of becoming a soccer hero had started in an airport sometime previously. However, a serious injury has now left his career in ruins and his dream over. Scene 2 is really the beginning of Joey's story and it is set in Dublin Airport, as Joey, surrounded by his parents, prepares to leave for London. Joey's Mam and Dad, while very proud of their son's achievements, try to temper his excitement with wise advice. We learn his father had also worked in London on building sites, playing soccer and hoping to build a career. However, a progressive disease left him permanently confined to a wheelchair.

In London, Joey meets the Spurs manager who is gruff. Robbie's niece Jenny is his secretary and she tells us that Robbie will soon lose interest in Joey if he doesn't succeed on the pitch. London is big and impersonal and Joey misses home but he is determined to succeed. His first opportunity comes when the team captain damages a hamstring. Joey mistakenly thinks Robbie wants him to wear the captain's arm-band. On assuming the captaincy, he immediately shows leadership and scores a goal. Robbie promotes Joey to the first team although he still reprimands him for his indiscipline in taking the captaincy contrary to the manager's intentions.

Joey's career is now on the ascendant, he gets his first cap for Ireland and there is a hint that he and Jenny have a fondness for each other. Soon afterwards the Spurs reserves are playing an insignificant match at a doubtful football ground on a night when the weather conditions are poor. Joey, who is playing with the reserve team due to a minor injury he is carrying, doesn't want to play but the manager insists he goes on for the last few minutes to give himself a run. He breaks his leg, is stamped on and suffers excruciating pain. He undergoes months of treatment but the injury leaves him

permanently damaged with no hope of making a come-back. Scene 9, the final scene, is set in London Airport, connecting the story to where it started in Scene 1. Joey has ten minutes to board the plane home. However, the story takes an unexpected twist as Jenny suddenly appears, confronting Joey, saying she wishes to follow him. He begs her to leave him but she refuses, telling him she loves him. He is overjoyed. They are both joined by the chorus who sing a toast to a new dawn.

The libretto – the characters

Alec McAlister, the librettist, had no previous experience of writing for opera. He had however, written a play about Roy Keane which had a number of successful performances. His output also included monologues and short stories some of which were published. Alec possesses a keen knowledge of, and interest in theatre. His background research before beginning work on this libretto included an examination of Benjamin Britten's operas.

The *Bust* libretto is quite traditional in many respects. The story which unfolds through conventional scenes, is told by the principal characters and chorus. The *Bust* libretto creates and shapes very credible characters. Joey Power, the principal character, is a young, talented, hopeful soccer player. His dreams of stardom make him a universal character with whom many young people can identify. His determination matched by his honesty and decency ensure that the audience desperately want him to succeed and will have enormous sympathy for him when tragedy strikes. Robbie, on the other hand, is the typical manager: he talks at people, repeats himself a lot and has all the answers. His interest is in football and not in people. Jenny, Robbie's niece and secretary, is initially reserved but her detachment is gradually penetrated and in spite of herself, she falls in love with Joey. Joey's parents have all the love and concern one expects of parents. While they express genuine fear as they see their child heading into an uncertain future, they are also dreamers, a powerful characteristic Joey has inherited from his parents and one which resonates through the entire opera. Each character is well-crafted with sufficient realism to make them interesting, while at the same time a good contrast and balance between the characters is achieved. The story's cyclical shape is effective, drawing the audience into the story in such a way that they want to learn more.

Apart from the five principal characters, *Bust* has a small flexible chorus. One of the purposes in having such a chorus was to allow chorus members to play incidental characters who would perhaps have a single line, for example Scene 1 requires a check-out girl, whose solitary line is 'Sir your plane is waiting.' Members of the chorus could also be sub-divided into small groups as in Scene 3, where eight singers act as the main chorus while four others act as a semi-chorus quartet. Similarly, Scene 4 opens with the semi-chorus quartet which is later joined by the other chorus members and three of the principals; Joey, Robbie and Jenny. The full chorus also performs crowd scenes at matches or acts as a Greek chorus commenting in a more cold, detached and objective manner on the action and thereby increasing the intensity of the atmosphere.

The chorus has an important role in *Bust*. In sport, a large stadium can become a great cauldron charged with enormous energy and passion, when full of baying, cheering supporters. It would simply not be possible to replicate this kind of atmosphere if a person were to sit alone in their living room watching a match on television. The function of an opera chorus is to create on a theatre stage, the charged atmosphere made possible by crowds. If collective passion and emotion on a grand scale are required by the story, it is difficult to imagine how it can be achieved without the presence of a chorus. It also forms a link with earlier operatic tradition since in the long line of opera from the seventeenth century to the present time, the presence of a chorus is a common and often, key ingredient.

Challenges and opportunities presented by the libretto

Opera is one of those mediums where it is possible and credible, to deliver a number of different lines of text simultaneously. This operatic convention is ideally suited to Scene 2 where the speech of each of the three principals (Joey, Dad and Mam) is more soliloquy than dramatic dialogue. While writing for each of the voices simultaneously, it is possible to give an insight into each individual character and also into the Power family as a whole. The shadow side of the family is portrayed through the father's failure and sickness, thus creating a significant link with the tragedy which overtakes the son later in the story. While Joey can only see success and is full

of confidence, his Mam on the other hand, seems less concerned with the great opportunity her son has been given and is more taken up with the possible threats and dangers that a move to London might bring. And yet, the bond of love which holds them together is very powerful. The text here allows for, and indeed demands, three highly-contrasted musical characters, where their individuality is paradoxically made all the more obvious in a concerted musical number.

A significant challenge was how to deal with the large amount of chorus involvement demanded by the libretto. The original intention had been to include the chorus as a feature of the opera, to give breadth and depth to the sound and also enhance the range of possibilities for mood and emotional contrast. However, as the libretto developed, the chorus emerged as a kind of sixth character appearing in almost all of the scenes. From a positive point of view this chorus involvement made possible a much wider variety of musical textures and colours. On the other hand, it limited the options to create the more personal and intimate music often associated with solos and small ensembles. It also made greater compositional demands by having to consistently write for chorus, split chorus and soloists.

A further challenge emerged in the textual repetition used in the libretto. Repeated chorus lines as distinct from repeated choruses are a feature of this libretto. Furthermore, these repeated lines are often interspersed with lines of text delivered by the principals. It became apparent at an early stage that to set these lines of text separately would be at best cumbersome and clumsy. The challenge was to find a method of combining the flowing lyrical lines of a principal with the repeating ostinato-like line of the chorus. A good example is found in Scene 1 where the chorus repeat ‘Ten minutes’, while Joey poignantly reflects on his demise. This challenge is an even greater one in Scenes 3 and 4 where several principals are involved, while the semi-chorus quartet and the remainder of the chorus all have different and overlapping text. Simultaneous setting of the different lines of text suggested itself as the most obvious solution. However, this approach also presents its own dilemma, that of creating a texture that might be too overwrought and heavy.

Finally, the libretto successfully provides excellent dramatic potential with which the composer can work. The story of Joey is a compelling one, the romantic twist gives

the audience further questions to ponder, while use of the chorus to suggest danger and disaster can be a powerful means of making the audience uneasy. Joey's over-confidence, set against the sense of fear we observe in Mam, Dad and Jenny is a further source of tension.

1. Form

Bust consists of an Overture and nine scenes.

Overture

Bar	Formal Section	Tonality	
1-44	Through composed	Bflat	Chorus Music centred on 4ths

Scene 1 *This is how it started* *A B A1 A2*

Bar	Formal Section	Tonality	
1-27	A	F	London Airport – Ten Minutes
27-35	B	Bflat	Dream music
36-55	A1	G	Ten Minutes
56-79	A2	Bflat	Joey's music slowed down

Scene 2 *Your Dream – My dream – My Son* *A B A1 C A2*

Bar	Formal Section	Tonality	
1-31	A	F/Bflat	Trio-Joey, Dad, Mam
31-120	B	Am-Dm-Aflat C	Solo-Dad
121-166	A1	Gm-Bflat	Trio
167-193	C	Am/F	Solo - Mam
194-219	A+B	C	Trio
219-233	Coda (A)	Dflat	Trio

Scene 3 *Big City/Small Boy – Lonely* *A B C*

Bar	Formal Section	Tonality	
1-13	Introduction	Aflat	Chorus chant
14-116	A	Aflat+6th flat A+6th natural Am	Duet-Robbie and Jenny
117-146	B	Bm	Chorus and quartet Big City
147-183	B1	Am-Dm	Chorus and Joey
184-206	C	Bflat	Dad + Chorus (reprise Scene 2 music)
207-211	Coda	ends A(m)	Joey and Chorus

Scene 4 *The Stiffs* *A B A C A*

Bar	Formal Section	Tonality	
1-25	A	B B, F, A#	Chorus and quartet
26-70	A1		Chorus and quartet 'Stiff broken & scraps of fields'
71-92	A2	Bflat - A	Chorus/Quartet/Jenny
93-104	B	Bflat	Joey
105-117	A3	Bflat	Jenny, Joey and Chorus
118-144	C	Bflat	Robbie
145-149	A4	B B, F, A#	Chorus and quartet

Scene 5 *Wear It With Pride* *A B A C A D*

Bar	***Formal Section***	***Tonality***	
1-49	A	Am/D	Chorus and Joey 'Ball, ball'
51-65	B	B flat	Robbie
66-152	A1	Bm	Chorus, Joey, Robbie 'Ball, ball'
153-159	C	Bm	Chorus 'Goal'
160-216	A2	Cm	Chorus, Joey, Robbie 'Ball, ball'
217-273	D	Gm → B	Chorus, Robbie and Jenny

Scene 6 *Small Boy/Big Heart* *A B C*

Bar	***Formal Section***	***Tonality***	
1-13	A	Fm	Introduction Joey and Jenny Duet
14-57	B	F#m	Joey and Jenny Duet
58-186	C	C#m-Am	Jenny Solo Main Song
58-103	C	C#m-Am	Jenny Verse 1
104-145	C	C#m-Am	Jenny Verse 2
146-157	C	C#m-Am	Jenny Verse 3
158-186	C	C#m-Am	Jenny Coda

Scene 7 *First Cap* *A B C A Coda*

Bar	Formal Section	***Tonality***	
1-21	A	C/G	Chorus 'Star rising'
22-54	A1	C/G	Chorus, Robbie, Jenny
54-102	A2	C	Chorus, Joey, Jenny, Mam, Dad
102-123	B	Am/E ->	Chorus and Joey
		Bm /F# ->C/G	
		F	Chorus 'Ireland' & 'Goal'
125-135	C	C	Chorus and Joey Dream music
136-160	A3	C -> G -> D	Chorus, Joey, Jenny, Mam, Dad
162-191	Coda (A)	C/F -> Bflat	Chorus and quartet

Scene 8 *The Stiffs - reprise* *A B*

Bar	Formal Section	Tonality	
1-38	A	B B, F, A#	Chorus and quartet
39-54	A1	G#dim	Chorus, quartet and Joey
55-63	A3	B	Joey, Jenny, Robbie
64-99	B	Aflat	Chorus, quartet, Joey and Jenny
			Dream music

Scene 9 *The End* *A B C D E F*

Bar	***Formal Section***	***Tonality***	
1-60	A	C	Chorus and Joey
			Reprise Scene 1 'Ten Minutes'
61-90	B	Bflat	Chorus, Joey and Jenny
			Reprise Scene 8, Dream music
91-125	C	F#m	Jenny and Joey Reprise Scene 6 B
126-191	D	C#m	Jenny and Joey Duet
			Jenny and Joey Reprise Scene 6
			Main Song
192-218	E	G	Jenny and Joey Love Duet
219-258	F	A	Chorus, Joey and Jenny

A significant aspect of the entire opera is the high degree of connectivity and unity that exists between the ten pieces of music which form this work. This is achieved in a variety of ways. Scenes 8 and 9 reprise music already heard in the Overture and Scenes 1, 4, 5 and 6. The presence of fourths is present in virtually all of the music, in the melodic lines and in the harmony, linking every everything from the Overture to Scene 9. Joey's music is derived from the fourths heard in the piano part, bar 13 of the Overture. Similarly, the opening notes of the 'Ball, ball' chorus from Scene 5 and the 'Broken body' chorus from Scene 9 are derived from the same fourths. The quartal

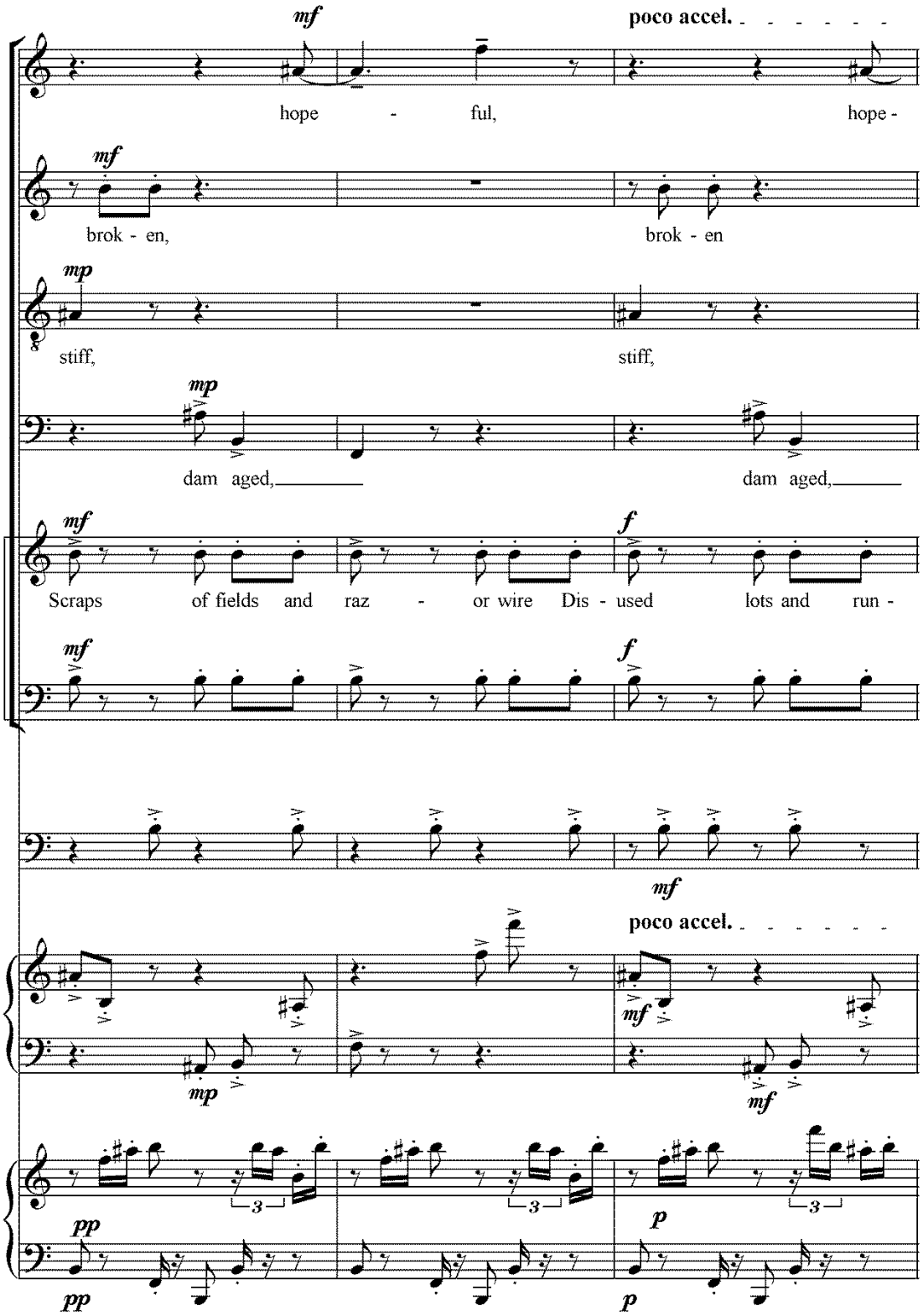
quality of the music also extends to the instrumental writing, beginning in the Overture with the writing for the piano. Fourths are a particular feature in the music for two pianos heard in Scenes 6 and 9.

The overall connectedness of the music in *Bust* is further enhanced and underpinned in Joey's dream music which is heard in Scenes 1, 7, 8 and 9. Jenny's song from Scene 6 is derived from her music in Scene 3, and is subsequently recalled in Scene 9, where it is sung as a duet with Joey.

2. Texture

Bust employs a number of different textural approaches throughout the course of the work. However, the most significant is the linear style of writing which permeates everything. The music moves horizontally in the main and is rarely conceived in a vertical manner. While horizontal movement certainly includes canonic writing and freely counterpointing lines, it has an even greater significance. It embraces blocks of movement taking in the chorus, semi-chorus, the soloists and the individual instruments. Contrast is achieved through a combination of different musical events: sustained sound versus movement, varied rates of rhythmic movement, short, repeated, sometimes angular, percussive, *ostinato* figures against longer flowing lines and varied vocal and instrumental textures While each of the elements is separate, when combined they produce a diverse polyphony.

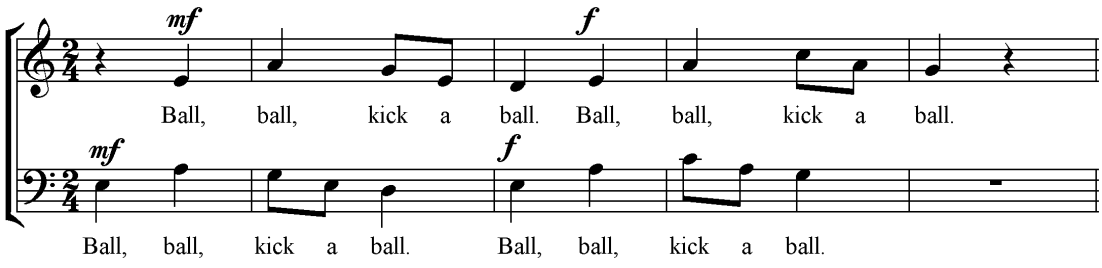
Ex 1 *Bust* Scene 4, The Stiffs, textural blocks, bars 61-63



Specific use of canon is a feature of the work, most notably in Scenes 5, 6 and 9. The 'Ball, ball' music is heard in each of the A sections of Scene 5, either in unison or as a

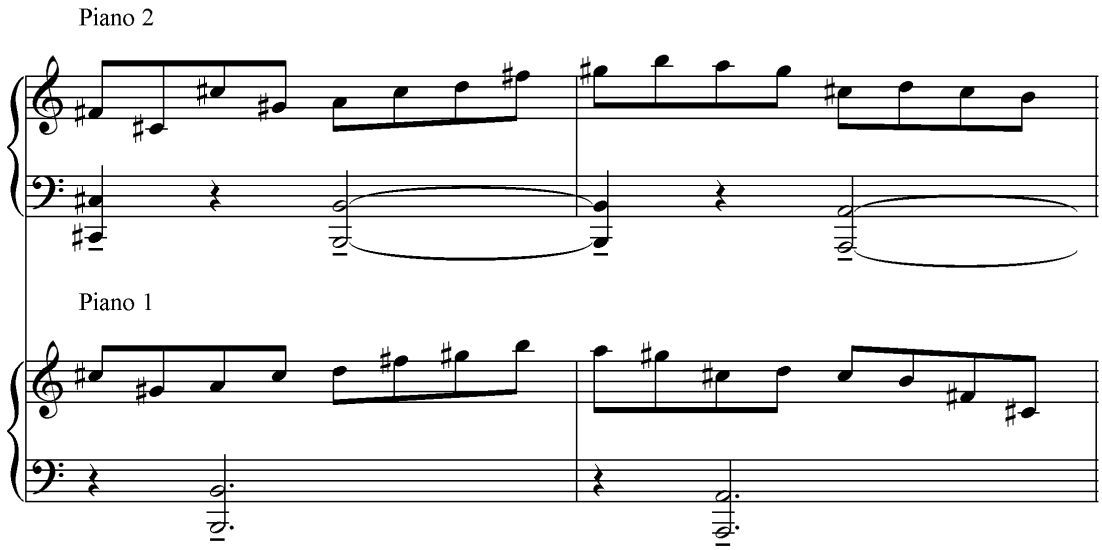
two part canon. For example, at bar 15, the gentlemen begin, followed by the ladies at a crotchet, while at bar 20, the canon is between the tenors and altos. Canon here is an effective means of describing musically the action on the field of play.

Ex 2 *Bust* Scene 5, Ball ball, canon, bars 15-19



The two-part canon at a crotchet featured in Scene 6 at bar 47 between Piano 1 and Piano 2, adds richness, colour and depth to the accompaniment. This technique can be seen in the music of Bach, Ligeti, John Adams and Stravinsky.

Ex 3 *Bust* Scene 6, canon for two pianos, bars 49-50



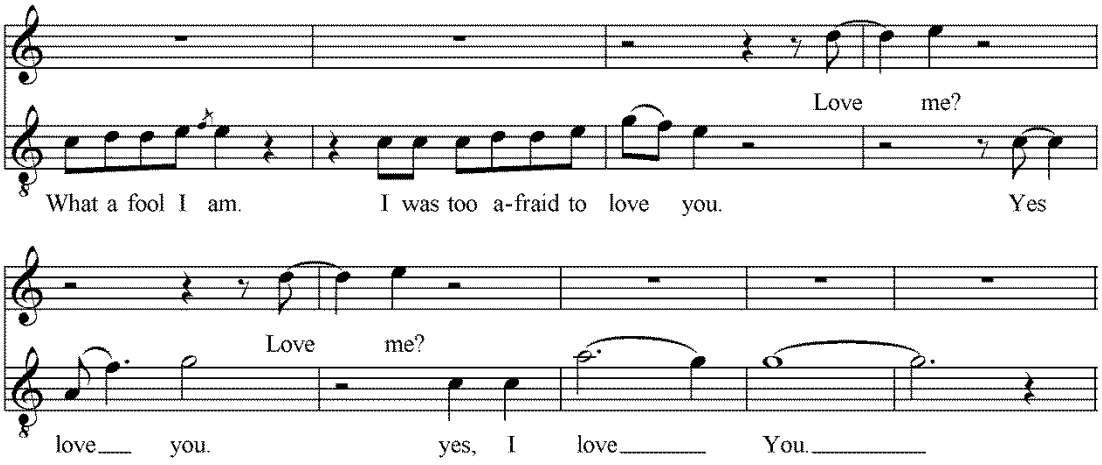
Energy defines the four part canon heard in the final bars of Scene 9. The chorus sing the seven-bar phrase, 'Broken body', firstly in unison and then as a four-part canon

beginning with the soprano at bar 226, while the two soloists, two pianos and cello develop independent lines.

There is little in the way of extended homophonic music for the chorus. However, in the 'Wear it with pride' music at the end of Scene 5, the chorus sings a distorted version of Gounod's *Soldier's Chorus* (*Gloire immortelle*)[48] melody, mainly in unison with chordal piano accompaniment.

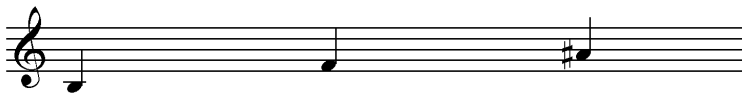
Perhaps one of the more interesting examples of texture in the opera is the monophony in Scene 9, Section E, bars 192-218. This simple love duet is based on the concept of call and response, creating one of the very expressive and effective moments in the opera and causing the listener's attention to be drawn by the unadorned vocal line.

Ex 4 *Bust* Scene 9, love duet, bars 196-204



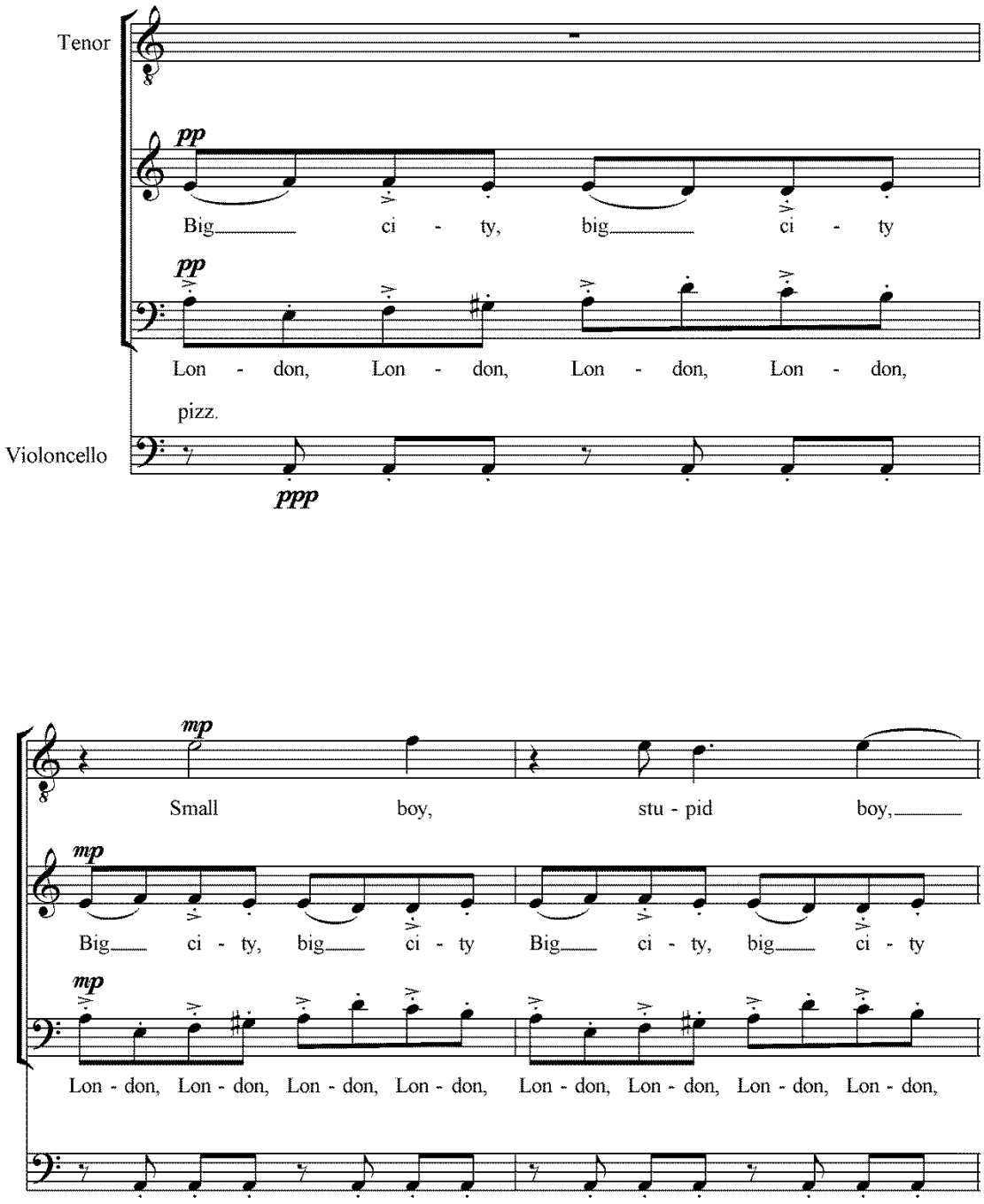
Heterophony occurs in Scene 6 between the vocal and piano 1, RH, parts. The vocal line is similar to that of the piano but makes minor changes for the purposes of shape and range. A different form of heterophony is found in Scene 4, Section A, bars 1-70, where all the pitched elements are derived from three pitches: B F A#. Although the music of the soloists, quartet, chorus, piano, marimba and cello is based on the three pitches, giving it an overall unity, at the same time these musical elements are totally independent and different.

Ex 5 *Bust* Scene 4, heterophony, three pitches B, F, A#



Pedals are used widely throughout this work. Single pedals, multiple pedals and broken pedals are often coupled with a moving line in order to create contrast. Bi-phonic texture occurs in the Overture, at bars 5 – 8. This is later expanded with the use of multiple pedals in the chorus and a moving line in the piano at bar 21-32. A tri-phonic texture is used in Scene 3, Section B bar 129: the broken A pedal is in the cello, a single-bar two-part *ostinato* heard in the chorus and a single independent line is featured in the quartet.

Ex 6 *Bust* Scene 3, triphonic texture, bars 129-131



Scene 9, bar 36, features a double pedal B and C in the instruments and voices while Joey has a separate, moving line.

3. Rhythm

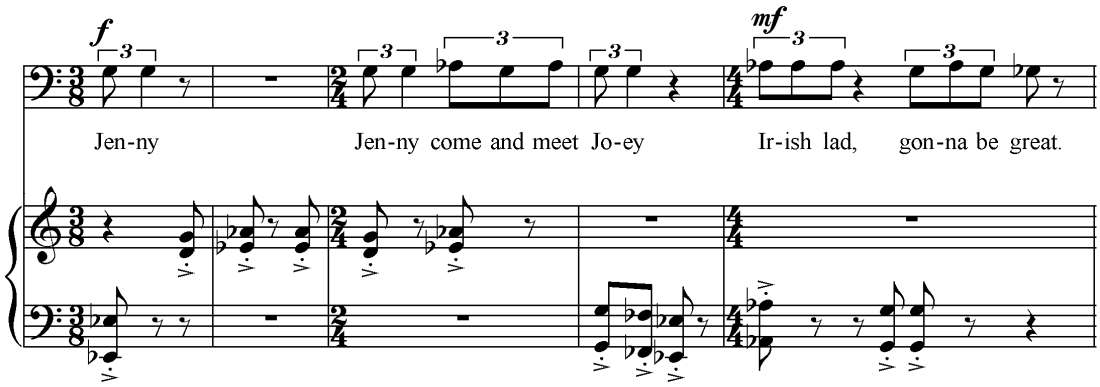
In the light of the polyphonic nature of much of the music in *Bust*, one would expect the organisation of rhythm to play a pivotal role in the compositional process. A variety of rhythmic procedures can be observed in the work.

The texture is often thick with two or three soloists, vocal quartet, chorus, piano, marimba and cello all taking part. It became necessary to guarantee there was contrast between the various elements, to ensure clarity (of text) and interest. The Sextet, *Chi mi freni* from Donizetti's *Lucia di Lamermoor*[49] and Verdi's *Bella figlia* quartet from *Rigoletto*[50], are fine examples of how rhythm can be an effective means of achieving contrast and clarity of line in a concerted vocal ensemble. Rhythmic counterpoint therefore, is an important feature of the opera as a whole. It is seen in Scene 7, bars 1-102, where the rhythms are differentiated from one another by the use of long values, short values, syncopated rhythms, off-beat rhythms, rests, tied notes, continuous quavers, triplets and dotted rhythms. It is possible for the listener to identify the various lines and at the same time feel the energy made possible by the web of rhythmic patterns.

By contrast, a rhythmic approach also favoured in the opera is the development of a moving line against a sustained line or lines. There is an example of this in the Overture, bars 21-32 and throughout Scene 1, when the chorus and piano have repeated figures that produce a certain sense of stasis while Joey has an active line.

Robbie's music makes a special rhythmic contribution. The aim was to create rhythms for his line in keeping with the babbling nature of his character. In the main, his music is syllabic, following the natural rhythms and flow of speech, as distinct from melodic rhythms. These rhythms, coupled with the narrow range adopted for his part, create an impression of 'free rhythm' although all his music takes place in a metred context. The semi-recitative used by Robbie in addition to responding directly to the character, also links *Bust* to the operatic tradition by employing one of its earliest conventions. Allied to recitative is the use of alternating spoken and sung lines usually referred to as *sprechstimme*. There are examples in Jenny's part both in Scenes 4 and 7.

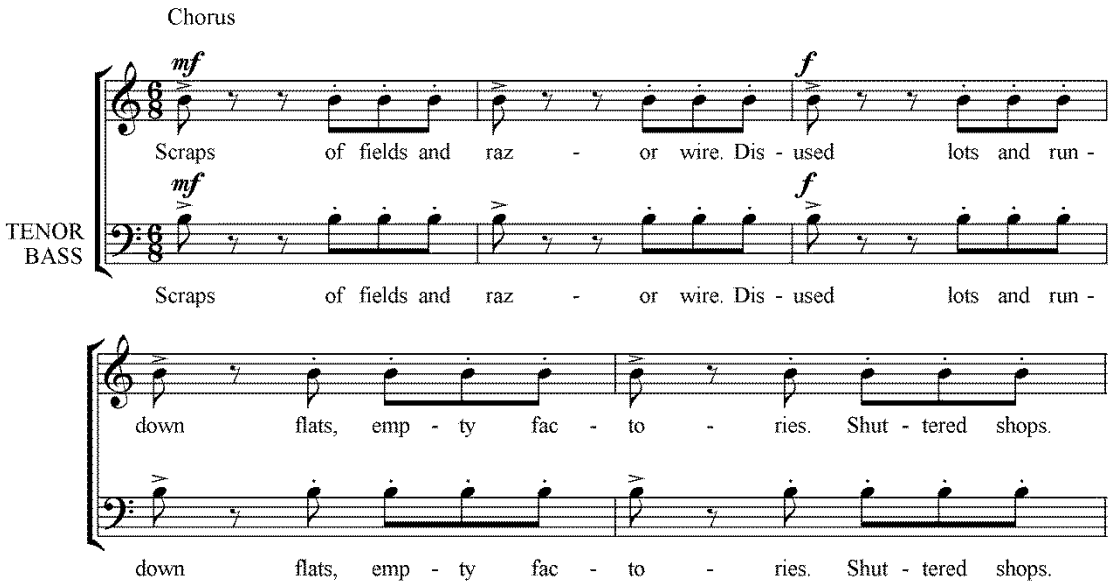
Ex 7 *Bust* Scene 3, Robbie's recitative, bars 59-63



In addition, formal dance rhythms find a place in the score. Joey sings of his dream for success, to a march-beat of repeated fifths in the piano LH and cello, in Scene 3, bars 162-176. Scene 5 concludes with a melodically altered version of Gounod's *Soldier's Chorus*, which is also a march. A slow waltz rhythm is used in Scene 6 to support the romantic nature of the song, while in Scene 9 the fast waltz rhythm creates and supports a happy, carnival atmosphere.

An interesting facet of rhythm in the work is syllabic word-setting. The syllables which form the words are separated by rests with the intention of creating independent, identifiable rhythmic patterns or lines. In this context, each syllable has equal weight and the rhythmic pattern has a higher function than the words which make up the pattern. Accents can come at inappropriate places. However, because the entire word or set of words is often repeated and also due to the mechanical manner in which the syllables are delivered, the meaning can in fact be heightened. This approach can be seen in Scene 4, bars 61-70, where the chorus chant 'Scraps of fields and razor wire….' on a monotone.

Ex 8 *Bust* Scene 4, word-setting, bars 61-63

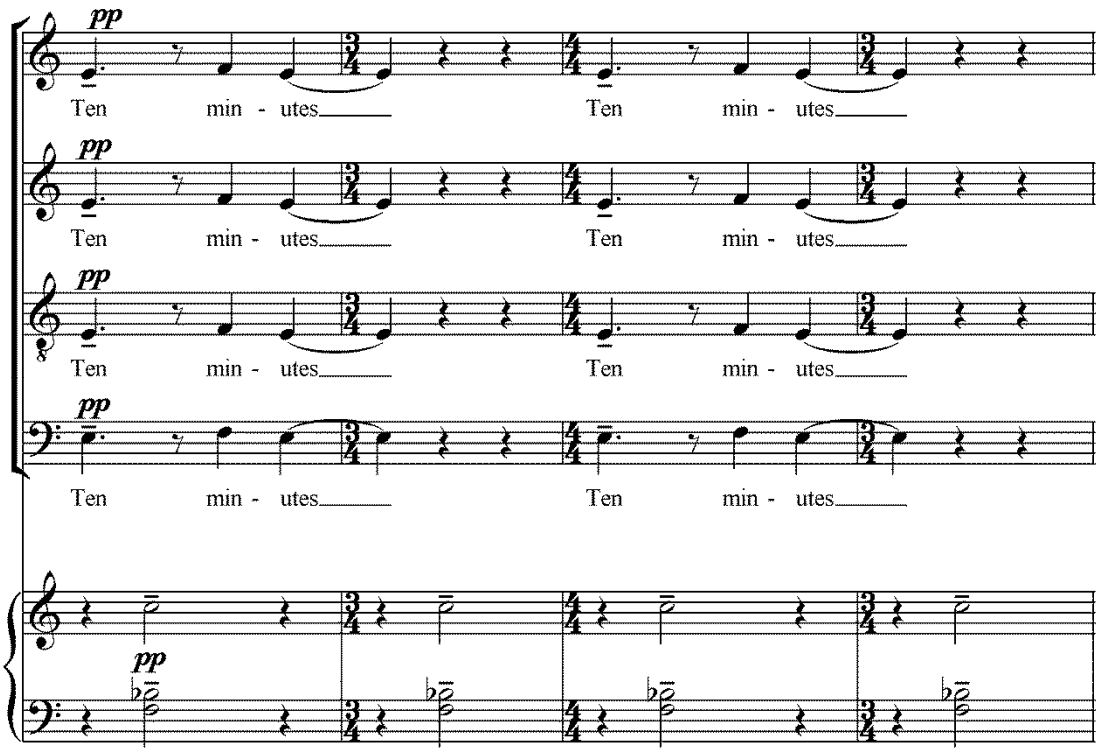


The words are a vehicle for a rhythmic pattern rather than the other way round. A similar approach to word-setting used in the dance sections of *O Frondens Virga*, has already been discussed.

Finally, crucial to the rhythmic momentum of the opera is the piano 1 part. The opera was originally written for piano accompaniment with the other instruments being added later, towards the end of the process. There was a determination to avoid either doubling voice parts in the piano part, or to create a vamp-style accompaniment. Instead, a part that would add its own voice and a further layer to the texture, was preferred. A further consideration was how to support the central place of rhythm in the opera, particularly in the absence of percussion. For that reason, the piano would have the dual role of providing pitch for the singers while simultaneously acting as an agent of percussion.

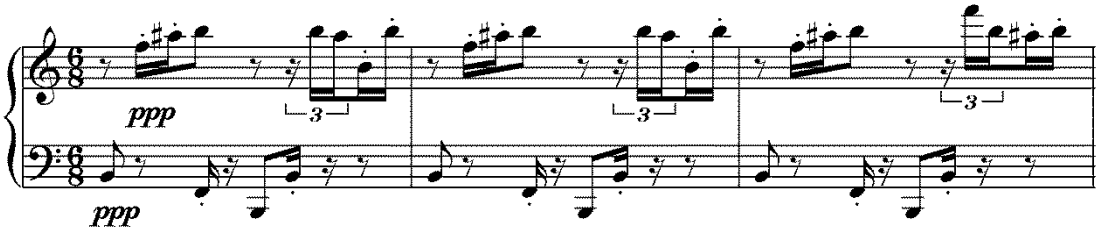
In Scene I, the repeated chords in the piano part from bar 6 onwards create a bell-like effect against the 'Ten minutes' motif in the chorus which serves to imitate a clock by means of its repetitive monotone.

Ex 9 *Bust* Scene 1, Ten minutes, bars 6-9



On the other hand, the obsessive triplet figure heard in piano 1, Scene 4, bars 24-47, sounds angular, percussive, even somewhat irregular, and yet it powerfully anchors the rhythm for the chorus whilst still adding enormously to the overall atmosphere of dysfunction.

Ex 10 *Bust* Scene 4, piano figure, bars 37-39



The role of the piano is different yet again in Scene 5. Here the repeated *staccato* quaver chords in the RH help generate the kind of energy and movement expected from a team. The continuous quavers heard in the two pianos in both Scene 7, bar 70-

102, and in Scene 9 bars 91-111, are further examples of the ability of the piano to endow the music with dynamic rhythmic momentum.

Rhythm, therefore, is at the heart of *Bust*. Rhythmic impetus is provided in a variety of ways by instruments and voices. Concerted numbers are rhythmically contrasted in all parts to ensure independence, clarity and interest. In a general sense, rhythm is at least as important as harmony and melody and this is seen in some of the approaches to word-setting and frequently in the piano writing.

4. Harmony/Pitches

Bust is a tonal work. However, there is no sense of chord progressions in the traditional manner of functional harmony.

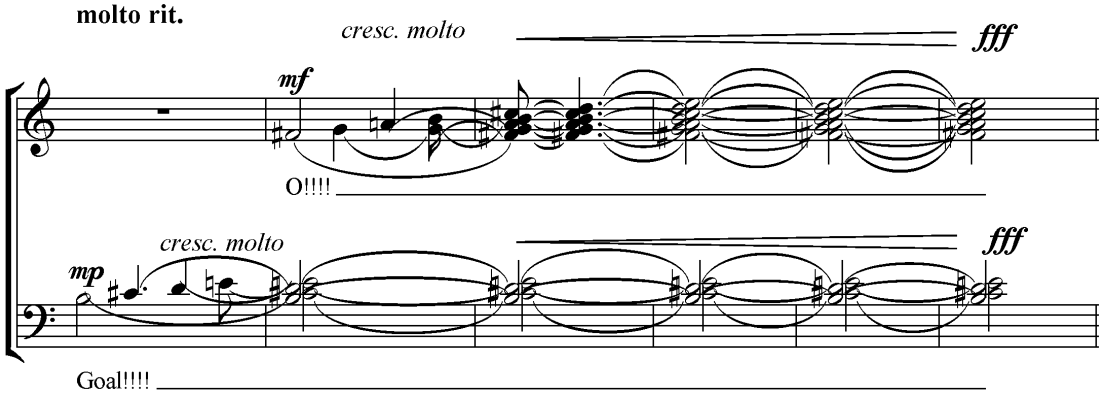
In the first instance this music is primarily built around tonal areas of varying durations. For example, the entire Overture is centred on Bflat. Although we hear chromatic notes in the voices and instrumental parts and clusters are also employed, the basic tonality remains centred on Bflat. Scene 4 uses almost exclusively, three pitches, B, F, A#, all of which have equal importance. Section B, bars 93 – 104, is in Bflat, and is the only part of the scene to change pitch, (Ex 1)

In most cases the tonality is obvious even where deliberate ambiguity is introduced. For example, Scene 5, the repeated figure in the piano might be Dminor or Aminor, with the latter being less likely. Yet when the marimba enters at bar 2, preparing the way for the chorus part, it is obvious that the tonality is A minor. Certainly when the voices enter at bar 6 we are in no doubt at all. Although the piano continues its motif for twenty-four bars and the tenor and marimba are in E flat at bar 20, the basic A minor tonality prevails. On other occasions, this tonal ambiguity is more unsettling, and this is the case particularly in the opening section of Scene 7. This music looks straightforward enough. However, the C/G tonality, coupled with the presence of an intermittent Aflat in the tenor line and an Aflat and Bflat in Robbie's line, appears to blur the tonality for the singers, making the music difficult to anchor.

Techniques which are very effective, especially when the tonality is prolonged, are pedals and clusters and chromatic notes. Pedals or sustained notes which are widely used in *Bust* provide a harmonic break from constant movement, they allow a line or lines to shine, they clarify the tonality and multiple pedals can produce interesting harmonic colour. Multiple sustained notes are especially effective in the Overture and Scene 7, with pedals in the latter rising by a series of steps to herald Joey's goal for Ireland.

Clusters contribute significantly to the harmony in *Bust*. Probably the most interesting cluster occurs in Scene 5, bars 153-158 and describes a goal. The eleven-part cluster builds from B,C#,D,E,F#,G,A,B,C#,D,E, in a kind of Mexican wave as the crowd appear to watch the ball rise and end up in the top of the net.

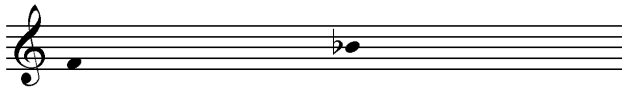
Ex 11 *Bust* Scene 5, cluster, bars 153-158



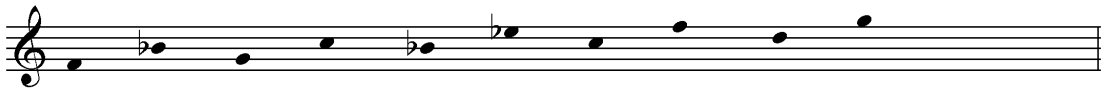
Chromatic notes as a technique differ from their use for change of key or modulation. They are mostly used in *Bust* for a different purpose, namely to colour the harmony. They may be introduced unannounced so to speak, they may be used in a particular part and contradicted in another and sometimes they are at odds with accepted tonality or may even suggest bitonality. For example, in the opening of Scene 5, the piano accompaniment sends out an unclear harmonic signal, leaving the marimba to clarify the Aminor tonality for the voices, which enter at bar 6. Joey's initial entry at bar 12 fits with Aminor. However, his second entry at bar 19 is in Eflat, while there is no change to the chorus and piano music. The resulting tonal ambiguity creates interest in the harmony and difficulty for the singers. Chromatic note, in essence means coloured note and its primary function here is to act as an agent of colour.

The music in *Bust* is unified principally by the core interval of a fourth. The starting point was the interval F-Bflat. This interval was then expanded to give F-Bflat-Eflat. D-G was added above and C-F below.

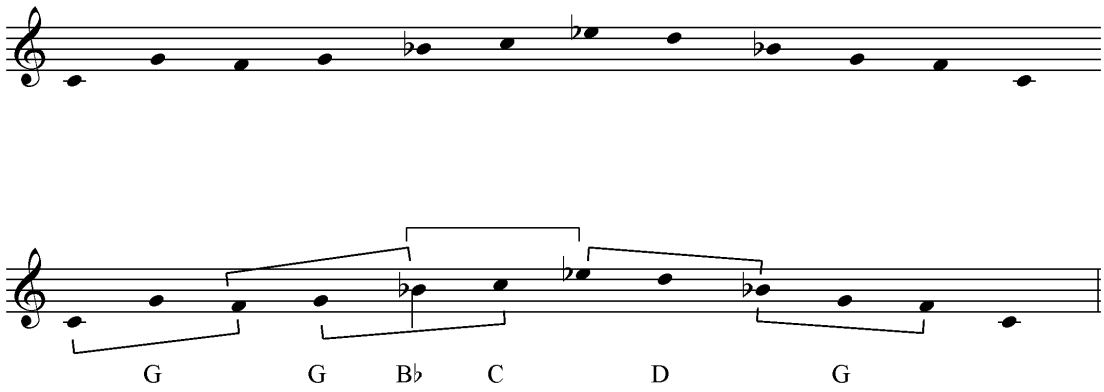
Ex 12a *Bust* fourth



Ex 12b *Bust* fourth sequence

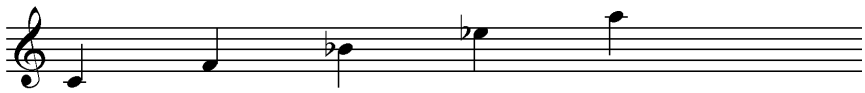


Ex 12c *Bust* fourth related notes



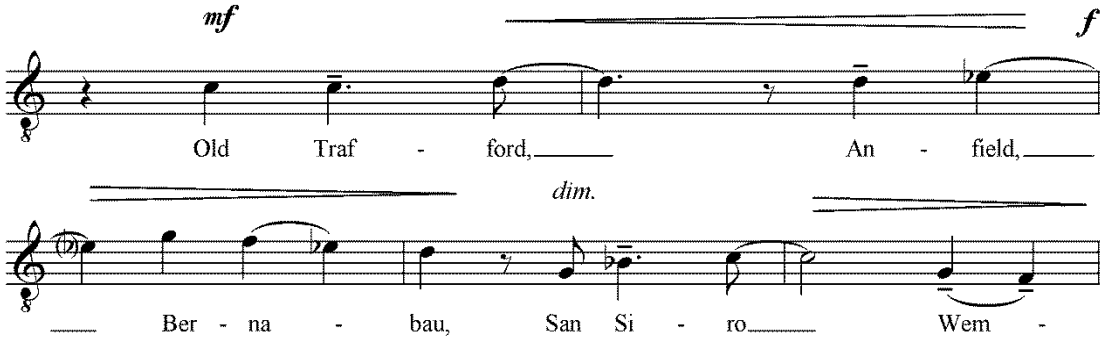
When this work was begun the composer was unaware of Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony No 1 in E major, Op. 9*[51] which uses almost the same intervals, spread across all of the instruments, in its opening measures.

Ex 13 Pitches used in opening bars of Schoenberg's Chamber Symphony



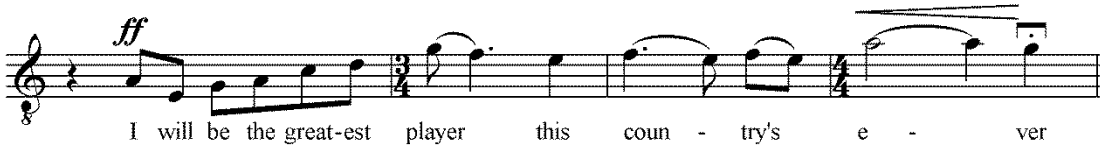
Much of Joey's music is derived from these intervals. All the Overture music is based on the fourths shown above. The sound of the opera is quartal in both melodic and harmonic terms. And indeed there was a deliberate attempt from the beginning to track back and re-work these intervals as a means of giving overall unity to the work by the creation of an integrated sound. As has already been stated, Joey's music is largely quartal and derived from the opening pitches, so much so that the character becomes identified with the 4th. This is certainly the case with the Joey's prayer/pain music which is first heard in Scene 1, bars 28-35 and subsequently in Scene 4, Section B, bars 93-104, Scene 8, Section B, bars 63-99, and finally in Scene 9, Section B, bars 61-90.

Ex 14 *Bust* Scene 1, Joey's prayer/pain music, bars 28-35



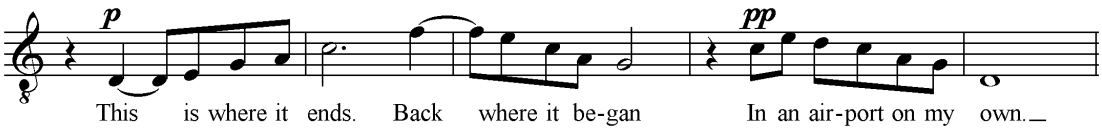
Joey's other character-identification music is also heard throughout the opera. This is Joey's ascending line, which grows out of the fourths heard in the Overture. It is his dream music and it acts as a sign of hope and is imbued with excitement and energy. We hear it in Scene 2, bars 213-216, 'I will be the greatest player.'

Ex 15 *Bust* Scene 2, Joey's dream music, ascending line, excitement, bars 213-216



On the other hand, he also uses a falling line which indicates the disaster and impending doom that's ahead when he sings 'Waiting in an airport.' at the end of Scene 1, bars 76-78. Scene 9, bars 31-35, echo the music already heard in Scene 1, linking the story to the beginning when Joey was about to return home a failure.

Ex 16 *Bust* Scene 9, descending line, doom, bars31-35



His destruction appears complete later in Scene 9, Section A, bars 46-60, when he sings 'Now my body's made of ice. Now my heart is made of ice. Cracked and cold and cannot move.' Joey's line descends by step from E to Eflat, moving by semitone for the final sixth.

The more lyrical music in the opera belongs to Joey, Jenny, the cello and to a lesser extent Dad, Mam and the chorus. Joey and Jenny are given flowing lines which are appropriate to their character, given that they ultimately fall in love. This melodic lyricism is tempered and contrasted by what is going on around them, particularly in the chorus and the instruments. It is in the latter that the rhythmic energy is mostly located. In addition to rhythm, special atmospheric effects are also generated by means of the chorus, which include choral speaking, hissing, harmonics, *glissandi* and mechanical speech. These choral techniques, which are used in Scenes 4 and 8, considerably broaden the dramatic scope of the piece.

Robbie's recitative-like music has already been considered from the point of view of rhythm. His music is also interesting from a melodic standpoint. The music responds to this character by giving him a semi-recitative, chant-like line, with the monotone being relieved by rising or falling a step. His music has a very narrow range, often no more than a third and it relies heavily on repeated notes. On occasions he mixes pitched and unpitched sounds using a version of speech-song. As Robbie is often paired with Joey or with Jenny, his music attempts to achieve a counterpoint to the more lyrical lines of both Jenny and Joey. An additional benefit of using this

technique for Robbie's text is that it allows for a considerable amount of dialogue to be set economically while having the added advantage of facilitating significant dramatic contrast.

5. The Characters

Joey Power

Joey, the hero of the story, might be described in contemporary parlance as the romantic male lead. Joey's character has two sides, the hopeful, determined, enthusiastic young man and the more introverted, reflective male. The music for the former is often made up of soaring melodies with animated rhythms which drive the music forward in sweeping phrases. In the trio sections of Scene 2, Joey's music generally has shorter note values than those of the other two voices. He sings mostly shorter values such as quavers and crotchets, which give his music a sense of forward movement, while the other voices tend to use mainly crotchets and minims, which slows their music down. This is Joey, confident, happy and following his dream for success. On the other hand, Joey's reflective side is also developed through his music. His soliloquies in Scenes 1, 3, 8 and 9 are also derived from the quartal melody we hear him sing in the opening of Scene 1. However, as dream music while the contour is the same, the music has a much slower tempo and a richer chordal accompaniment, often focussing the music on a particular key.

Joey's music is primarily lyrical in character. While the leaps give it a certain angularity, they also infuse it with vigour and link it to operatic tradition where leaps are often used in order to create drama and colour and to convey a mood of excitement or tragedy. Joey's lines surge upwards to a point of climax by using long values on high notes between F4 and B4 and by using open vowels which can be both expressive and effective in this register.

Throughout the opera, Joey's music continues to explore and develop the fourth with which his music began in Scene 1. This melodic motif gradually becomes identified with Joey's character. It re-appears in new guises almost each time he sings, giving

his character a clearer definition and at the same time contributing to the unity of the opera as a whole.

Robbie

Creating music for Robbie's character was challenging because he repeats many of his phrases: 'That'll be you son. That'll be you.' Or 'Have you seen my darling Jenny? Have you met my darling Jenny?' He is a babbler, who is always in a hurry. He has the answers to all problems and so he hands down solutions to problems without discussion. He talks at as opposed to talking with.

The music responds to this character by giving him a semi-recitative, chant-like line, the monotone often relieved by moving up or down a semitone. His music has a very narrow range, often no more than a third, apart from the few occasions when his emotions get the better of him, such as Scene 5 when Curry, the team captain has to be taken off, having sustained a hamstring injury. His music is mainly syllabic following the natural rhythms and flow of speech as distinct from melodic rhythms. On occasions he mixes pitched and unpitched sounds using a version of speech-song. As Robbie is often paired with Joey or with Jenny, his music attempts to achieve a counterpoint to the more lyrical lines of both Jenny and Joey.

The semi-recitative used by Robbie in addition to responding directly to the character, also links *Bust* to operatic tradition by employing one of its earliest conventions. Perhaps, what is unusual about Robbie's music is, that although the recitative is a mainly syllabic, semi-chanted line, using rhythms derived directly from the speech rhythms themselves, it is at the same time combined with principal and chorus music which is strongly metred and featuring wide expansive melodies. Within the overall linear context of the opera, Robbie's music makes a significant contribution by delivering a very different type of line. One of the benefits of using a form of recitative for Robbie is that it facilitates a considerable amount of dialogue to be set economically while having the added advantage of providing considerable dramatic contrast.

Jenny

Jenny gradually emerges as a character. At first she appears distant and even shy. But just as her fondness for Joey gradually becomes more obvious, so too her character, her strength, her perception and her love grow in a gentle manner. In the same way, the range and expressive demands of her music broaden and become more expansive.

A feature of Jenny's music is the use of contrasting registers, which can be used to good effect in the mezzo-soprano voice. The slow tempo allows the lower passages time to settle and make their sound. This is particularly the case in Scene 6, bars 94 – 95, where the lower and upper octaves will have a very different colour, thus helping to emphasise the question in the text. They also attempt to bring out Jenny's emotional side. The Jenny we meet at the beginning of the opera in Scene 3 is a calm controlled, detached woman who is able to comment on Robbie and Joey objectively. Her music at this point is repetitive and uses a fairly narrow range. As the story unfolds she is less in control of her affections and is more vulnerable emotionally and this is reflected in a wider range and a more flowing quality in her line. However, as her solo in Scene 6 progresses, she is already in love with Joey. Her dialogue here shows her vulnerability and her caring nature both of which are reflected in her music.

The chorus

The chorus features in all scenes apart from Scene 6. It therefore provides a wide range of musical opportunities. The chorus also has a number of different functions and these add further to the scope for variety and invention. The libretto gives the chorus short repeated phrases and these are often pitted against or between the dialogue of the principals. As previously stated, the approach from the outset was to have the principals and chorus sing simultaneously where feasible and appropriate. The challenge then was to find a method of setting the short repeated lines of the chorus in an engaging and effective manner. Due to the shortness of these phrases they are never set as flowing, fluid melodies. Rather they are built up as short *ostinati* which can be changed in pitch or rhythm, sung in unison, in harmony, with countermelodies or in canon. We see a particular example of this in the final section of Scene 9, where the chorus has a seven-bar melody which is first sung in unison

and then repeated as a four-part canon, which drives the music forward powerfully as each voice joins in. A very different use of the *ostinati* occurs in Scene 7. Here each of the four chorus parts develops its own *ostinato* over which Joey, Robbie, Jenny, Mam and Dad all have their own solos. As the scene progresses, the texture is varied with some voices being dropped and others added. The scene concludes with all voices joining in and the different *ostinati* of the chorus helping to build the music to a powerful climax.

In Scenes 5 and 7, the chorus acts as the crowd at a football game. While the story here could have been told by one person, (*Bust* was originally a monologue for Joey) or by the principal characters involved, the inclusion of a chorus is a key component in the provision of a crowd atmosphere. Matches played to empty stadiums are usually described as dead, even meaningless, events. The roar of the crowd, the colour and spectacle are fundamental to our enjoyment of a game and sometimes also to the success of the team. The *Bust* chorus, when it acts as the crowd, endeavours to generate this atmosphere by using short repeated chants which are a regular feature of games, in that way grounding the music in real experience. A good example is Scene 5. The 'Ball, ball' music begins lazily, painting a picture of a team that is finding it difficult to compete. Then when Joey gets the captain's armband, the game takes on a new life which is reflected in the music too. The 'Ball, ball' music is now sung a tone higher and the there is also a sudden increase in tempo. The scene concludes with the chorus singing a distorted version of Gounod's *'Soldiers Chorus'*, (*Gloire immortelle*) from Faust, in which Joey is triumphantly hailed as the hero. Perhaps the scoring of a goal by Joey (the second of two) which is depicted in Scene 7, through an upward glissando in all the voices, demonstrates effectively the sense of excitement which can be generated by the chorus.

In Scenes 4 and 8 the chorus has a very different function. It comments on the situation, filling the audience in on the awful conditions endured by players whose clubs are in the lower divisions. Here the chorus acts as a kind of Greek chorus, on the one hand warning us of impending disaster but also creating a dark eerie atmosphere through the use of a variety of choral techniques. The 's' of stiffssss is vocalised as a hiss, while the A sharp which follows is sung on a z which is buzzed. The chorus then move to choral whispers for 'The league of the living dead.', the semi-chorus quartet

are required to ‘speak in a ghostly, mechanical, unnatural way’, while the large chorus accompanies them with a sustained chord using harmonics. The four words ‘Stiff, broken, damaged, hopeful’ are divided among the semi-chorus quartet, each getting a separate word, while the remainder of the chorus chant ‘Scraps of fields and razor wire’ on a monotone B. This chant, in 6/8, is set syllabically in a mechanical fashion. This ensures that this particular layer stands out, making it easy to understand, even though words or syllables may sometimes be placed on inappropriate or unexpected accents. These mechanical sounds also tend to keep us at a distance, thereby giving them greater power, and in this instance, making the football pitch conditions sound even worse than they might have been. Later the chant moves up in pitch and the chorus is split between ladies and men as they sing in fourths. A further aspect of the chorus taking the role of objective commentator can be heard in Scene 1 where it sings the ‘Ten minutes’ refrain for the entire scene. The chorus here represents a clock ticking away and hastening Joey’s impending doom and its presence powerfully underlines how a relentless chant can arouse discomfort in an audience.

The repeated five-bar ‘pain’ melody which the chorus sings in Scene 8 is different from anything else in the opera. Firstly, it acts as an accompaniment for Joey’s ‘injury soliloquy’, enriching the sparse right-hand part in the piano 1. Secondly, the texture is homophonic with the four-part block chords ascending and descending by step. Thirdly, the deliberate intention is to create affective music which will generate pathos, by the mantra-like repetition of a short, slow moving phrase, over which the solo voice can float and soar, while the L.H. piano part provides a steady beat over which the music ebbs and flows. This is unashamed sentimentality designed to appeal to our feelings of sadness. The mantra-like repetitions are modelled to some extent on similar repetitions in Gorecki’s *Totus Tuus* (anthem) and the *Symphony of Sorrows,* (No 3).

The chorus is a major feature of the *Bust* libretto, contributing to the drama in all its aspects, increasing tension and anxiety, generating excitement and passion and helping to add weight and colour to the events unfolding on stage.

6. Instrumental Ensemble

Bust was composed with piano accompaniment only. The cello and marimba (keyboard) parts were composed later.

The piano has a number of functions: to provide pitches, act as a rhythmic part, set tempi, support the voices, and add a contrasting layer to an otherwise completely vocal texture.

The piano part is fully independent, rarely doubling the vocal lines. While it clarifies the pitches for the voices, this is usually not done at the expense of its own independence. The music of *Bust* is mostly centred on particular tonal areas, (See *Form charts*). Once a tonal area is established it usually remains in place for a considerable amount of time. This allows the voices and the piano to explore pitches outside the tonal area, returning to the established pitch quite easily. For example, in Scene 4, the piano sets up a tonality centred on B, with a sustained bass chord which comprises B2, F3, A#3. As the music progresses the chorus takes over this chord, allowing the piano to contribute to the atmosphere with wispy, percussive semiquaver figures. Since the B tonality continues, the piano develops an angular and irregular pattern with a broken B pedal in the bass. As the music is not based on a series of chord progressions, the piano part is often made up of short ostinato-like phrases that are fashioned from the tonal centre and then varied on repetition. In Scene 7, the piano part at bar 70 is a two-bar pattern which is repeated literally three times and then subjected to variation when the four-quaver figures are heard in retrograde.

Rhythm is a key component as the piano creates its own independent line. The piano is ideal as a rhythmic instrument, indeed sometimes the pitch is less important than the rhythm with the piano acting as a drum, playing fast, accented repeated notes and defining patterns, while at other times it explores rhythmic variations of the original figures. This is particularly evident in Scene 2, where a figure is set up in bar 34, consisting of two falling octave quavers in the L.H. answered by two rising clusters in the R.H. This figure is repeated in the piano throughout the scene but in many different rhythmic and harmonic guises.

The piano style employed in Scene 6 creates an ebb and flow or *rubato* which would be appropriate to a romantic aria. The introduction of 2/4 and 4/4 time bars is designed to break the inevitability of the three crotchets per bar. 2/4 has an additional purpose as it has the effect of causing a skip, apparently speeding the music up and thereby creating a sense of urgency and forward momentum.

However, it was also necessary to help the young singers, especially the principals, by cueing some notes which were difficult to pitch and supporting others. The cello, marimba and second piano parts were primarily chosen for this purpose. Needless to say they also add considerable colour to the instrumental sound, enrich the overall texture and help create a more cohesive instrumental ensemble. Raymond Deane's *Seachanges* uses piano, marimba and cello in a great variety of subtle and exciting ways which influenced the choice of instruments and the instrumental writing in general. A larger band was not used for two practical reasons: time and money. The parts were written in the summer while the opera was being rehearsed. As the production was completely self-financing, it was necessary to keep paid performers to a minimum in order to pay the bills.

The cello is a most useful instrument in the ensemble and it fulfils many varied functions: it is a *cantabile* instrument adding to and underlining the pathos during significant moments throughout the opera, at other times it is primarily rhythmic, especially in some of the *pizzicato* passages. There are also occasions where it is called upon to support the voices doubling in a subtle manner or mirroring or cueing the vocal entries, while at other times it reinforces the tonality for the chorus. Finally, the cello can heighten the mood or atmosphere most effectively.

The marimba on the other hand, due to its hollow and sometimes spikey sound, is exploited for its atmospheric and rhythmic possibilities. In Scene 4, The Stiffs, the piano part comprises repeated, jagged figures which attempt to create an eerie atmosphere. The repeated fourths (tritone) in the L.H. marimba part, bars 6-21, with their irregular rhythmic pattern, help to underline a sense of foreboding. Later in the scene the marimba part complements the piano by imitating its triplet figure at bars 78-91. The purpose of the instrumental parts here is to set up a rhythmic backdrop against which the vocal and chorus parts can unfold and also to intensify a pervading

atmosphere of doom. The marimba possesses a lightness of sound which can be conducive to the build-up of excitement. The continuous semiquavers across the final bars of the Overture (bars 41-44) help build the climax as the music hurtles to its conclusion. Once again there is a sense of background, foreground as full, sustained chords of the chorus contrast with the lightness and dexterity of the marimba and piano. The marimba is also called on to support the voices, a good example being the alto and tenor parts in the Overture, bars 13 – 20.

A second keyboard piano was selected for Scenes 6, 7 and 9. This choice was influenced by a number of considerations. Firstly, the practical suggestions gleaned from an SPNM seminar 'Writing for two pianos' led by Steve Martland, with pianists Nicolas Hodges and Rolf Hind[52]. The seminar considered a number of modern works such as Stravinsky's *Concerto for Two Pianos* and Ligeti's *Monument* from *Three Pieces for Two Pianos*, generating huge excitement around the possibility of using this medium. Secondly, there was the danger of over-using the marimba. This distinctive sound could become overbearing, lessening its ability to be effective and distinctive in Scenes 4 and 8. In addition, its inability to sustain limited its usefulness, where a more sustained sound was required. For example, in Scene 6, Joey and Jenny have a gentle dialogue duet bars 1 – 57. This is the first time we realise they are in love. The use of the second piano here adds a weight and provides a timbre that is appropriate to the action on the stage. The crotchet chords at bar 18 produce a light sustained sound that would not have been possible on the marimba, as it is an instrument of short decay.

The blend of sound achieved by two pianos is very homogenous and complementary. When the instruments play canonically, as in Scene 6, bars 47-56, considerable rhythmic energy is generated. This technique is used in a different manner in Scene 9, bars 91-97, where the two pianos play a two-bar *ostinato* of continuous quavers. The evolving line in both instruments is quite similar but not the same, resulting particularly in seconds and fourths and making for a very atmospheric sound. In Scene 6, another approach can be observed in the instrumental interplay between the two instruments as piano 1 plays a continuous quaver pattern, while piano 2 has an ascending and descending chord pattern which moves by step against it. Later, these chords are treated as minims giving a new prolonged colour to the sound. Finally,

these two instruments playing *forte* chords together, add considerable weight to the chorus in the closing bars of Scene 9.

7. Conclusion

Bust was a hugely demanding but most profitable compositional experience. Writing a work of this magnitude required many skills. As the work progressed it became more apparent that an integrated, unified work would require planning. Since the libretto was delivered to the composer in instalments, it was vital that significant musical connections were made in order to ensure that the work had an overall sense of unity. This aim was achieved by developing the fourths, first heard in the opening bars of the Overture, in the remaining scenes of the opera. Connections are also forged when music heard in Act 1 is reprised in Act 2.

The opera asked many questions of the composer[15]. Finding a way to deal with the large amount of chorus text, in particular simultaneous principal and chorus lines, proved a major challenge. *Bust* attempts also to draw characters who can be defined by their music and whose music seems to make them more engaging and vivid as characters.

The primary objective in composing the music was to use it as a vehicle to tell the story effectively. All aspects of the opera combined to achieve that end, the principals, chorus, instrumental accompaniment and the conductor. *Bust* became a 'team' opera, as opposed to an opportunity for principals to sing great arias. In that sense it connects with earlier tradition and medieval opera which was principally concerned with dramatising a story through music.

Bust is an energetic work which seeks to make a useful contribution to the repertoire of dramatic music that is suitable for both young performers and amateurs.

Three Songs for Baritone and Piano

Introduction

The *Three Songs for Baritone and Piano* were composed between June 2013 and February 2014. The composer had attended a number of Canford composition workshops conducted by the British composer and teacher Malcolm Singer. In 2013 former students of Malcolm's were invited to compose a piece for his 60th birthday. *Irish Feast* was composed in June 2013 and performed some weeks later at a Canford celebration concert. Two songs were then added to form a song cycle. On Feb 21st, 2014, the song cycle was performed at the annual CMC New Music marathon which took place in the Good Shepherd Chapel, Waterford, with Eoin Power, baritone and Marian Ingoldsby, piano.

The songs represent an interest in and an exploration of the baritone voice. In the case of the latter two, *Duilleoga* and *Never give all the heart*, these songs developed from a collaboration with the Waterford baritone Eoin Power and were written specifically with his voice in mind. The piano also resulted from a collaboration with Waterford composer, teacher and accompanist, Dr Marian Ingoldsby. This cycle is also the result of an increasing interest in the intrinsic sound of a word itself and the various musical possibilities offered by the sounds.

Each of the three songs is by an Irish poet: *Never Give all the Heart* was written by W.B. Yeats, *Duilleoga* by Seamus O Neill and *Irish Feast* by Jonathan Swift.

1. Form

While the three songs have their own unique formal shape, they each have in common a sense of unity which emerges from a repetition of musical materials. For example, in the case of *Irish Feast*, a single set of three pitches is used for the entire song. While motifs *a* and *b* are alternated to vary the opening bars of the five verses, the melodic material throughout is very similar. Contrast is achieved in this song by the changing rhythmic figures in the piano accompaniment. *Duilleoga* and *Never give all the heart* both use repeated thematic material but it is always considerably varied on

repetition. The piano has a pivotal role in all three songs, often anticipating and defining the mood changes, through the switches in tempo, rhythm and atmosphere which occur in the linking sections, thus ensuring the voice can concentrate totally on expressing the appropriate mood when it makes its entry.

Never give all the heart *Form Chart*

Bars	Section	Tonality	
1-12	A	Am/F	Dotted minims in piano. Quartal harmony and melody. Use of rests
12-32	B	Am/F -> Aflat	Quavers in piano – movement. Vocal melody interrupted by rests
33-38	A1	Am/F	Rests - broken accompaniment
39-52	B1	Aflat	Quavers/semiquavers in piano RH - excitement
53-66	A2	Am/F	Descending vocal melody E4-B2

Duilleoga *Form Chart*

Bars	Section	Tonality	
1-16	A	D	Word play on Duilleoga. Wide leaps in vocal part.
17	Link	C	Polyphonic texture
18-23	B	C	Semiquavers in piano Word-painting – *seoladh*. Wide vocal range.
24-31	C	Bflat	Homophonic. Repeated acc. motif Semiquavers in voice and acc. Ascending melody.
33-44	A1	D	Excitement
44-48	B1	Aflat	Glissandi
49-51	C1	Aflat	Build-up
52-56	Coda	D	Climax on Dflat Descending vocal line – word-painting

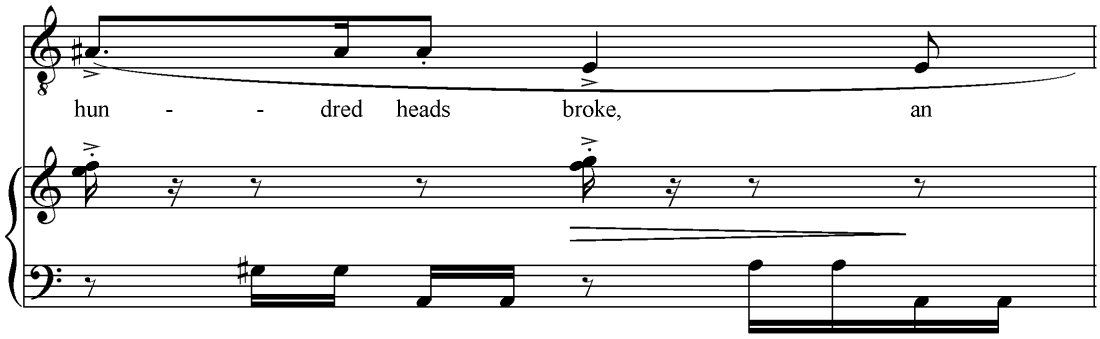
Irish Feast *Form Chart*

Bars	Section	Tonality	
1-15	Verse 1	A, F, E + related pitches Full resource: A, A#, B, C, D, D#, E, F,G,	Vocal melody and acc. use A, F, E + related pitches. Motif a
16-19	Link 1	G#	Lively quaver movement
20-32	Verse 2		Excitement
33	Link 2		Motif b
33-43	Verse 3		Deep clusters in piano
43-44	Link 3		Slower. *Glissandi*
44-50	Verse 4		New intensity
51-54	Link 4		Motif a
54-62	Verse 5		Semiquaver acc.
63-67	Coda		Repeated semiquavers in acc. Humorous ending

2. Pitches/harmony

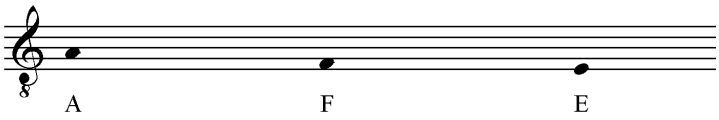
Certain approaches to pitch, harmony and melody are common to all three songs. Firstly, the rules of functional harmony are not applied here. There is a tendency to maintain the same tonality for significant segments of a piece. Allowing the tonality to settle, facilitates the singer in dealing successfully with independent passages where the accompaniment is not necessarily supportive. It also helps the audience appreciate and enjoy music that may otherwise sound strange and discordant. Finally, it makes possible ambiguous and contradictory harmonies, since they are part of a larger tonal picture. For example in *Irish Feast* at bar 57, the vocal part has A#, while the piano LH has A natural, the piano LH has a G# in the first part of the bar while the piano RH has a G natural in the second part of the bar. However, since the sound from bars 1-67 clearly suggests A(m), the 'contradictory pitches' in reality are a source of colour and do not have any fundamental effect on the tonality.

Ex 1 *Irish Feast* tonal ambiguity, bar 57



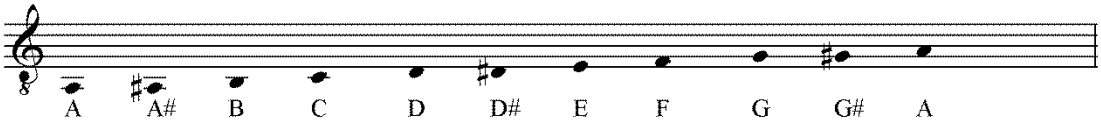
Defined pitches are used in *Irish Feast*. This song has three basic pitches A, F, E, on which the entire piece, vocal line and instrumental accompaniment, is built.

Ex 2 *Irish Feast* three pitches, A F E



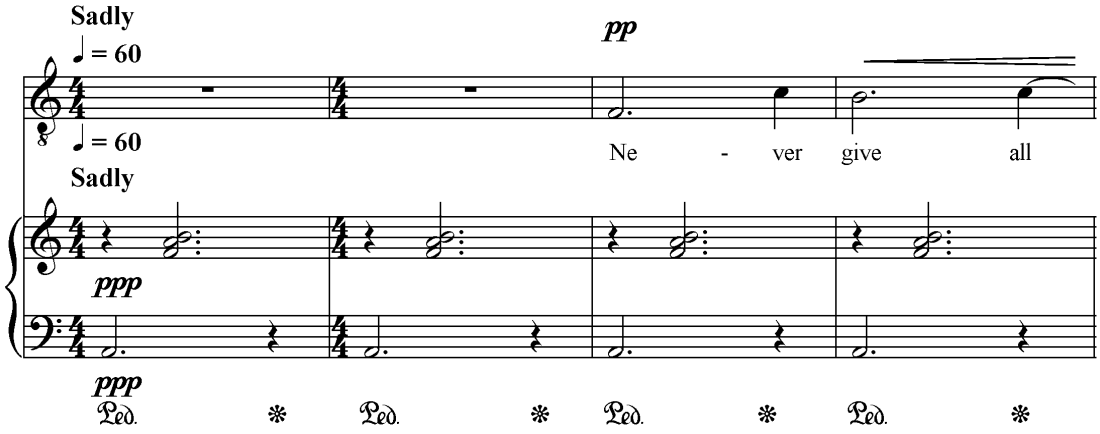
Related pitches or those which border the set pitches are also used giving a complete resource of A, A#, B, C, D, D#, E, F,G, G#

Ex 3 *Irish Feast* Full pitch resource, A, A#, B, C, D, D#, E, F,G, G#



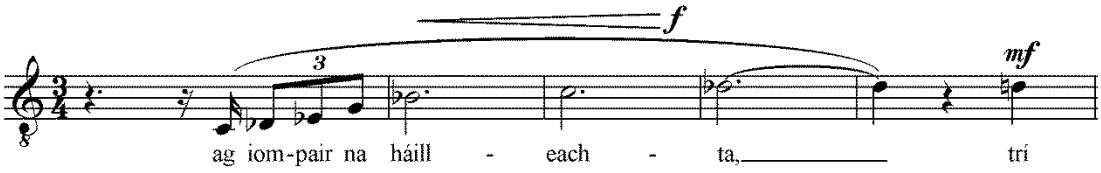
The interval of a fourth is an important building block for harmony and melody, vocal and accompaniment parts in *Never give all the heart*. For example, in the opening bars, the tritone forms part of the piano RH, (F-B), while the voice opens with F->C->B. Fourths, perfect, augmented and diminished are all part of this work.

Ex 4 *Never give all the heart* tritone in voice and acc., bars 3-4



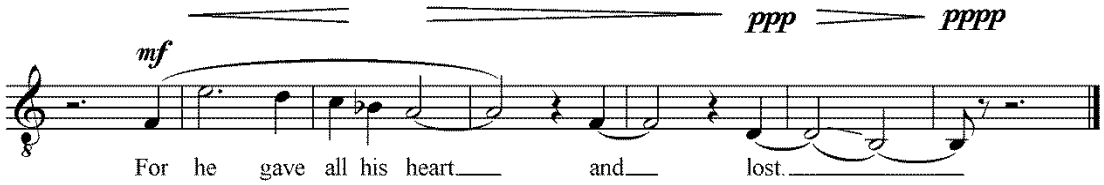
Every melody has its own distinctive characteristics. However, the following method of melodic word-painting seems to be a feature of all three songs and indeed of much of the melody writing in the portfolio. Ascending lines are quite often used when the mood is one of happiness, joy and excitement. A typical example occurs in *Duilleoga* in bars 47-51 for the line *ag iompair na háilleachta*, meaning 'bringing beauty'. The melody ascends more than an octave, with the notes becoming louder and longer as the pitch rises. The highest note Dflat marks the climax of the piece.

Ex 5 *Duilleoga* ag iompair na háilleachta, bars 47-51



On the other hand, descending lines are used for tragedy, sadness and despair. Possibly the best example from the songs is Yeats's painful line: '*For he gave all his heart and lost.'* which occurs in the final seven bars of *Never give all the heart*, bars 58-64.

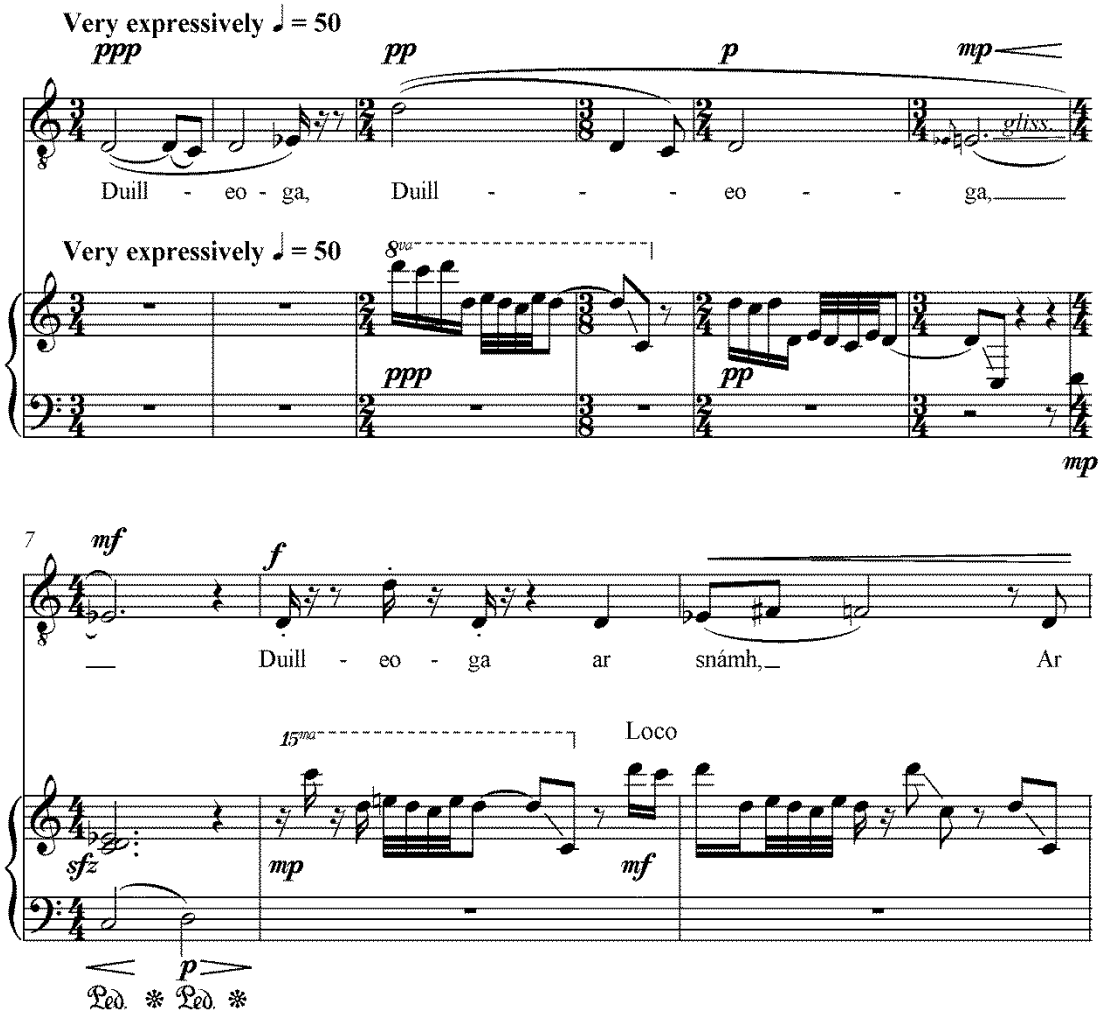
Ex 6 *Never give all the heart* descending melody in final bars, bars 58-64



3. The role of the piano

The piano is not really an accompanying instrument in these songs. Sometimes it may fulfil that role but the piano part is actually much more. It is an independent part creating equally with the voice, a polyphonic texture. Take for example the opening bars of *Duilleoga*. (Ex 7 below) The voice is mainly concerned with exploring various ways of sounding the word *Duilleoga*. The piano, on the other hand, while it uses the same pitch, D, also examines leaves but perhaps looks at their fluttering or their intricate design, thereby exploring the word in a very different manner. *Never give all the heart* provides a further example in bars 39-49. The piano has a neo-baroque line with running semiquavers, while the voice moving mainly in quavers has an entirely separate melody.

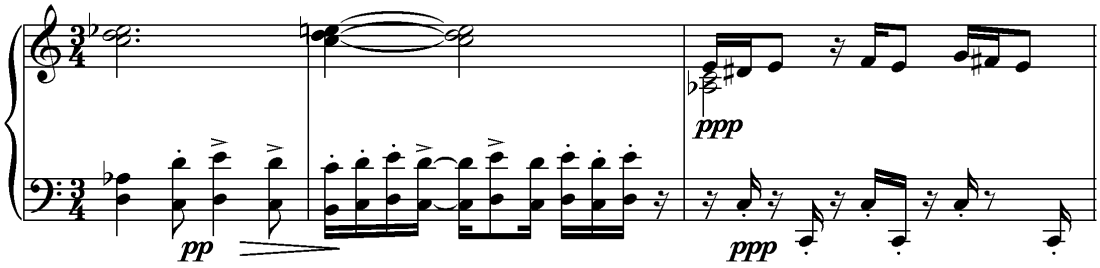
Ex 7 *Duilleoga* opening piano and voice two separate lines, Bars 1-5



The piano has also the role of changing the scene, so to speak, of creating the various shifts in mood which occur in the course of the three songs. This is brought about mainly by the changes in tempi, accompaniment motifs and harmony which it effects as links between the different sections. In *Irish Feast* the rhythmic energy is dictated by the piano and in that way it cues the voice part. There is a more subtle linkage at work in both *Duilleoga* and *Never give all the heart*. For example, the opening of *Duilleoga* is quite static, and although there are lots of notes and short values, there is no sense of beat as such. A motif with a particular rhythmic bounce had already been decided for the word(s) (ag) seoladh or floating. The question then was how to introduce that rhythmic idea. How to move from stasis to movement? The syncopated

figures in bars 16 and 17 create a vital link allowing the music to move seamlessly to a rhythmic pattern at bar 18.

Ex 8 *Duilleoga* link into seoladh, bars 16-18

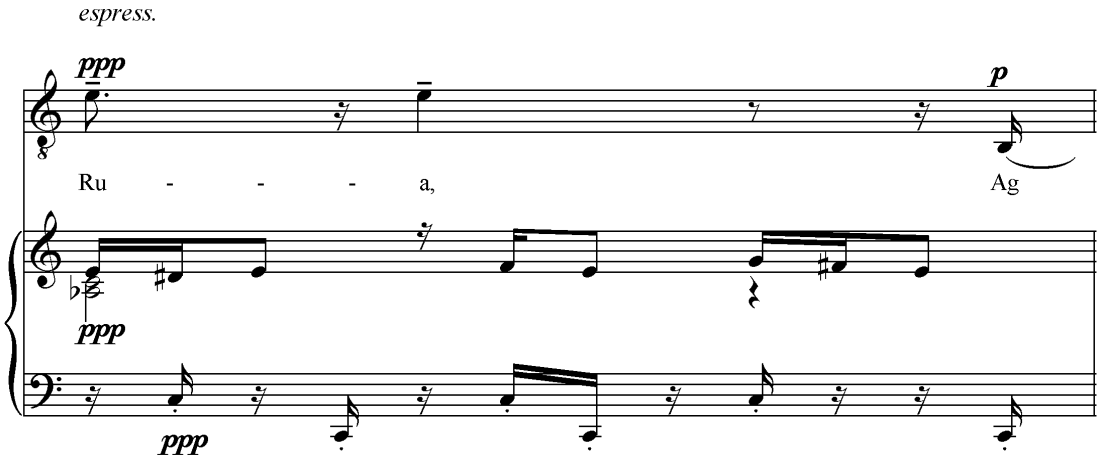


Tempo is critical to the success of *Irish Feast*, with six different tempo markings on the score, including two *accellerandi*. In each case the changes of speed are in the piano part. Tempo is also set and varied by the piano in the other songs.

4. Writing for the baritone voice

A significant aspect of the song cycle is the baritone voice and in particular the voice of Eoin Power who performed the songs at a Waterford New Music Week concert in February 2014. The singer has a wide vocal range combining a warmth of tone in the lower, middle and upper registers. His ability to deal with dramatic music which featured wide leaps was a further consideration. *Duilleoga* explores this aspect of the baritone voice with sudden shifts between upper and lower register. At bar 18 the singer is required to sing a leap of an eleventh.

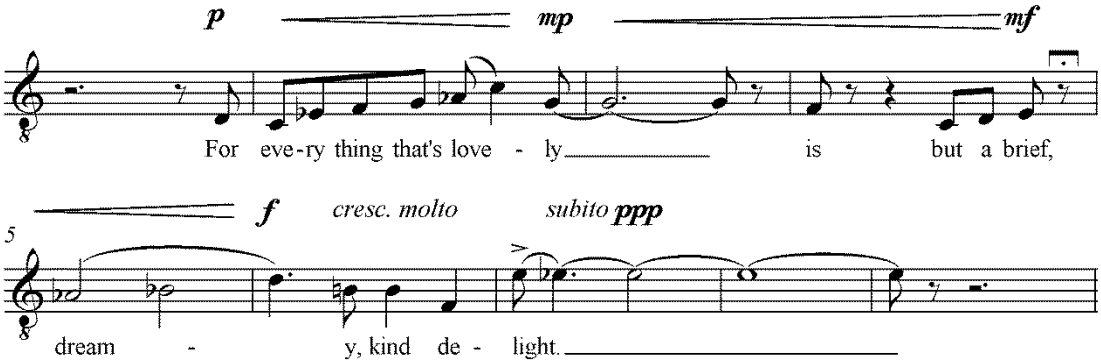
Ex 9 *Duilleoga* leap of eleventh, bar 18



The songs also require expressive tone on very high notes. For example, *Duilleoga*, bars 17-18, feature repeated E4, marked 'Almost whispered'. Perhaps even more demanding is the *subito ppp* Eflat 4, in bar 29 of *Never give all the heart*. While these notes are at the top of the baritone's range, they also offer the possibility achieving a very rich tone colour. There are also opportunities for the singer to display the darker, warmer sound of his voice in some of the lower phrases of *Duilleoga*.

Creating an overall sense of phrase and conveying the meaning of the text, where the line is interrupted by rests, is a challenge which demands great vocal skill. This musicality is necessary in *Never give* as Example 10, demonstrates.

Ex 10 *Never give all the heart* line interrupted by rests, bars 23-31

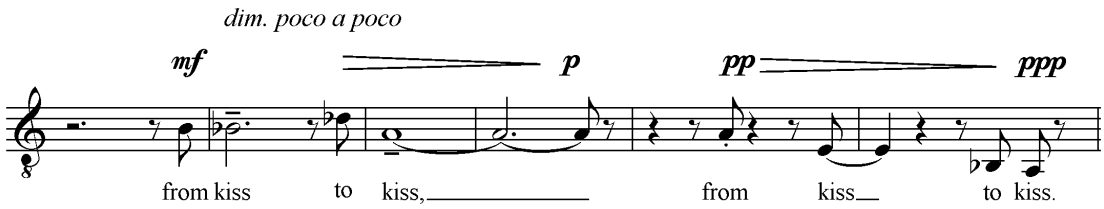


5. Approach to word-setting

Word-painting is a technique used by composers to highlight the meaning of a word or phrase in a text.. It would be impossible to paint every word so composers usually choose key-words to help the listener understand the text and the music.

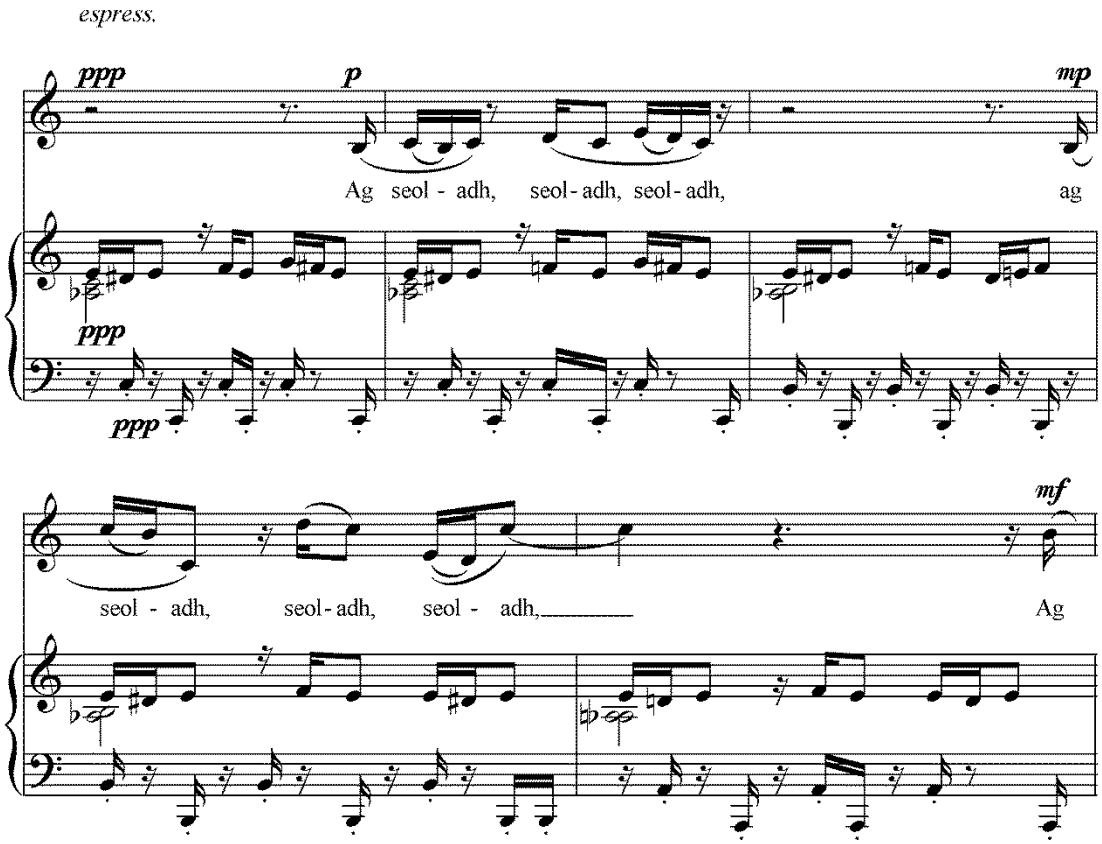
In the case of *Never give all the heart*, it is more the mood which is described in the music rather than particular words. Having said that, the music does attempt to convey the poet's meaning in the line: 'And they never dream that it fades out from kiss to kiss.' The lessening of the enjoyment from kiss to kiss is painted by the shortening of the note values on successive kisses.

Ex 11 *Never give all the heart* word-painting, bars 16-21



Many moods are described in these songs; inebriation, sadness, the dullness of city streets, the excitement of a fight, the beauty of nature. Example 5 above describes the beauty brought to the dull streets by leaves floating on the water. The rhythmic pattern used in *Duilleoga* for the *seoladh* section, bars 18-23, were based on observing leaves which became impeded by briars while floating down a stream. The bouncing of the leaves as they tried to break free is reflected in the rhythm used in the piano part at bars 18-23.

Ex 12 *Duilleoga* floating rhythm of *ag seoladh* in piano, bars 18-23



An aspect of the writing includes, the use of words for their own sake, exploiting their melodic and rhythmic possibilities. The opening section of *Duilleoga* is a good example of this approach. (see Ex 7 above)

Irish Feast is special in that it comprises sixty words. Composers who composed a piece for Malcolm Singer's sixtieth birthday were asked to include the number 60 somewhere in the composition, in an original way. In the case of *Irish Feast* there are exactly sixty words. The original poem by Swift is of course much longer. However, the judicious pruning of some verses reduced the word count to exactly sixty.

6. Conclusion

Writing these songs was in many ways breaking new ground. Although the composer was involved with choral and vocal music and had composed for choirs and soloists,

for many years, he had never attempted a song cycle. These compositions are in one sense, very personal and also very satisfying. Perhaps the fact that they were composed for a particular singer and pianist added to the feeling of a genuine collaboration. Writing for specific performers helps to give the composer a clearer focus which may result in better outcomes.

Gerald Barry in his *Piano Quartet No 4* created 'radical discontinuities' where a particular sections has absolutely no connection to the one which immediately precedes it. This work on the other hand represents 'seamless continuity' where different sections dovetail into one another in a natural fashion. This is particularly the case in both *Duilleoga* and *Never give all the heart*. Making seamless joins is a skill in art, craft and even life. It is also a valuable compositional asset.

Final Reflections

When the composer began his MA in composition in 2006, he thought all his questions about composition would be answered. On completion of this research in 2008, while many answers had been found, his original questions were replaced by lots of new ones. He felt he was only beginning to gain insight into contemporary composition, and hence he made the decision to embark on a level ten research programme. While there are still many questions, there is immense satisfaction in the realisation that a huge amount has been achieved. The goals set in 2009, at the outset of this research, have largely been accomplished.

A wide variety of works have been composed. Four compositions are large-scale works including a twenty-minute work for orchestra and an opera in two acts. In many respects these achievements could only have dreamed of prior to undertaking this research. The lessons learned from undertaking the opera cannot be overstated. The sheer scale of this endeavour called into play many new skills. In addition to writing the work, ensuring interest, integrity, coherence and guaranteeing its performance, were huge challenges.

All the works which comprise this portfolio except *Compline*, have been publicly performed. This was vital in order to link the work to performers and audiences, to build on their experience of new music and also as a source of gaining invaluable feedback. While more rehearsal time for all of the works would have been desirable, (some of them were performed having had just two rehearsals), it was gratifying that each work was played and heard.

Interconnectedness, an aim of this research, was achieved in a number of ways. The music explores plainsong in a modern orchestral setting, demonstrating the durability and flexibility of this wonderful heritage. Traditional music, when played by a group of performers, can be very much at ease with contemporary processes. The players too found this particular fusion of their music enjoyable and revealing. The ability of the quartet to create endless counterpoints fascinated the young musicians.

As a result of this research a number of valuable collaborations with musicians have emerged. Not all musicians are willing to perform new music. It is vital that there are

players who enjoy playing music that is different and which may make strong rhythmic demands or which is experimental. Indeed, the cause of new music needs to be championed and promoted by its musicians. Part of the success of this research may be the result of an ongoing consultation process which emerged between the performers and the composer.

Over the last five years, with support from the Arts Council travel grants, the composer was able to attend two major festivals/workshops. The three week Festival of New and Experimental music in Ostrava in August/September 2011 was a seminal experience. It was a powerful exploration of another world, a world of new music. It fostered openness, and created an opportunity where it was possible to embrace different styles and modify personal compositional preferences.

The week-long workshop on contemporary choral music with the Latvian Radio Choir, in 2012, was hugely beneficial. While there was much that was new, the composer found it significantly easier to come to terms with experimental sounds. In a general sense his approach to composition had changed, He was now increasingly more willing to try new things, looking forward to hearing the music of living composers from other countries and cultures and incorporating some of their compositional approaches into his own work where appropriate.

Now that the research is complete many new compositions are suggesting themselves. One particular goal is to compose a collaborative work with and for young people who suffer from mental health disability.

While this is a conclusion, it is also a new beginning. An acceptance of the fact that learning never ends is surely the best way to ensure the creative spirit stays alive in the human heart.

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