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The Adaptable Composer: Context and Collaboration
A portfolio of compositions

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The Adaptable Composer: Context and Collaboration
(A portfolio of compositions)

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.

Yr wyf drwy hyn yn datgan mai canlyniad fy ymchwil fy hun yw'r thesis hwn, ac eithrio lle nodir yn wahanol. Caiff ffynonellau eraill eu cydnabod gan droednodiadau yn rhoi cyfeiriadau eglur. Nid yw sylwedd y gwaith hwn wedi cael ei dderbyn o'r blaen ar gyfer unrhyw radd, ac nid yw'n cael ei gyflwyno ar yr un pryd mewn ymgeisiaeth am unrhyw radd oni bai ei fod, fel y cytunwyd gan y Brifysgol, am gymwysterau deuol cymeradwy.

Contents

1. Introduction

Abstract

During the course of this creative PhD, I set out to address the following issues through the process of composing, performing and curating mixed projects: (1) the nature of collaboration as part of an artistic vision and output, (2) the role of the composer within these relationships, and (3) the scope for a career in writing music, as well as the accessibility and impact of performances. The nature of practice-based research - creating and reflecting upon my own musical works and those of others - builds an ever-evolving trajectory of my artistic awareness over the course of study. This development of artistic awareness informs the results of my conceptual, aesthetic, and technical considerations as a musician.

Summary

My research aims may be summarised as follows:

- To cultivate works which indicate the potential of collaborating fluidly across other musical genres and other art forms in both large and small-scale forms;
- To produce scores which appeal to the musical and analytical sensibilities of the performers (ranging from concert-hall orchestras to improvising musicians);
- To develop my craft in expanding the harmonic language of my music and explore what it means to write ‘tonally’;
- To demonstrate a varied career model, driven by an entrepreneurial ethos, assessing the range of ways in which my role as a composer can be employed and utilised;
- To write inventive, original works and develop my profile as a composer.

Portfolio, scoring and timings

I have divided my portfolio of works into four main areas, as follows:

1. Works for classical ensemble

- *Block,* for piano trio (4’40’’)
- *Blue Lab*, for orchestra (4’45’’)
- *this was a dance*, for piano and percussion (5’50’’)
- *Elasticity*, for string quartet (7’43’’)
- *Lust and Lustre*, for chamber ensemble (7’00’)

2. Collaborative works

- *Forever Interrupted*, for cello and electronics, with spoken word (7’18’’)
- *Shoot and Leaf and Breath and Feet,* for jazz piano-vocal duo, with spoken word (15’31’’)
- *Walls and Windows,* with folk ensemble (9’21’’)
- *What will the future be?,* with electronic music producer and members of the Morley community (5’05’’)
- *Charleston,* with choreographer and training dance group (2’08’’)

3. Works for leisure time groups to perform

- *Strange and Wild / Remote and Unfamiliar*, for choir, folk musicians and trumpet (22’)
- *Dream big for tomorrow*, for improvising vocalist and orchestra (17’)

Works list in date order:

- **Block** (completed January 2017, first performed February 2017)
- **Blue Lab** (completed July 2017, first performed and workshopped July 2017)
- **Forever Interrupted** (completed March 2018, first performed May 2018)
- **Strange and Wild / Remote and Unfamiliar** (completed October 2018, first performed November 2018)
- **Charleston** (completed December 2018, first performed February 2019)
- **this was a dance** (completed March 2019, first performed May 2019)
- **Elasticity** (completed January 2020, first performed and workshopped in full March 2020)
- **Walls and Windows** (completed June 2020, first performed July 2020)
- **Shoot and leaf and breath and feet** (completed June 2020, first performed June 2021)
- **What will the future be?** (completed and performed in September 2020)
- **Dream big for tomorrow** (completed November 2020, first performance postponed to 2022)
- **Lust and Lustre** (completed December 2020, first performed March 2021)

2. Background and Context

The composer's role in a digital age

The term "concert hall music" has come to represent, as James Wierzbicki describes, "the entire culture for which the physical concert hall is just a symbol, a culture that embraces and promotes what until not so long ago (before persistent critics challenged the labelling) might have been called 'serious music' or 'art music'."[1] The composer has been perceived historically as a wandering minstrel, or a contributor to church and court, or the romanticised figure of an "isolated, possibly unhinged genius, struggling alone at the piano or desk".[2] The realistic outlook, since the end of the 20th century, is that very few composers earn a living solely from commission fees and royalties,[3] and are unlikely to maintain an entire career sitting alone at a desk, completing their latest magnum opus. I would argue, however, that in today's digital age in the UK, there are more ways than ever to write, perform and publicise original music, and that finding opportunity to create – curating projects and seeking out collaborations – is in itself a creative process, albeit at times in pursuit of additional income streams as well as artistic expression.

In considering the factors which have contributed to the changing landscape for contemporary composers, it is impossible to ignore arguably the biggest change in the music industry over the past thirty years. The digital age has affected listening culture in the UK and beyond, given the "conveyer-belt" system of constantly delivering audiences new, curated music selections to stream.[4] Has the rise of streaming music services, such as Spotify and Youtube, which allow listeners to switch between musical genres at the click of a button, meant that more composers are now happy to do the same in their output? Brian Hulse calls this "an emerging world composition practice - a

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[1] J. Wierzbicki, (2019). *Double Lives: Film Composers in the Concert Hall*. London: Routledge p.2.

[2] S. Hayden and L. Windsor, (2007). 'Collaboration and the Composer: Case Studies from the End of the 20th Century'. *Tempo*, 61(240), p28.

[3] R. L. Finney and F. Goossen, (1991). *Thinking about music : the collected writings of Ross Lee Finney.* Tuscaloosa: University Of Alabama Press.

[4] N. Cook, M.Ingalls, M. and D. Trippett, (2019). *The Cambridge Companion to Music in Digital Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

practice without a ruling genre but rather one with the capacity to engage any genre or combination of genres".[5]

Contrary to this it could be suggested that digital listening habits defy any distinctions with such a range of styles at our fingertips, and consumers or creators who engage with music are instead heading toward a post-genre society. One interesting example is Scottish composer Anna Meredith. Helen Wallace, programming director of King's Place, London, describes Meredith as "somebody who has rewritten the rulebook"[6] in her approach to moving fluidly between roles from project to project. She writes and performs electronica-based original music and has previously accepted classical commissions, film and TV work, and cross-arts or community projects.

"There's a beat, there's a rhythm. Who cares about those distinctions anymore? I use the same musical building blocks whatever kind of piece I make. There's not such a panic to make categories. Radio 3 and 6 Music overlap in a way you'd never have imagined."

Genre distinctions are of little importance to Meredith's outlook, differing from an aesthetic of referencing – or being influenced by – pop music (an aesthetic associated with post-minimalist, indie-classical, and other related styles that have been prevalent since the 1980s[7]). The inherent, intuitive eclecticism which is part of her output means that her role as a composer becomes multi-faceted, and collaborators can be diverse in scope – from video projection artists, to Vivaldi.

How to contextualise these differences? *Composition in the Digital World: Conversations with 21st Century American Composers* notes how the impact of digital technology has acted as a catalyst in re-defining and expanding how composers are building careers in America. Interviewing the composer, performer, visual artist and director of Brooklyn Experimental Media Center at NYU Tandon School of Engineering, Luke DuBois, Raines writes:

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[5] B. Hulse, (2015). 'Becoming-Composer'. *Perspectives on New Music,* 53(1), p230.

[6] L. Volpi, (2019). 'The shape of music: Anna Meredith'. *Bachtrack* [online] Available at: https://bachtrack.com/fr_FR/interview-anna-meredith-composer-january-2019

[7] M. Ritchey, (2019). *Composing Capital: Classical Music in the Neoliberal Era*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

"What is a composer? After meeting with … DuBois … I would argue that the answer to that question has become fluid and elusive … Only by expanding the definition of the word 'composer' could one hope to categorise this creator of original music".[8]

Composers such as Robert Laidlow in the UK, and Holly Herndon in Germany, are using artificial intelligence and algorithms as composing tools, blurring the boundaries of the 'role' of the composer even further, questioning who or what occupies the role of the creation of music.[9] In 2016, Susanna Eastburn (chief executive of 'Sound and Music,' and the former artistic director and chief executive of Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival) wrote an article for the Guardian about how composers are seeking a new definition of 'greatness' in a fast-paced, connected, digital world. She cites composer Shiva Feshareki, who talks about composers as a community having more fluidity, and more perspectives. Given Feshareki's own work in electronic & club music, concert & orchestral, art & design and free improvisation, one can assume she has first-hand experience of adapting the traditional commissioning / performance structures and templates for composers in the UK.[10]

Changing emphasis

The change of emphasis from 'composer' to 'creator' is evident within UK-based publications and discourse. 'Sound and Music' and 'Ty Cerdd', charities for new music in the UK, changed their advertised opportunities from callouts such as 'Adopt a Composer' or 'CoDI Composers' to 'Adopt a Creator' and 'music-creator, sound-artist or composer'. In 2020, the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival issued a callout for 'music creators',[11] and the PRS Foundation in addition to Help Musicians UK both offered funding opportunities for what they described as 'music creators', such as the Do It Differently fund (HMUK) and the Open Fund (PRS). This change appears to be towards a term that is deliberately more open, inclusive and ambiguous, in that it can be used across

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[8] R.Raines, (2015). *Composition in the Digital World: Conversations with 21st Century American Composers*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.292.

[9] T. Service (2019). 'AI and the future of music.' *BBC Music Matters* [online] Available at: https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m00066lv

[10] S. Eastburn, (2016) 'Composers seek a new definition of greatness in a digital age'[online] *Guardian*. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/jul/22/composers-greatness-in-digital-age-susanna-eastburn

[11] R. Smith (2020). 'Call for Music Creators: COVID-19 Commissioning Fund.' [online] *Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival*. Available at: https://hcmf.co.uk/call-for-music-creators-covid-19-commissioning-fund/

genres and art forms: an artist can ‘create’ a piece of art in *any* field. In musical terms it is possible to ‘create’ a track, song, piece, improvised set or sonic art installation in any genre of music. ‘Composer’, I would suggest, has historically related to the more specific task of writing notated classical or jazz pieces, which implies a specific training in notated music. Funding bodies in the UK appear to acknowledge that contemporary music in practice is not a fixed entity or role, and are using wording which is more inclusive of other musical styles, backgrounds and methods. This provides further context to the notion of fluidity across the art form becoming just as important to ensembles and music institutions, if not more so, than commissioning ‘great’ composers.

Multi-Dimensional Artists and Careers

Not only has my research involved interdisciplinary attitudes within individual projects, but also the potential of building a career made up of several disciplines. Indian classical vocalist Supriya Nagarajan, r&b cellist Ayanna Witter-Johnson, jazz bassist Misha Mullov-Abado and broadcaster/ dj / performer Hannah Peel are all examples of composers with a multi-dimensional career that involves working as a composer and as a performer of not just their own music but that of others outside of the concert hall. Do they differ from their multi-disciplined predecessors of the 20th century: conductor / writer Boulez, music teacher Holst, or the many others who worked in other disciplines before their careers took off? The difference is perhaps when composers actively try to reach a diverse audience, to redefine what it is to have a career in ‘classical’ music. BBC Radio 3’s development of shows like *Unclassified,* pitched as an exciting new generation of unclassified composers and performers, breaking free of the constraints of practice rooms and concert halls, demonstrates the growing number of multi-practice musicians whose professional networks and listeners are more varied: multi-disciplined, and multi-audience. Composers who are working in other disciplines can use this as a ‘selling point’, a reason for ensembles to collaborate with or commission their idea, allowing the different facets of their career to overlap. The Philharmonia, for example, actively seeks out an Artist in Residence each year from a non-classical background, this year being House of Absolute, a team of vocalists, poets, choreographers, composers and practitioners.

Andrea Moore argues in *Neoliberalism and the Musical Entrepreneur* that the “rapidly growing emphasis among classically-trained or -oriented performers, composers, critics, and music educators on ‘entrepreneurship’ as an engine of musical life” habituates musicians to financial insecurity and precariousness, and that “entrepreneurship resembles freelancing reimagined for the

neoliberal era".[12] The article is focused on American cultural institutions and composers, but makes for some interesting comparisons to the situation for musicians in the UK. The acknowledgement that with artistic freedom comes financial uncertainty is an important consideration, given the barriers it presents. The question is, do traditional labour structures offer a stable alternative, and are they an option for everyone? In my case, I aim to work (and intend to continue working) as a performer, composer and facilitator; and, as my research sets out to demonstrate, each can inform the other in positive, benefiting ways. In a Forbes interview with Emma Gannon, author of *The Multi-Hyphen Life,* the publication notes that diversifying a career creates more options, and might increase job security during times of hardship for freelance and self-employed workers: "the multi-hyphen phenomenon is also about the importance of diversifying your skill set and in turn, your career, and not having all your eggs in one basket – another hard truth many of us will have to accept as a result of COVID-19's economic downturn."[13]

Composer Errollyn Wallen reminds us that independent hard work is not an entirely new trend in classical music: "I knew that if I didn't make things happen for myself my music wouldn't be heard," she stated in an interview in 2015, adding: "… you've got to remember that in the 19th and the early 20th century, composers including Paganini, Liszt, Chopin, Busoni regularly put on their own performances. Berg and Webern helped Schoenberg run his concert series dedicated to contemporary music (Society for Private Musical Performances), which were quite small but highly influential. Steve Reich and Philip Glass both started out with their own bands."[14]

Aiming towards a multi-faceted vocation can facilitate reaching a broader audience, and has generated interesting collaborations during my research. Working as a jazz vocalist, for example, led to a commission from the Wigmore Hall to write for piano-vocal jazz duo Liselotte Osblom and Rupert Cox. Whilst working separately in these fields (as well as later seeking out collaborative projects wherein I perform and compose), opportunities have arisen as a direct result of working across disciplines and genres. In an interview I conducted with Anne Rushton, executive director of

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[12] A. Moore, (2016). 'Neoliberalism and the Musical Entrepreneur'. *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 10(1), p43.

[13] K. Eldor, (2020). 'How A Multi-Hyphen Career Can Lead To Success, According To Best-Selling Author Emma Gannon.' [online] *Forbes*. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/karineldor/2020/04/14/why-a-multi-hyphen-career-is-critical-today-according-to-emma-gannon/#50874d54697d.

[14] A. Awbi, (2015). 'Errollyn Wallen', *M-Magazine*. [online] Available at: https://www.prsformusic.com/m-magazine/features/interview-errollyn-wallen/.

NMC Recordings up until 2020, she notes how self-releases and self-publishing have resulted in a more diverse contemporary music scene, something she feels must be addressed:

"The new music landscape has changed dramatically over the last 50 years, with the established publisher-composer infrastructure becoming a smaller part of a bigger and more diverse, musical picture. On the publishers' part this is largely a response to a changing business model, as many of the orchestral composers of the late nineteenth and twentieth century which generated the bulk of their income fell out of copyright and they therefore had to tighten belts and sign fewer new, less profitable, composers. At the same time as fewer publishing opportunities were becoming available, a younger generation of composers, often working across genres or art-forms, realised that they could retain their rights, and a greater proportion of their income, by self-publishing or working with collectives such as Composers Edition (where publishing services are offered but rights are retained by the composer). In parallel a shift occurred as opportunities opened up for composers to self-release recordings and not be reliant on being taken up by a record company. All of these developments were made more possible by the onset of digital technologies to enable dissemination of material and to facilitate marketing and promotion. This undoubtedly has had a democratising effect, with more women composers and composers of colour having direct routes to establish their careers, although it's important to recognise here that the official structures (orchestras, broadcasters, festivals, record companies) need to do much, much more to promote inclusivity. Hence the priorities for younger composers are not necessarily seeking to sign a publishing deal or record contract; they are to have a good website, an active social media presence and networks with their peers and with performers, organisations, distribution services and managers who promote new music. Of course, all that takes time and energy and there will always be the challenge for young composers to balance the time they spend marketing and managing their careers with the time available for creating the work in the first place!"

As noted by Rushton, time and energy put into marketing and curating events, for an early-career composer, is time that could be spent composing…is there a risk of becoming 'jack of all trades, master of none'? Through the projects carried out in my creative research, I seek to demonstrate how funding and curating one's own projects, working across genres and practices, allows for inventiveness that might not be possible through traditional, classical commissioning models. My entrepreneurial attitude and approach to styles and genres relates to my first and third research aims: to cultivate works which indicate the potential of collaborating fluidly across other musical genres

and other art forms in both large and small-scale forms and to demonstrate a varied career model, driven by an entrepreneurial ethos, assessing the range of ways in which my role as a composer can be employed.

3. Collaboration and curation as creative research

Fusion, populism, postmodernism, crossover

Writing in 1955, Dennison Nash sheds a negative light on the workings of the classical music industry in America at the time, as he explains that "the musical process involves a complex of different institutions and roles … the composer's individual aesthetic criteria are mediated by the actions of other artists … The prevailing values of the composing and aesthetic sanction originality and the pursuit of a constantly developing individual style. On the other hand, the "facts" of the musical process conflict directly with such ivory tower self-expression."[15] He cites conductors and business-people as beholding power over the composer and making decisions based on financial gain. His article *Challenge and Response* was published just three years prior to Babbitt's *Who Cares if you Listen?* which expressed fear over the threat of populism in American culture, at a time when Stockhausen, Messiaen, Miles Davis, young Boulez and elderly Strauss were making influential works.

A decade later, in the 1960s, American composers of the minimalist movement such as Steve Reich worked with an approach which brought audiences into their process, wherein it became perceptible, and could be heard in real time throughout the sounding music (as stated in Reich's essay 'Music as a Gradual Process', published in 1968). In contrast to Nash and Babbitt's concerns over logistics or popular tastes clouding the originality of a contemporary composer, Reich's philosophy was one that reached out to audiences, inviting people to become part of a ritual, listening to a shared process, and hearing blocks of sound as forming part of a collective musical journey. With a contemporary classical music movement developing in a way that appealed to broader audiences, the building blocks were perhaps put in place for the past few decades of

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[15] D. Nash, (1955). 'Challenge and Response in the American Composer's Career'. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 14(1), p.116.

collaborative works that cross boundaries between genres, or do not always rely on conductors and commissioners but instead on contacts, entrepreneurship and record labels. New Amsterdam records, in 2007, began using the term 'indie-classical' to group together such works, not so much based on sound but on ethos, as New York radio host John Schaefer describes:

"It says something – not about the music – but about the people making it, which I think is a fair thing for that name to do … it suggests a kind of working outside conventional, organised mainstream musical forms, whether that be record labels, concert halls, compositional techniques. It suggests this kind of enterprising, freewheeling, oblivious-to-boundaries approach to classical music, which, if someone had coined that term back in the '80s you might have applied to Bang on a Can; and if someone had coined it back in the early '70s, you might have applied it to the minimalists."[16]

I have aimed to build on this ethos in my portfolio of collaborations and commissions, and to work within a fluid, adaptable mode of writing, so that not only is the music I write occasionally falling between the cracks within different genres, but my whole approach, career and role is one that moves between genres and disciplines. Unlike Reich (or Babbitt, for that matter), my concern is to appeal to the musical, analytical sensibilities of the *performers* as a form of collaborative music-making wherein my role changes depending on the project. Writing for cellist and producer Oliver Coates, I created a project that would generate lots of layers and textures within the production while retaining a pure, melodic and romantically-expressive sound for his classical cello playing. Working with jazz musicians, I created space for improvisation; writing for folk musicians, I created melodies and grooves that evolved through repetition. My philosophy was as follows: working in an integrated way with performers, in turn, will mean more satisfying outcomes for listeners if the aim is for an audience to hear the full expressive potential of a performer's playing / singing. Across all the works in this portfolio, whether for classical, electronic, folk, jazz or leisure-time ensemble, there is a fusion of styles which happens as a result of all the different musics that have been part of my lived experience, meaning that my output remains unique and personal to me whilst collaborating with performers. The ethos of the portfolio is not to combine 'high' and 'low' art in an ironic, postmodern fashion, nor to play upon neoclassical 'wrong note' humour; neither is

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[16] W. Robin, (2018). 'The Rise and Fall of "Indie Classical": Tracing a Controversial Term in Twenty-First Century New Music'. *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 12(1), p63.

the music 'crossover' as defined by a deliberate use of popular tropes for commercial purposes. I have an affinity instead with the words of composer Graham Fitkin, who explains in an interview for *Seen and Heard* that he doesn't distinguish between styles; rather, he just draws upon the sounds familiar to him in equal measure: *"*I've never thought of it as fusion … but it is a fusion, but in my mind, because of what I listened to as I grew up. It was just music to me. I drew on everything I knew."[17]

Similarly, Anna Meredith stated as part of a blog through *Liquid Music* (a commissioning collective of genre-melding music): "I'm not someone who sees genres at all. I think we're living in a quite healthy time … I don't think about genre at all when I'm writing."[18]

It may be that the "healthy time" Meredith describes, relating to the number of musicians who do not fit into one category, is partly a result of the increased number of pop, jazz and electronic music courses and modules in universities and conservatoires across the UK. In 2015, the Royal Northern College of Music launched a four-year BMus in popular music, and the jazz course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, which was launched in the 1980s, more recently expanded to include tuition in music production. If a hip-hop producer can obtain the same qualifications as a classical oboist, perhaps there is no longer scope for referencing other styles in a dialogue between so-called high and/or low art, concert hall music and club music. On the other hand, there is a distinction between levels of fusion or genre-crossing when it comes to the logistics of communicating ideas, through a written score or other means, depending on the musicians involved. Meredith has a flexible approach to scoring ranging from electronic music written collaboratively with her band that is not available to purchase as a score, to detailed notations in other cross-genre works for example her concerto for beatboxer and orchestra. Drawing upon non-classical genres requires an adaptable approach to communication if it involves *collaborating* with musicians who have a specific vocabulary as performers, and musical strengths depending on experience or training - in this sense, genre or style cannot be ignored, and there are distinctions between music that artists choose to score in a notated way, and works which are not, for example in the case of Anna Meredith.

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[17]B.Briggs, (2011). '"I keep doing it whether there are problems or not!": Bob Briggs talks with Graham about a life devoted to composing', *Music Web International*. [online] Available at: http://www.musicweb-international.com/SandH/2011/Jan-Jun11/fitkin_interview.htm.

[18]A. Thoreen, (2018). 'On the Spectrum of Pop with Anna Meredith and Har-di-har'. *Liquid Music* [online] Available at: http://www.liquidmusic.org/blog/anna-meredith-and-har-di-har.

Working with leisure-time and / or non-classical musicians

Working with improvising musicians as part of my PhD research allowed me to incorporate techniques from a number of vocal and instrumental specialities and traditions. In addition, being flexible in my approach meant that my output was able to expand and forge far wider industry connections, which created more opportunities for me to compose, for recorded or live performance, than otherwise. There are certain techniques that are not available to use when writing for leisure-time groups who have not undertaken specific instrumental or vocal training, and when writing for musicians whose discipline is part of a mostly oral tradition it is not possible to rely fully on notated rhythms, timings and structures. Adapting to such projects as a *collaborator,* with a mutually beneficial goal – wherein I write music that appeals to performers' analytical, musical sensibilities – has been an important part of my development as a composer.

The 1983 publication, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think In Action* puts forward a case for two 'types' concerning collaborative approaches in the arts. 'Type 1' is characterised by artists having a fixed view of their role (e.g. composer, or performer), whereas 'Type 2' behaviour involves questioning one's role and being open to the idea that a better outcome can be obtained if these assumptions are abandoned or replaced by creative dialogue and solutions. The publication highlights the importance of prioritising mutually beneficial goals when collaborating, encompassing some elements of facilitation or curation which may not have been considered a part of the classical composer's role in the past.[19] More recent research in the field of music substantiates these claims in the specific context of musical performance:

"In a study of the communication processes of a professional string quartet (Seddon & Biasutti, 2009), the distinctions between cooperative and collaborative communication strategies (both verbal and non-verbal) were found to rest in the degree to which these strategies facilitated cohesive performance (cooperative) or facilitated 'creative developments in the interpretation of the music' (collaborative). Examples of cooperative strategies included players' discussions that focused on technical performance, including bowing, whilst examples of collaborative strategies

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[19] H.S. Schwartz and D.A. Schon, (1987). 'The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action.' *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 32(4), p.614.

included discussion of 'remedial action...to develop interpretation and / or style in the piece'. These researchers suggest that 'cooperative modes are associated with lower level cohesive processes, and collaborative modes are associated with higher level creative processes"[20]

From this study it can be deduced that as a composer, thinking about how to utilise performers' musical and emotional skill set results in a higher level of creative process, regardless of technical performance.

Working with the Camden Symphony Orchestra, I met with the group to find out what kind of music they enjoyed and if anyone had any creative endeavours that could become an extra-musical element in the piece. Sheila, who led the second violins section, talked about her involvement with Freedom From Torture's creative writing group Write For Life. Performing with the orchestra and forging connections through text and dialogue with its members allowed for a less hierarchical and more involved collaboration. When collaborating with the folk ensemble Don't Feed The Peacocks, I opted to write descriptive, free-time passages alongside passages which could be structured as traditional folk music in AABB form. Using language as a tool to communicate meaning, as opposed to symbols (e.g. graphic scores or precisely notated music), allowed for a process which was open to interpretation and encouraged expressive, sensitive playing without demanding that the performers adhered to a method of communication that would be novel to them. Fast sections of music were communicated in a 'session' setting with the group, wherein I repeatedly played lines so they could familiarise themselves with the tune and groove, and were then able to experiment away from the music. In this instance, the discussion arose from the performers, and decisions were made collaboratively during the rehearsing and recording process.

Another composer who works in this way - facilitating group music making and new compositions for leisure-time or school-age groups - is Kerry Andrew, who has scored music for school groups and worked collaboratively with communities. When working on her community chamber opera *Woodwose* (2013), Andrew encouraged participants (two school choirs and one elderly choir) to find lullabies and songs that were sung to them as youngsters, thus involving them in the content of the work and collaborating through an exchange of material. For *No Place Like,* a work written for BBC Teach 2017/18, the piece includes not just a score but resources, lesson plans and mp3 tracks

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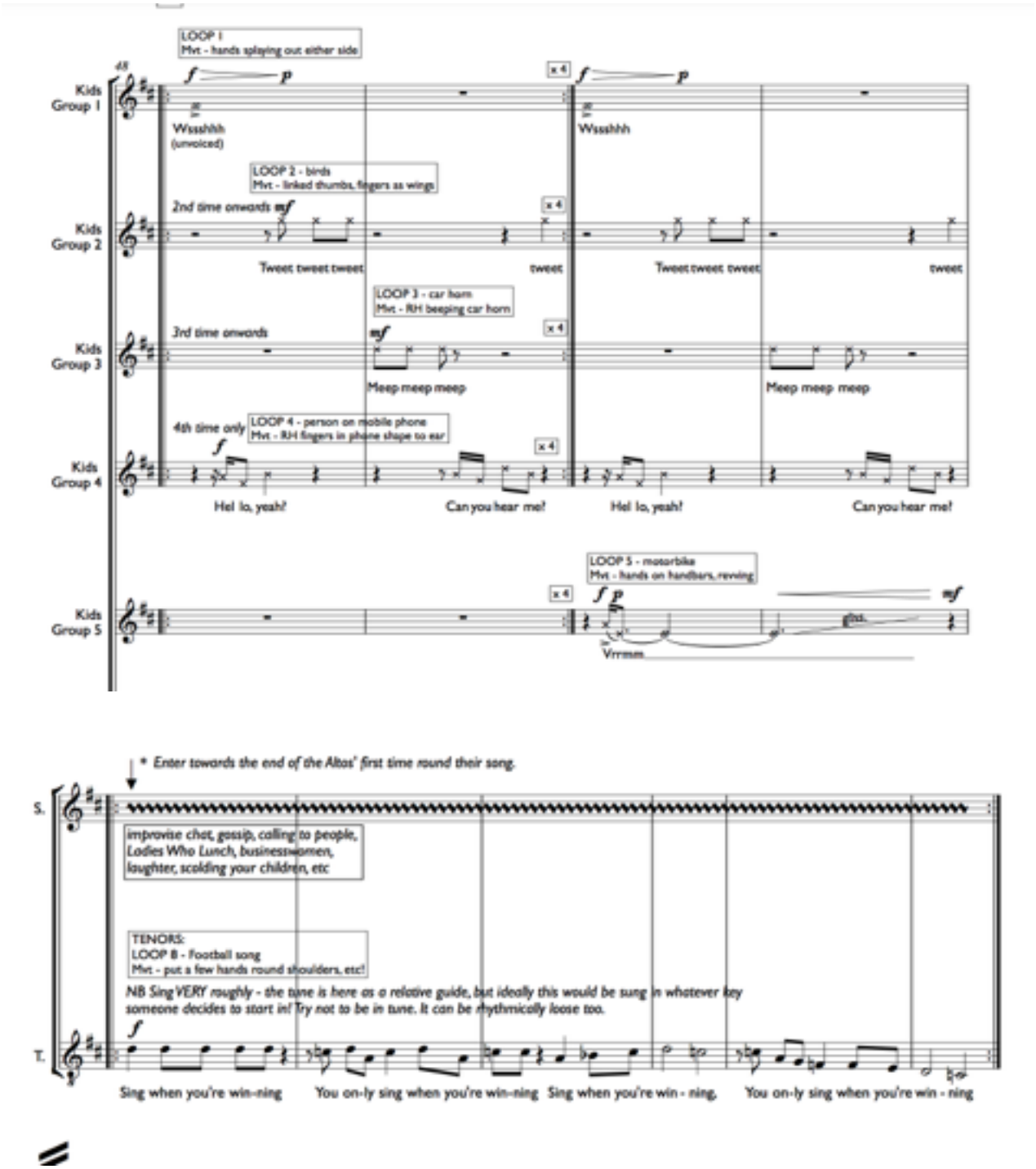
[20] M.S. Barrett, (2016). *Collaborative Creative Thought and Practice in Music*. London ; New York: Routledge, p.19

with both primary and secondary variations or parts to sing. Similar to *Walls and Windows* in my portfolio, the score communicates through boxed instructions and the process of sharing the music involves a certain amount of facilitation, using the score as a map rather than something which can be 'sight read' by classical performers. In a step further again to facilitate communication without notation, Anna Meredith's portfolio includes body percussion pieces *Connect it* and *Handsfree* which are not notated but instead taught by the composer or available as lesson plans and mp3 download.



Example 3.a, excerpts from Kerry Andrew's *No Place Like,* including descriptive instructions in place of notation[21]

Andrew summarises her skillset as "being able to tailor something to specific players/singers – it's actually what I mostly do, and am grateful for being able to work in that way."[22] In working with improvisers and in educational settings, her music relies on vamps or loops within a modal harmony, as a way of building textures without writing intricate parts that might require training to follow a conductor and read notated rhythms. Her repeated blocks of texture can be heard in works like *Who we are* (2016), *No place like* (2017) and *Wave* (2018), all three involving youth choir singing and body percussion.

Throughout my portfolio I try to combine this ethos with extended instrumental techniques for varied textures and timbres - for instance, in the opening of *Walls and Windows* and *Dream big for tomorrow,* - or with elements such as synthesized sounds and spoken word in *What will the future be?* Developing a work in a way that allows flexibility, ideas and process to happen within the community of performers alongside a composer is something discussed in Sam Hayden and Luke Windsor's account of collaboration and the composer. Their study (2007) ranks composer-performer collaborations in terms of levels of negotiation, as 'directive', 'interactive' or 'collaborative'. Their summary includes a 'shared aesthetic goal':

"The most successful artistic collaborations described here occurred when the creative *process* arose from within the group and was not a predetermined ideology … [a] shared aesthetic goal seemed important: incompatible aesthetics can impede successful collaboration by promoting conflicts in working methods and artistic aims."[23]

My interpretation of a 'shared aesthetic goal' relates to my second research aim: to produce scores which appeal to the musical, analytical sensibilities of the performers. That way, the aesthetic goal allows for creativity on both parts but does not limit me to a particular musical aesthetic. What is

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[21] K. Andrew (2017) No Place Like full score b.48

[22] E. Hughes, (2020). 'Kerry Andew'. *Composing the Historical* [online] Available at: https://meettheartist.online/2018/05/12/kerry-andrew-composer-performer-and-writer/

[23] S. Hayden, and L.Windsor, (2007). 'Collaboration and the Composer: Case Studies from the End of the 20th Century'. *Tempo*, 61(240), p32.

important is that the ideas are communicated in a way which can be interpreted and expressed by the performers, for example by using adjectives and imagery to create a contemporary texture in the opening of *Walls and Windows*.

Creating an experience not a score

Brandon Houghtalen's 2012 essay, 'The Conductor as Curator', examines the difference between classical programming and gallery / museum curation. He describes five elements of exhibition design: setting, subject matter, visual weight, compositional direction, and narrative. Based on surveys carried out in the U.S., Houghtalen notes how galleries and museums are not facing the same decline of audiences as classical concerts, citing the importance of a "good story", a narrative and context, and how this can be applied to classical music performances. It seems that he is drawing a link between the notion of accessibility in classical music and its context or setting:

"The belief that art music is losing its audience because society no longer connects with the music is, in this author's view, an error of attribution—the content is not the problem, but rather the delivery…A central tenant of this document is the belief that musical performances take place within a context, and this context is critically important to the reception of the overall concert experience and the individual pieces themselves."[24]

One of my research aims involved raising and extending my profile as a composer beyond the boundaries of new music circles, contemporary music composers, critics and aficionados. Combining my entrepreneurial attitude and flexible approach with a desire to entice new audiences has involved working on concert and event curation. This style of programming is not a new idea, however: the involvement of composers and / or artists in programming, artistic direction, or curation is a practice which strongly relates to my interest in flexible approaches to composing and the role of a composer. My research involved creating works which call for collaboration, multiple disciplines and working within a narrative context, ideas listed below as curatorial strategies by Zurich-based journal *OnCurating*:

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[24]B. Houghtalens, (2012). 'Music in Context(s): The Conductor as Curator'. *Arizona State University* [online] Available at: https://core.ac.uk/reader/79563920.

"In recent decades, the borders between the roles of the artist and the roles of the curator in the very open-ended 'field of music', are also increasingly blurred. Many musicians include curatorial strategies in their work. Both curatorial, compositional and performative strategies include collaborative methods, interdisciplinarity, appropriation, staging archives, working with context as a compositional parameter, development of concert series and alternative institutions."[25]

As a composer, my vision is of framing a piece around an event or project and thinking beyond what might be on a page in a score. Putting together a performance in practice is as much a part of the process for me by looking closely at the nature of the event, setting, performers, and practicalities. My research has brought to my attention how much the notion of curating an experience beyond the notes has helped to guide my career and raise my profile, as well as adding a layer of intention to my creativity. For the piece *Strange and Wild / Remote and Unfamiliar*, I set out to create an event which celebrated the life of Emily Bronte in the year of her bicentenary. Many aspects of the event were planned out prior to any music being written. It was important to me that the event took place in Yorkshire and was performed by local musicians, that there was an element of Yorkshire's traditional music, and that the setting could be both historical and reverberant. Deciding on the theme of Wuthering Heights, I began to research the novel and came across an article by John Bowen, Professor of Nineteenth-Century Literature at York University. I contacted Professor Bowen to ask if he could give a talk prior to the performance, as a way of providing further context to the music at the event. Once these elements were in place and I had contacted performers and venues, I began to apply for funding to carry out the project and compose the piece. The evening featured Yorkshire folk music from local performers, tea and cake from local suppliers in keeping with the theme, a reading and talk by Professor John Bowen, before the music unfolded on a cold Yorkshire evening in the antiquated setting of the Leeds Minster, based on selected texts from *Wuthering Heights*, which described the misty landscape and harsh climate of the moors.

When a second, different performance of the piece was cancelled (due to the Covid-19 pandemic), I wrote to the funders about creating a new piece instead to reflect on the unfathomable aspects of isolation, for a digital premiere. The new project and budget meant adapting to a smaller ensemble.

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[25] L.P. Hagen, (2020). 'Introduction: Defragmentation – Curating Contemporary Music,' *On Curating* [online] Available at: https://www.on-curating.org/issue-44-reader/introduction-defragmentation-curating-contemporary-music.html#.X9YV8qr7SgA.

Working flexibly in this way has been an important feature of my research aim to develop a varied career model with entrepreneurial ethos: curating events, promoting the release of the piece online, and responding to changes in the arts world as part-artist, part-fundraiser and producer, as demonstrated in the funding applications included within the portfolio.

4. Influences as Research

Composer / collaborator research models

There are three primary areas of influence which are exemplars of curating audience experiences and going beyond the task of writing a score in the UK. Firstly, there is the role of other composer-curators such as Freya Waley-Cohen, who was my mentor when working on the Wigmore Hall commission. She has spoken at the Southbank Centre conference *The Business of Composing* about getting new music heard and performed and has founded a record label and concert series Listenpony, which promotes and commissions new music. She also directs and co-curates events outside of the concert hall, teaming up with unique spaces, artists and architects.[26]
Her career consists of both composing and artistic directing, and the nature of her rising profile – a result of working in different ways within the industry – makes her a key figure not only in my research but in the way the career of the 'sound artist' might be shaped. Her influence has been concerned with questions of ethos, attitudes, how and why, not 'what' is created as an end result.

The second area of industry which has influenced my research is multi-faceted performing groups who commission and collaborate in the vein of American pioneers Bang on a Can. American ensembles Eighth Blackbird and yMusic are known for their collaborative ethos and relationship with pop and folk music, the latter labelled as "Neoliberals" by the *Journal of American Musicology*, given their ideology as an ensemble. The trumpet player of yMusic, C.J. Camerieri, described the branding element of contemporary music groups in the 21st century in an interview in 2014:

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[26] Composer website: http://www.freyawaleycohen.com/

“We all grew up with this entrepreneurial spirit, because you had to have it. There wasn't a way to make a living if you just were a person who could play your instrument, because there aren't gigs for that anymore – at least not fulfilling gigs, either for your soul or for your pocketbook … You have to build your own house. And so this entrepreneurial spirit, that's what yMusic found. We found these six individuals who were creating their own brand for what they did, and they were similar enough that we decided to codify it into one brand … The present-day musical landscape is such that if you create your own gig, or you create your own brand, you create your own way of making a mark on music, you'll be rewarded for that.”[27]

In June 2020, Crash Ensemble collaborated in Northern Ireland with folk / indie duo Saint Sister and pop singer-songwriter Hozier. The Manchester Collective, Juice vocal trio, 12 Ensemble and the Aurora Orchestra are examples of similar groups in the UK. Some composers have created ensembles of their own such as Errollyn Wallen’s Ensemble X whose motto proclaims *We don’t break down barriers in music… we don’t see any*. In the UK, these ensembles have potentially set themselves apart from other experimental contemporary groups whose repertoire would be considered contemporary classical or experimental, (such as Pspappha ensemble, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Riot Ensemble, Apartment House).

The final strand of influence which has been important in my outlook during this period of study has been the work of composers writing for education and community projects, such as Kerry Andrew and Anna Meredith. In an interview with composer John Barber, he explains the importance of the emotional world of youth and community music, relating strongly to my own aims of writing music which appeals to the sensibilities of collaborators in order to work creatively instead of ‘logistically’ or ‘with limitations’:

“the emotional world and the social aspect of music are intrinsically linked to the work I do and to what gives my music validity and strength. Knowing where a musical idea has come from and why, and who the person is behind it, also shuts off my critical inner voices, because I am part of something else. These social connections legitimise musical decisions that can be hard for me to make on my own.”[28] Barber’s music is primarily melodic, making passages more easily pitched and

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[27] W. Robin, (2018). ‘Balance Problems: Neoliberalism and New Music in the American University and Ensemble’. *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 71(3), p.780.

[28] Interview with composer John Barber in person, 2019

memorised without notation, for example in *The Watchers in the Wings* for ROA Youth Opera, and *Seven Seeds* Royal Albert Hall youth project with Triborough Music hub. Barber's compositional voice thus lends itself well to youth projects, without necessitating a wholly new skillset. The same can be said for my own melodic writing which is present in the challenging contemporary works such as *Elasticity* and *Lust and Lustre* as well as in cross-genre projects such as *Strange and Wild / Remote and Unfamiliar.*

Composer-performer

The likes of Oliver Coates, Graham Fitkin, Shiva Feshareki and Elaine Mitchener have developed a voice or 'brand' as simultaneous composer-performers in the UK contemporary music scene, and Nico Muhly amongst many others in the US. My earlier discussion of multidimensional careers addressed the notion of having various streams of income and working in different disciplines. What I begin to explore later in my portfolio is the notion of becoming an integrated artist, working on some projects as a composer-performer, similar to the folk / pop definition of a 'singer-songwriter'. It perhaps comes as no surprise that the composers mentioned here have worked in film and television, given that paying someone who can write, perform and produce the music is less demanding on time and budgets. British independent music publisher Manners McDade is an agency devoted to multi-instrumentalists and composer / producers working in film, television, games or indie-classical commercial releases.

In *What will the future be?* I had the opportunity to work on a commission as composer-performer, interpreting the poetry of local voices in Morley. This combined project allowed me to be self-sufficient, adapting to the circumstances of restrictions wherein rehearsing and performing with others was risking the spread of Covid-19.

Often my practice when composing directly relates to my performing practice, as is the case with other composers working in a similar field and upholding similar musical values. Errollyn Wallen, for instance, claims to create her work mostly by improvising at the piano, and stated earlier in her career in 1994: "composition comes from playing - and improvisation is the lifeblood of all art - it

is chance and order entwined".[29] The melodies written in my pieces *Walls and Windows* and *Shoot and Leaf and Breath and Feet* were written through various improvisations on the instrument and with my voice, and in a similar way Wallen's *More Light* is essentially a transcribed piano improvisation, given the free rubato and expressive ornamentation of the melody on her album *Errollyn* it's hard to imagine this was not composed or arranged at the piano.

In her songbook, Wallen's role is almost that of a singer-songwriter, often performing the songs herself. She encourages performers to treat the scores of the songs with flexibility, including a note in the score's frontmatter:

All these songs were written from my heart and in a state of grace. At last they have made the journey from my battered manuscript sketchbook where they were often feverishly scribbled down. I am very pleased to be able to share them in this book.

Improvisation is an important characteristic of my performances. In some songs in this book I have retained elements of my own style of improvisation, particularly in the piano solos and in some vocal lines. In others I have given a bare skeleton, designed to act as a springboard for flights of fancy. I encourage the performer, whether from a pop, classical, folk or jazz background, to feel free to imbue their performances of this music with their own creative spirit.

ERROLLYN WALLEN

Ex.4.a, from the Errollyn Wallen Songbook [30]

Wallen's songbook, however, is fully notated with chord symbols added above.

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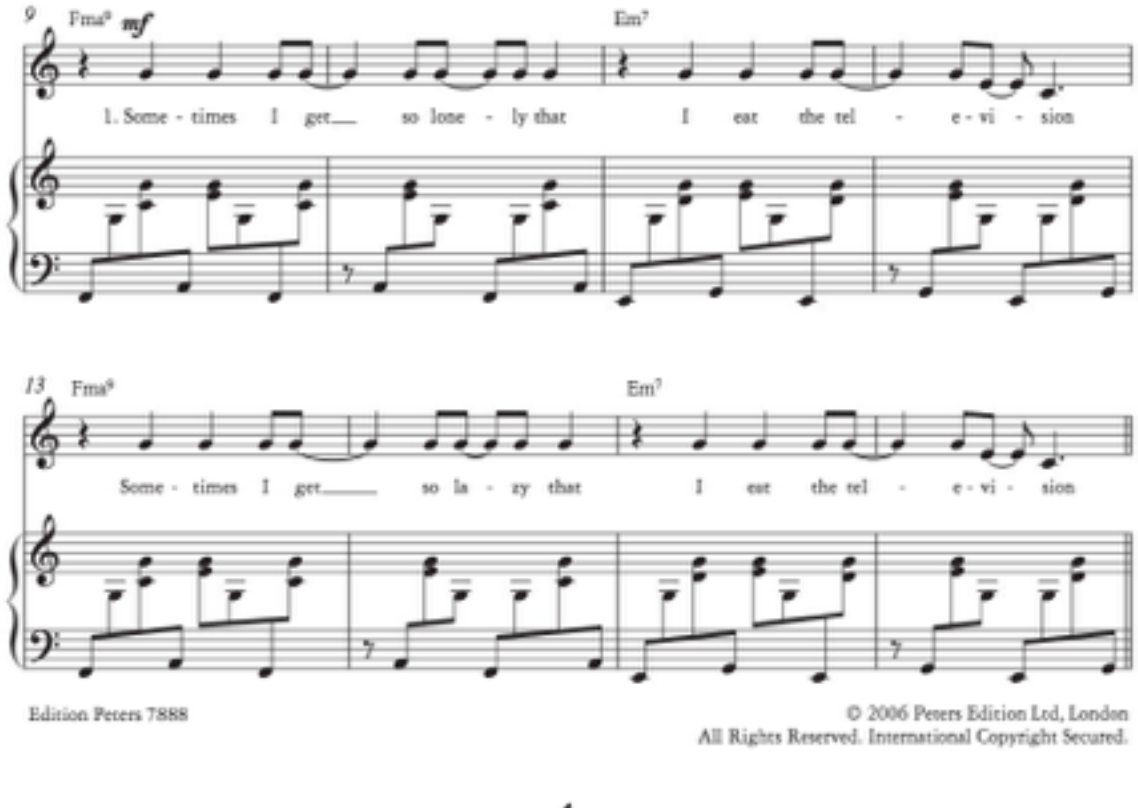
[29] E. Wallen, (1994) 'Slave to the rhythm'. *Contemporary Music Review* 11(1) p.293.

[30] Wallen (2006) The Errollyn Wallen Songbook p.2



Ex.4.b *What's up Doc?* notated music from the Errollyn Wallen songbook[31]

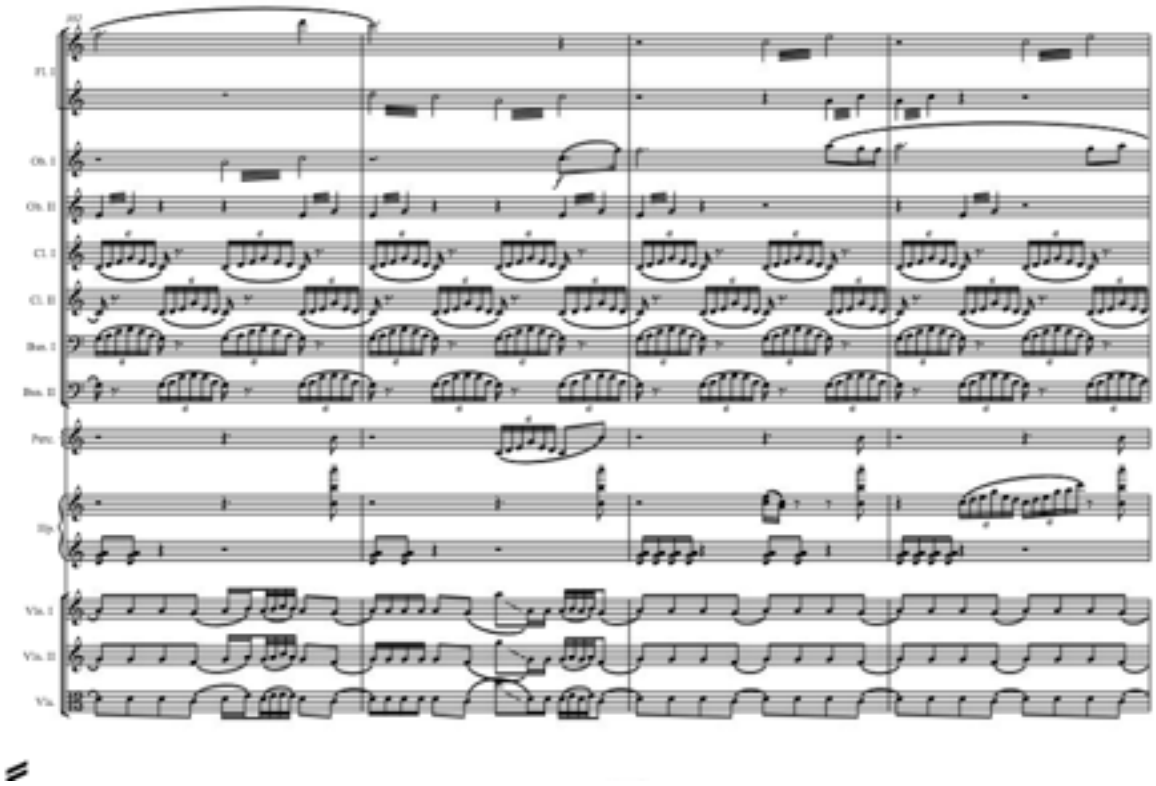
Any recorded or filmed performances of Wallen's *Beehive*, from the songbook, appear to be performed as per her notated music, with classical phrasing and no particular ornamentation. My practice, on the other hand, has evolved from finding that facilitating cross-genre collaborative practice in person often achieves the best result despite being more difficult to then capture in a written score. Through the course of my research, I have tried to find ways to incorporate both fully notated and detailed music and passages for improvisers to respond by ear within my work, in a type of musical exchange.

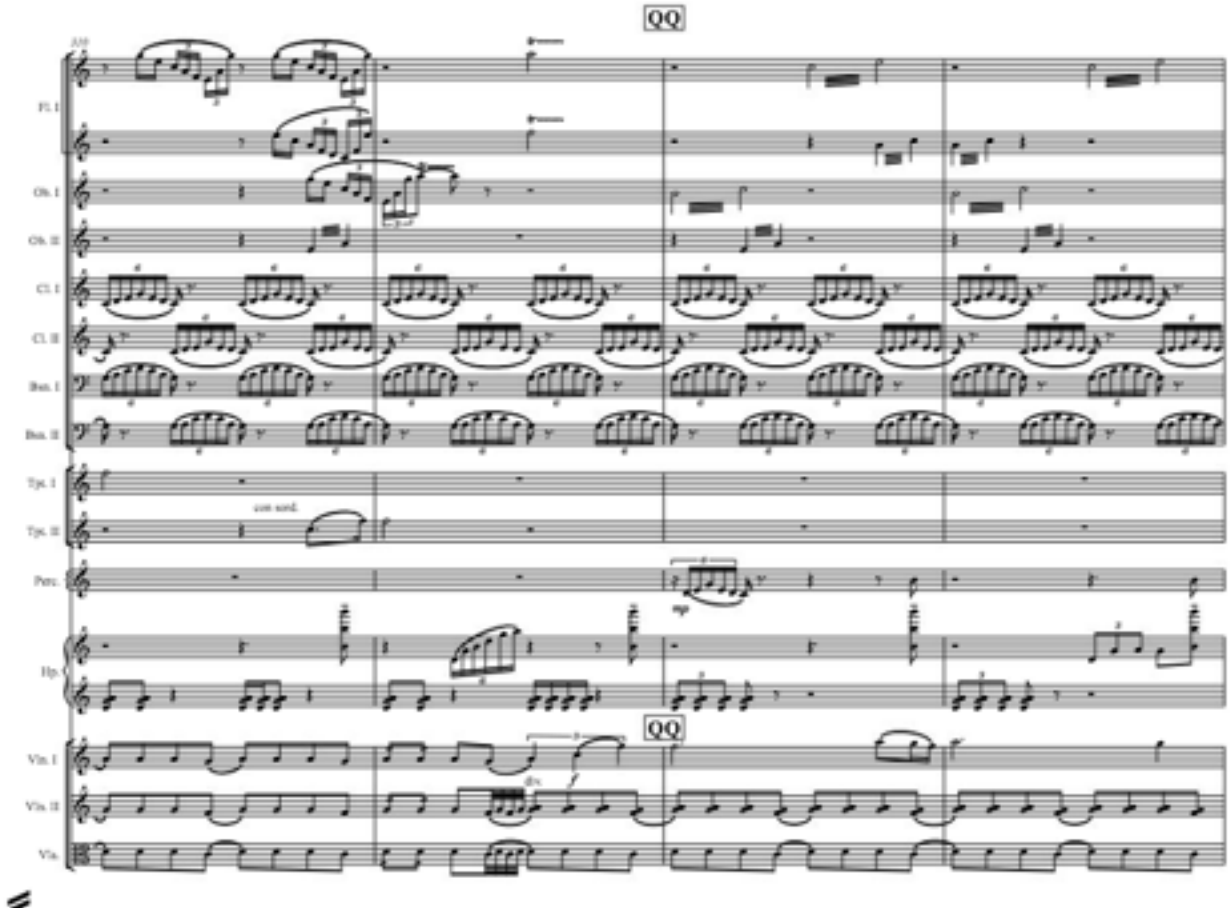
Compositional techniques to incorporate different instrumental idioms

Errollyn Wallen references other music through quotations in her pieces, quoting *Girl from Ipanema* in her *The Girl in My Alphabet* (1990); spiritual *Amazing Grace, Deep River,* and *Go Down Moses* are quoted and motivically developed in *Mighty River* (2007)*;* and Richard Rodgers' *My Favourite Things* is heard within her piano piece *More light* (1990). Particularly in *Mighty River*, she transports existing melodies into the context of her classical work through motivic development.

[31] E. Wallen (2006) What's up doc? b9

Jazz musicians famed for their arrangements as much as their solos- the likes Brad Meldau or Gwilym Simcock - and chamber folk groups such as RANT, Vri and The Gloaming, create arrangements wherein the structure of an existing melody forms the basis of their work and they may change the metre, groove or harmony (for example Simcock's *Way You Look Tonight,* with changed metre and reharmonisation) . By contrast, the melodies quoted in Wallen's music have the effect of a classical 'theme' which develop through melodic variation, for example the fragments and inverted fragments of *Amazing Grace* which weave through the orchestra:

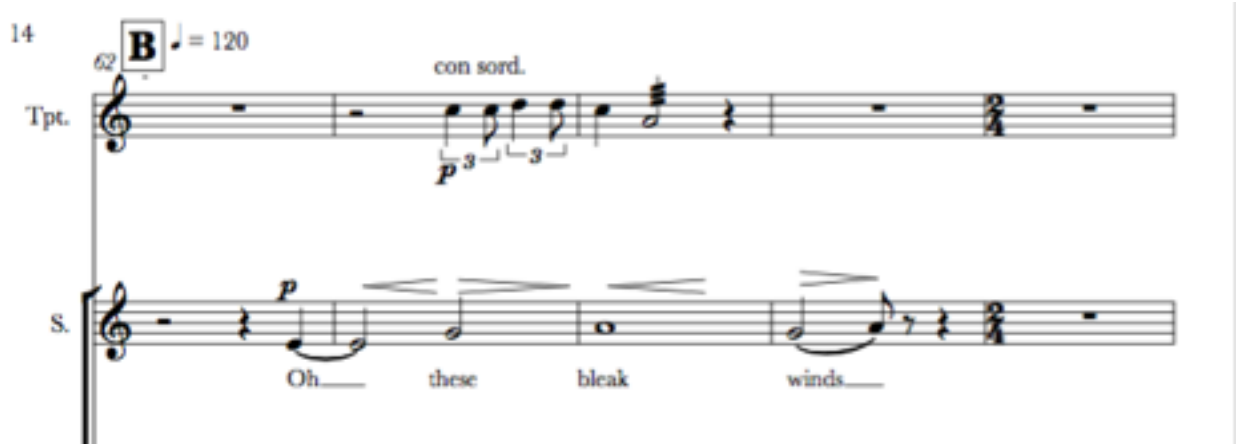




Ex.4.c, motivic development and fragmentation of the *Amazing Grace* melody in *Mighty River*[32]

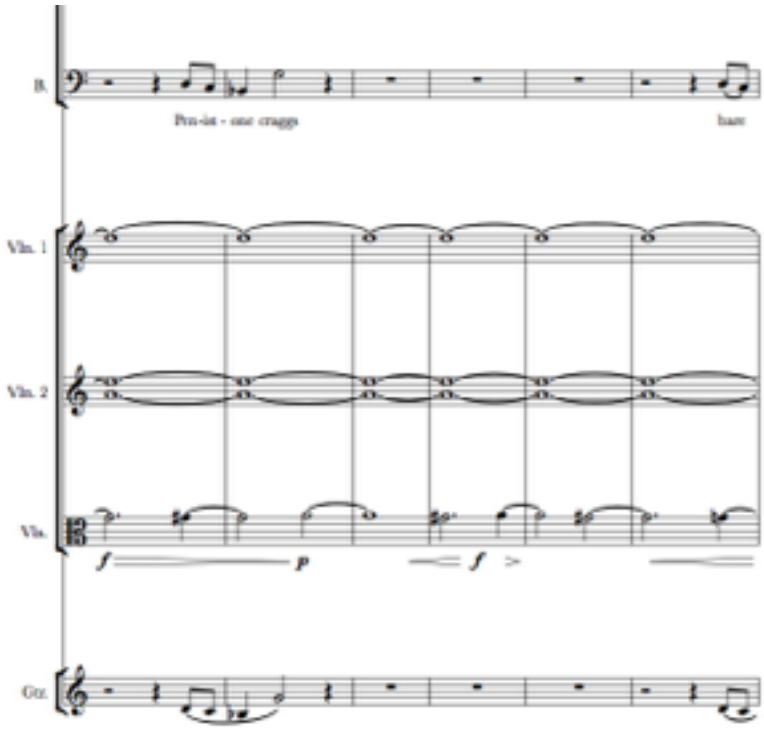
Earlier in my portfolio, when creating *Strange and Wild / Remote and Unfamiliar*, I included near-quotations of traditional English melodies that had been recorded as having links with West Yorkshire according to materials at Cecil Sharp House. There is a similar embedding of melodic quotation in this work as in Wallen's *Mighty River* and *More Light,* using the material as melodies in thematic terms, for example the end of movement 1 into movement 2, *Marshes,* there are fragments of the melody in the trumpet before it is heard in the folk ensemble:

[32] Wallen (2007) Mighty River, b. 302-313



Example 4.d, Fig B of *Strange and Wild / Remote and Unfamiliar*, showing fragmentation / motivic development of the quoted traditional melody

Additionally in the third movement, *Penistone Craggs*, the melody quoted in the guitar part as the opening theme is then fragmented for example in the bass vocal line:



Example 4.e, using melodies from other idioms as thematic material to motivically develop

Later as I began to establish a practice of working collaboratively with musicians from varied musical backgrounds, I became more eager to allow musicians the same level of freedom as they would find in a single-line traditional celtic reel or jig, or a standard lead sheet, and so in *Walls and Windows* or *Shoot and Leaf and Breath and Feet* there are more skeletal structures as a basis for performers, juxtaposed with highly detailed textures, timbres and motivic development to frame the

music with varied textures. An approach of working in classical structures with jazz performers has been a key part of Mark-Anthony Turnage's output, as he often writes for and with specific performers, enabling adventurous fusion works through his collaborations with improvisers who are also classically trained. Such pieces include *Blood on the Floor* (1997), as well as a Grammy-winning collaborative album with guitarist John Scofield *Scorched* (2002), and an opera *Anna Nicole* (2011). At times, the layering of timbres or sounds from two different musical idioms could be said to create a disorienting or chaotic effect, in particular the soaring operatic voices combined with big band-style orchestral parts in *Anna Nicole*, sounding almost like two performances crashing together at once. In *Blood on the Floor*, whilst the references are wide-ranging and the lyrical passages moving freely between notated and improvised playing, the stylistic shift to a movement like *Crackdown* marks an unavoidable dramatic change in the music and its eclectic nature becomes a driving force. By contrast, my practice has evolved mostly around finding intersections between genres through commonalities of compositional techniques, such as modal harmony and riff-like short motifs, or ornamented, improvisatory and rubato melodies. In this sense, my music has a strong affinity with the earlier mentioned pianist-composers, Graham Fitkin and Nico Muhly. Riffs and repetitions permeate their music, rhythmic drive is often at the forefront, and they also both perform their own multi-genre piano pieces akin to a 'singer-songwriter' approach.

The commonalities in the techniques used across my portfolio can be contextualised by other composers finding intersections between styles, with three influential figures being Errollyn Wallen, Graham Fitkin, and Nico Muhly. Commonalities listed below will be further analysed in the following section:

- modal harmony
- added 6th, 7th, 9th and 11th to triads
- melodic writing that outlines a rising a falling contour and implies tonal hierarchy
- ornamentation of melodic lines, notated or improvised
- repeated material on a small and large scale
- syncopation and syncopated patterns with an unchanging pulse
- phasing
- sudden stops to end pieces or textural build-ups, or a dramatic change in density as a structural device
- building rhythmic layers to create texture

- favoured timbres / instrument combinations

5. Musical language as outcome of research

Tonality

Throughout the portfolio, my harmonic language has expanded and evolved, from the triads in *Block* to the droning quarter tones in *Elasticity*. In 1992, Kamran Ince writes:

"I am not a tonal composer nor am I an atonal composer. I take advantage of the physically sonic qualities of tonal sonorities as well as atonal and noisal sonorities. Tonal sonorities in my music are emancipated as I use them for their own resonance and beauty, and do not subject them to the hierarchies of functional tonality. These sonorities exist for themselves; there is no need to move to the "next" area or to resolve…Having freed tonal sonorities I feel I can truly emancipate the atonal sonorities and move among these two types organically without creating the shock effect."[33]

In my portfolio there are instances throughout wherein tonal sonorities are used as Ince describes, without the need for resolution, such as the opening bars of piano trio *Block*. I would argue, however, that a tonal sonority does set up an expectation for listeners who distinguish between major and minor, whether consciously or not. In the words of Tim Rutherford Johnson: "it can seem as though the tonal triad has become so loaded with ideological baggage that it is impossible to write one without engaging in this debate."[34]Perhaps it is the idea of presenting a debate that keeps tonality, voice leading and harmonic techniques interesting still to many composers today, what makes us "interested in discovering our own attitudes to tonality and to tradition"[35]. My point of view is shared by Daniel Fardon, who analyses the music of Sky Macklay, Howard Skempton and Jonny Greenwood in his essay *Composing with Plural Approaches to Tonality, Source and Style,* and who does not claim tonal sonorities emancipated or deny their existence, but notes how they can exist differently in new contexts: "non-functional and capricious use of tonality creates a

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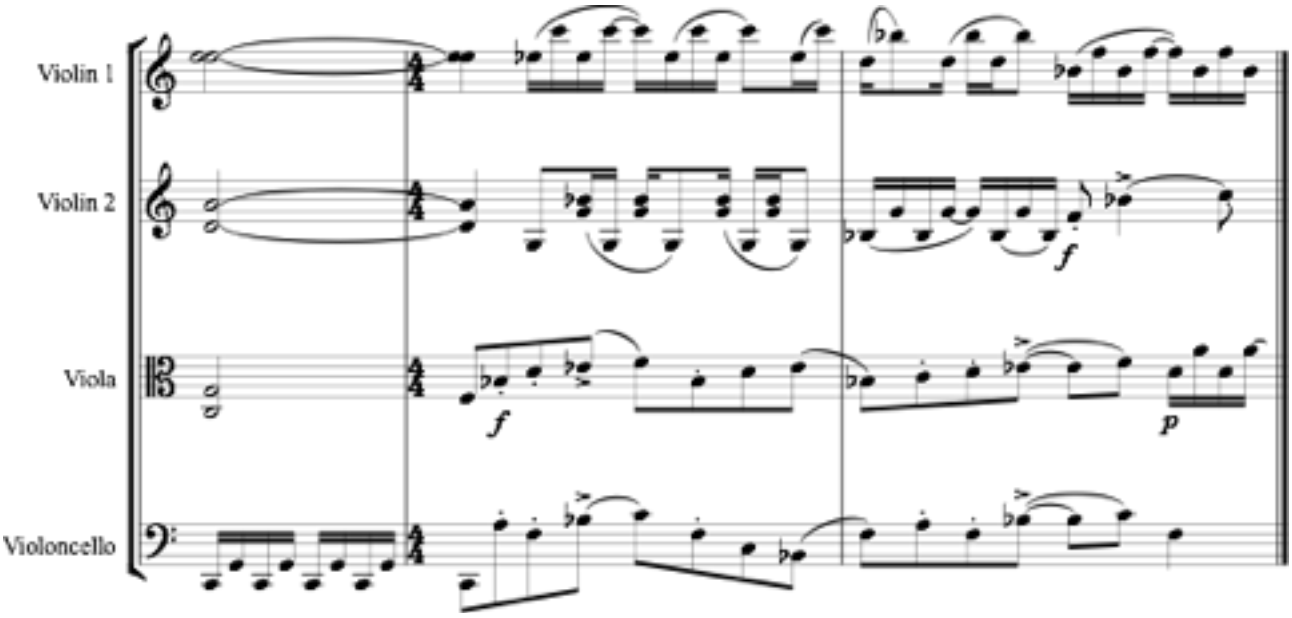
[33] K. Ince, (1992). 'Emancipation of tonal sonorities.' *Contemporary Music Review*, 6(2), p.50.

[34] T. Rutherford-Johnson, (2017). *Music After The Fall: Modern Composition and Culture Since 1989,* California:University of California Press, p.61.

[35] P. Szymanski, (2000). 'Between Tradition and Renewal', *The Voice of Music: Conversations with Composers of Our Time,* A. Beyer. London: Ashgate Publishing.

quality of curiosity, and the range of sonorities available when unrestricted from certain stylistic and historical parameters affords one a way of organically moving between idioms that can both exist in new and alien contexts as well as being objects in and of themselves."[36]

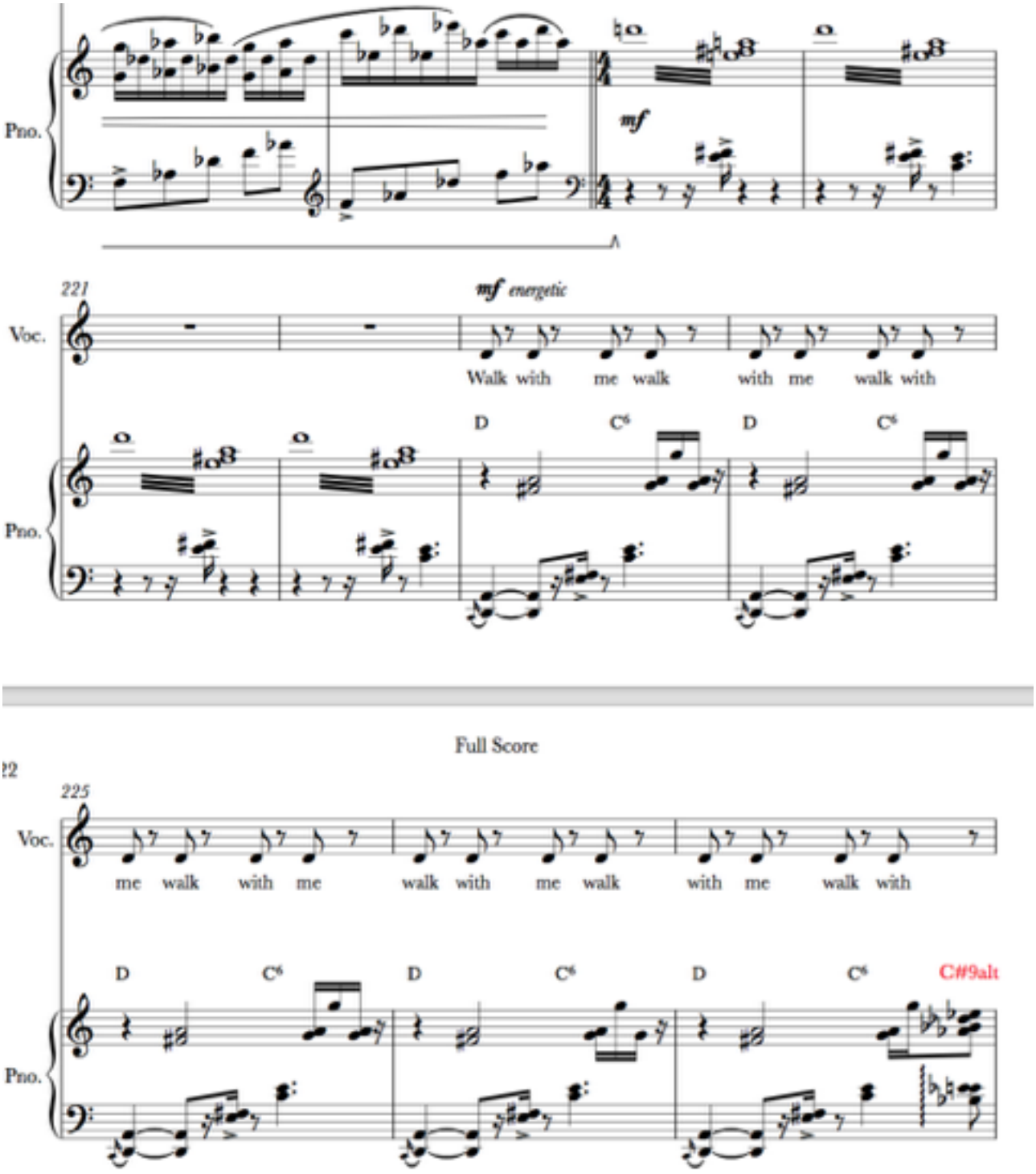
Much of my work features modal harmony or repeated pitches to imply a note centre within the music, or to act as a common tone which pivots between chords. The opening movement of *Strange and Wild / Remote and Unfamiliar* is an A dorian mode, with the repeated A pitches implying a minor tonality despite a C major triad in the trumpet melody. At figure D in *Elasticity,* the melodic interplay is within C Dorian, reinforced by a C bass note, and the frequent repetitions of G and C pitches (notably in the cello semi quavers) hint at a dominant / tonic hierarchy.



Ex.5a, Figure D of *Elasticity*

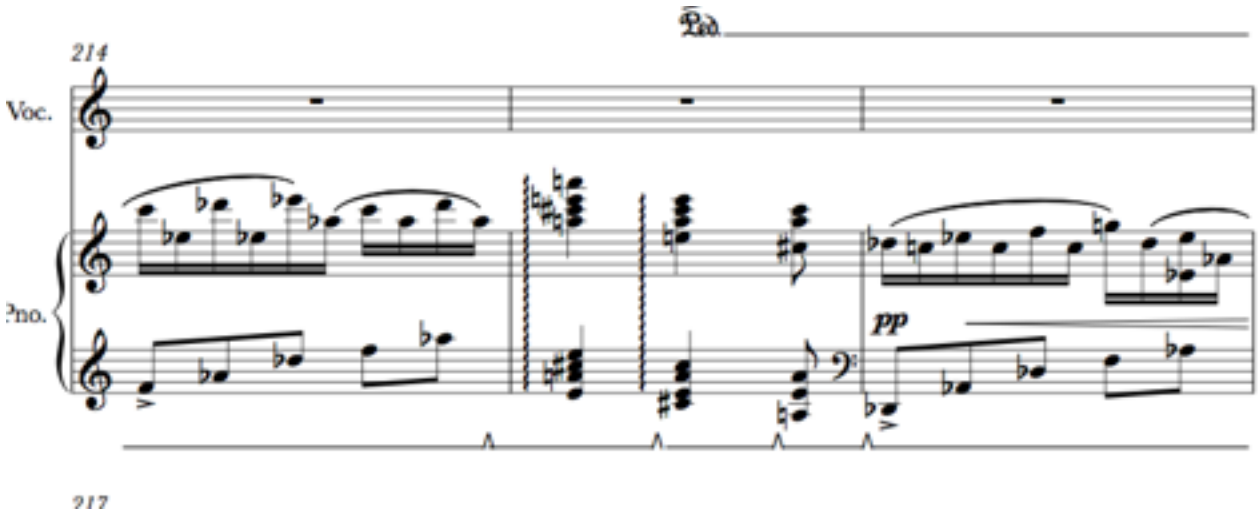
Similarly, the third song of *Shoot and leaf and breath and feet, Walk with me,* is a repeated syncopated figure with repeated Ds to reinforce D as a pitch centre. The passage is repeated Ds and C naturals, essentially vamping a D7sus chord:

[36] D.L. Fardon, (2019). 'Composing with plural approaches to tonality, source, and style'. *University of Birmingham*, Ph.D



Ex.5b, bar 217 of of *Walk with me*

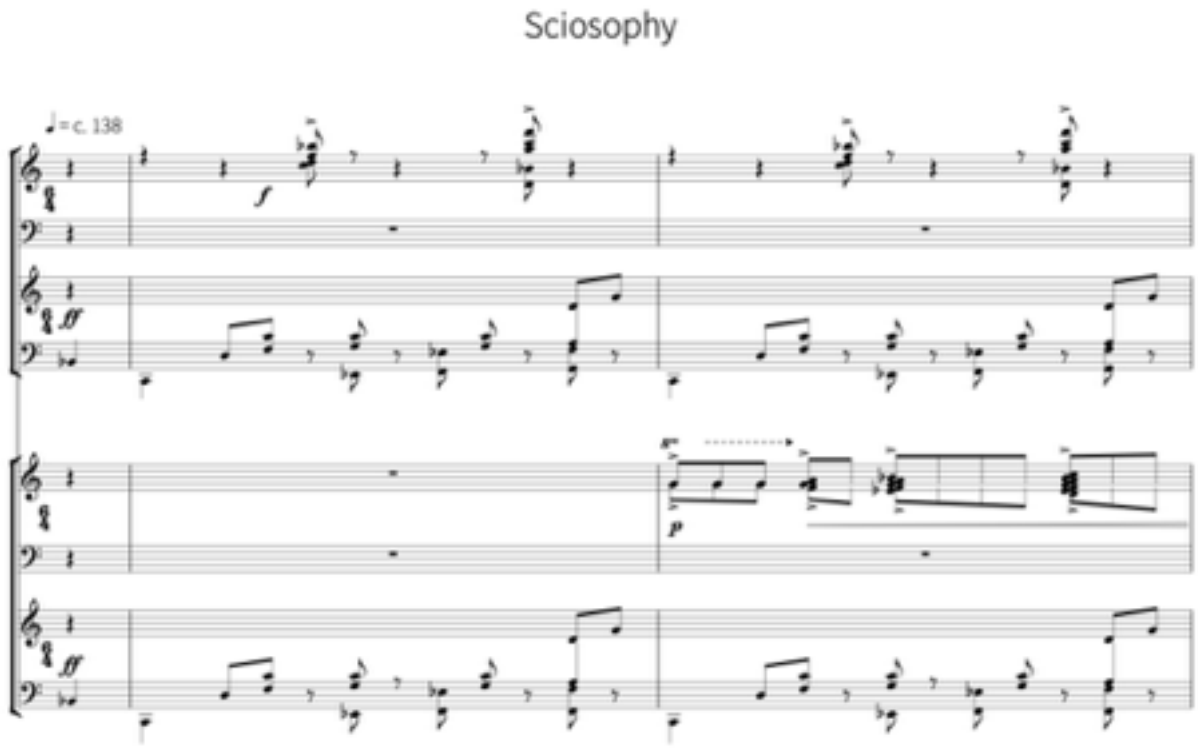
Instead of functioning as a dominant which resolves from D7 to a G major chord, the vamp passages later move to A major and using the third of the scale (C#) as a pitch to pivot between keys, to Db major, leading up by a semitone back to the D. Whilst G major and Db major are not strongly related keys, emphasising the pitch D creates an arrival point through a semitone voice leading from Db.



Ex.5c, bar 214 of of *Walk with me* changing from Db to A major

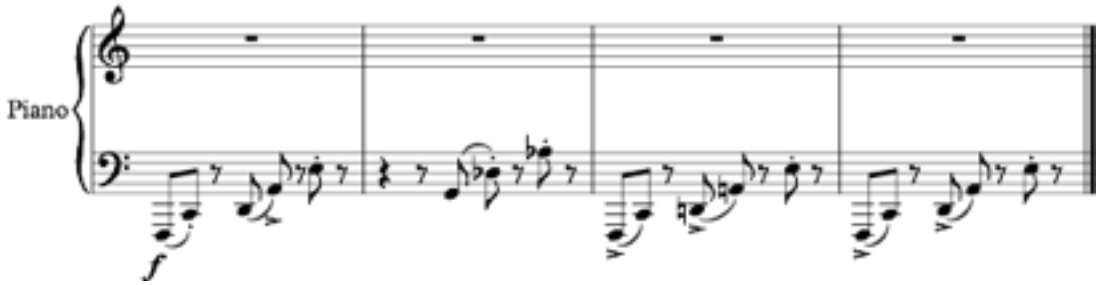
Walk with me is an example of my practice of using modes and diatonic scales as a colour and sonority rather than a functioning key. The opening vamp from bar 200 is a relatively consistent dorian mode with repeated Ds creating a build up of tension. When the language of the song becomes colourful, the harmony becomes richer and more unsettled flipping between A major and Db major, for example in bar 215, Ex5.c, using the sonorities without a function beyond colour, until the Db acts as voice leading for a return to a D pitch centre in 219 which brings back the sense of an unresolved D7 chord in G major. To build tension through the repeated Ds as a pitch centre at the end of the song, the piano includes layers of A dorian and A major scales over a D pedal, with further chromatic passing notes in the left hand to colour the D pedal with further suspense as an unresolved and un-functioning dominant pedal.

Much of Graham Fitkin's piano music is distinctively Dorian mode harmony, allowing for stacks of intervals which include 7ths, 9ths, 11ths and 13th on top of triads for example in *Aract, Sciosophy* and *Hard Fairy. Sciosophy,* shown below, is a C Dorian minor mode opening with a C minor triad outlined in the bassline and added 9ths, 11ths, 13ths in the chords above. The repeated C's in the bass reinforce C as a home pitch, and the flattened 7th and 3rd of the mode implies a blues-inflected dominant 7th harmony.



Ex.5d, Graham Fitkin's *Sciosophy* opening[37]

Through use of repeated riffs and motifs, Fitkin by default repeats pitches that become anchors in the music. Similarly, the return to the F bass note in my piano solo *Charleston* centres the music around F despite chromatic interplay between D and A natural / flat.

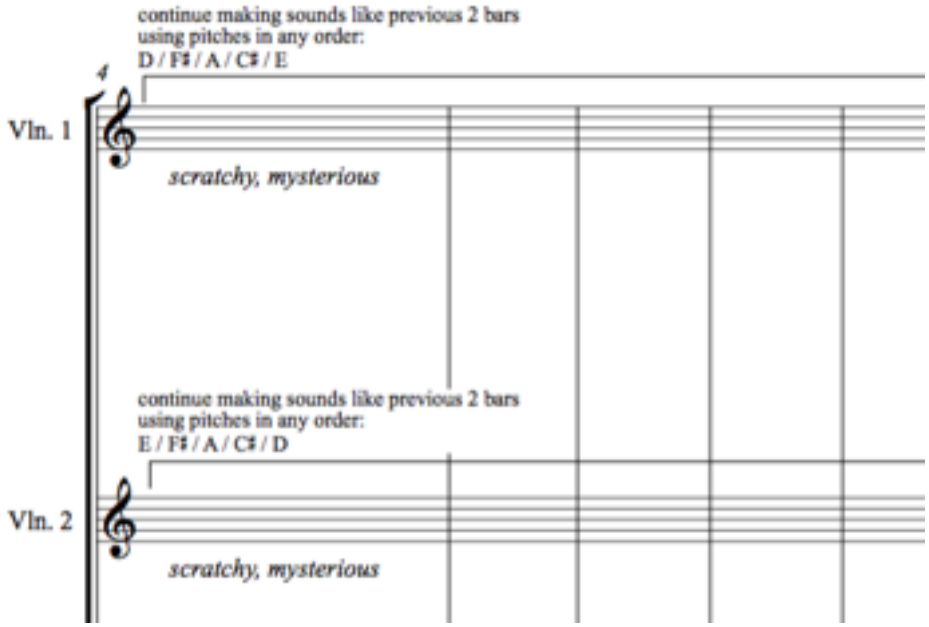


Ex.5e, intervallic leaps in left hand, Charleston

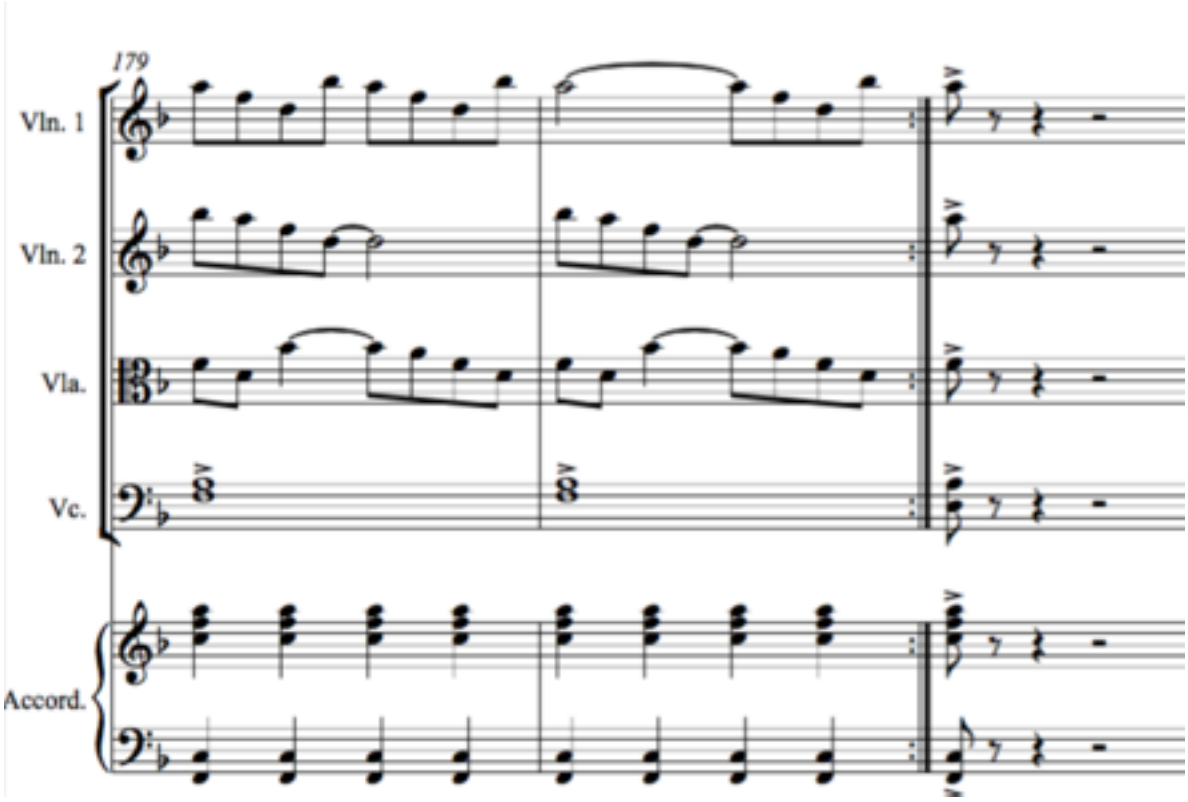
I frequently utilise major diatonic scales or Ionian mode, to build textures from repeated patterns within a modal or pitch-centred harmony which don't necessarily have to align vertically as a chord. The ending of *Walls and Windows* repeats an F major pattern, whilst the ending of *What will the future be?* fragments and loops short motifs in C# major / Ionian, layering nearly every note in the scale by 4'30''.

[37] Fitkin (1986) Sciosophy b.1

Adding 6th, 7th, 9th and 11th notes to triads in a vertical sense, nonetheless, is the most notable feature of my harmonic writing, in common with that of Fitkin, Wallen and Muhly. Below are some examples:

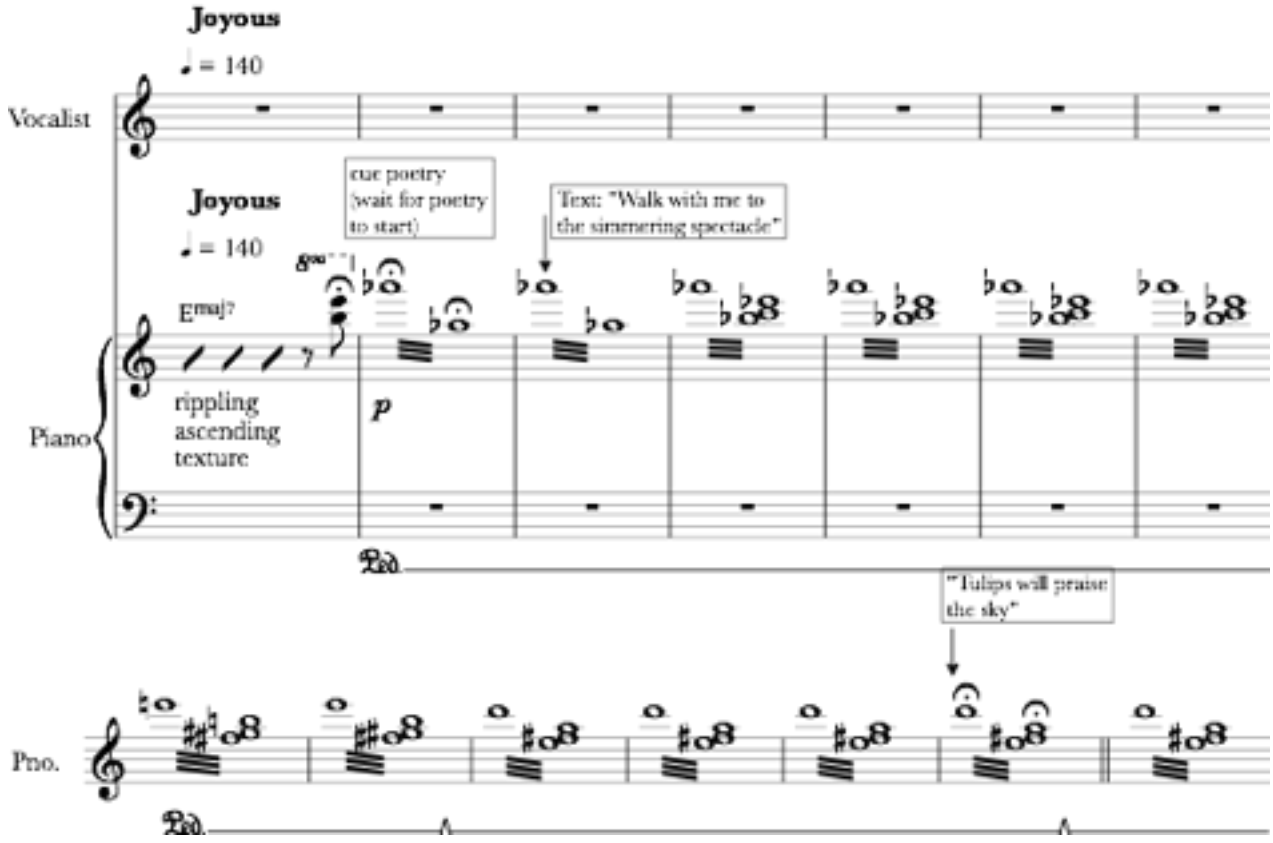


Example 5.f, *Walls and Windows* opening specifying pitches from a major 7th or 9th chord

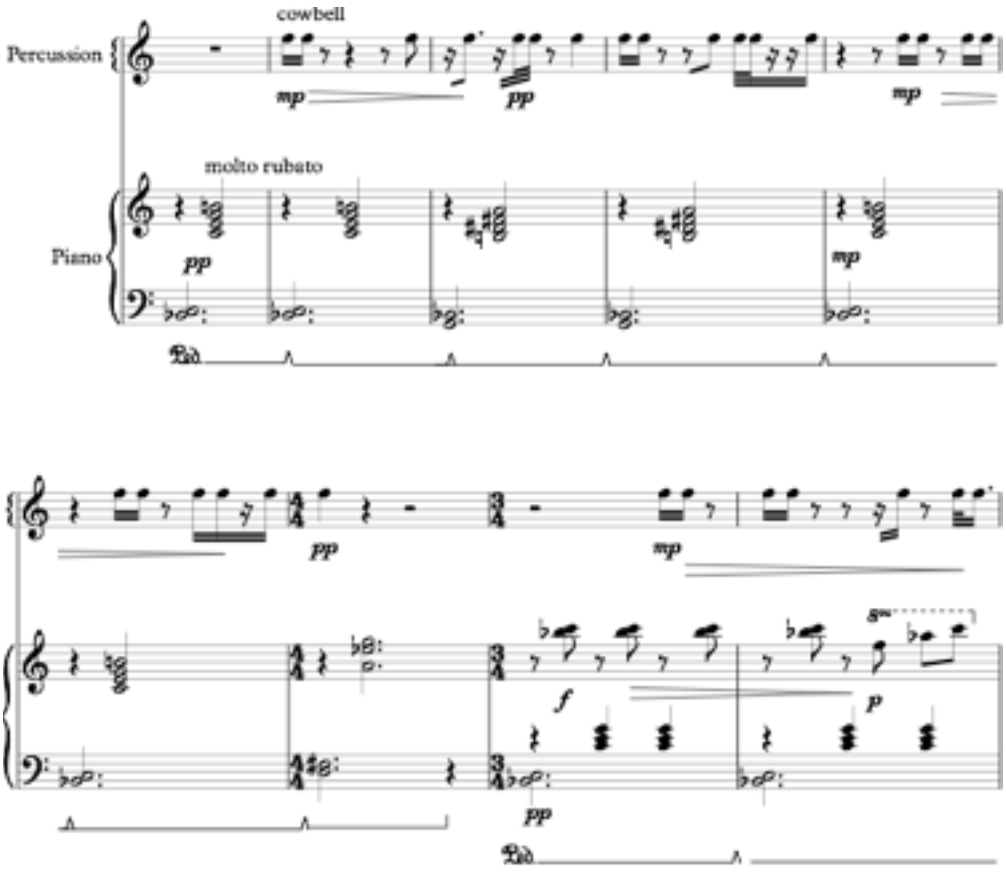


Ex.5g, F6 chord at the end of *Walls and Windows*

Ex.5h, a reduction of parts ending *Elasticity* adding 9ths and 11ths / #11ths to minor triads

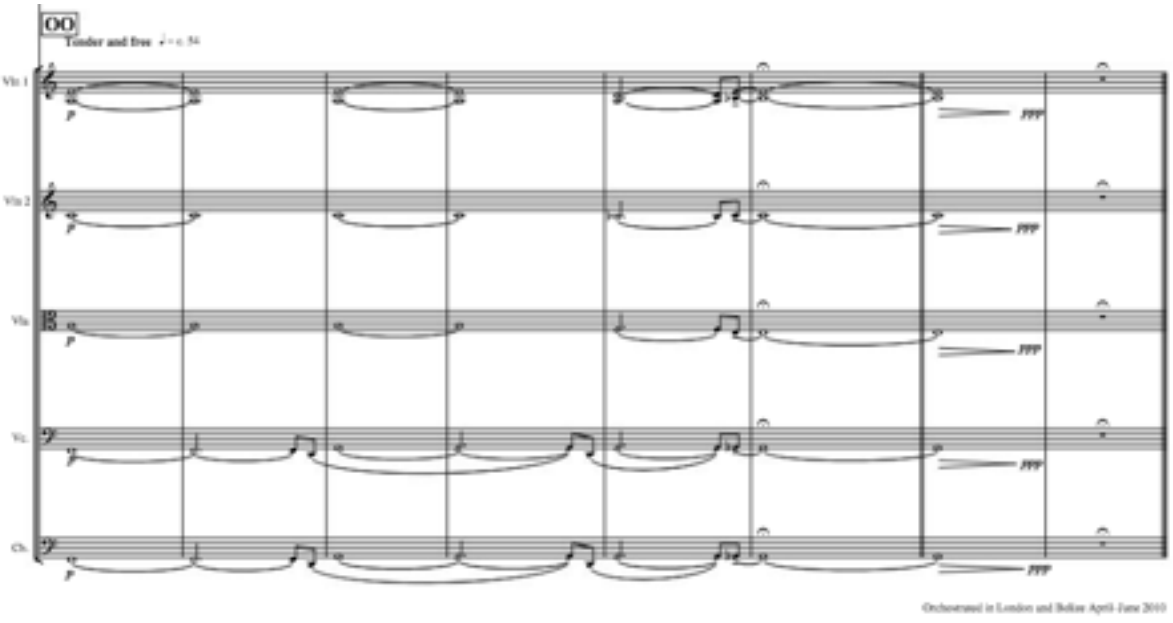


Ex.5i, 7th and 9ths added to piano triad in *Shoot and Leaf and Breath and Feet*



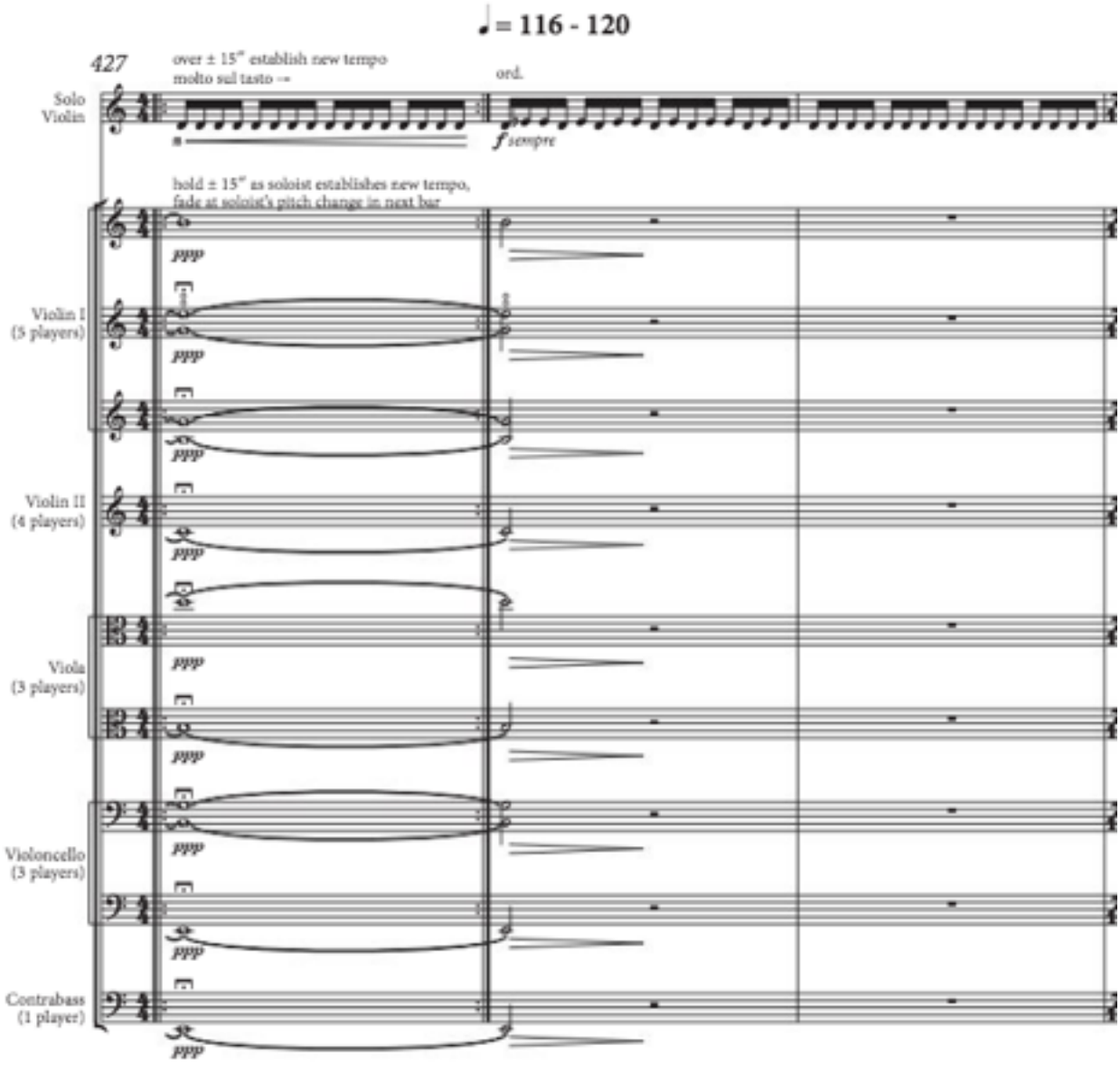
Ex.5j, 7ths added to triads in the right hand piano of *this was a dance*

Here are some examples from Errollyn Wallen and Nico Muhly, who characteristically also add 7th, 9ths and 11ths to triadic harmony:



Ex.5k, major 7ths at the end of Wallen's *Girl in My Alphabet* in the strings[38]

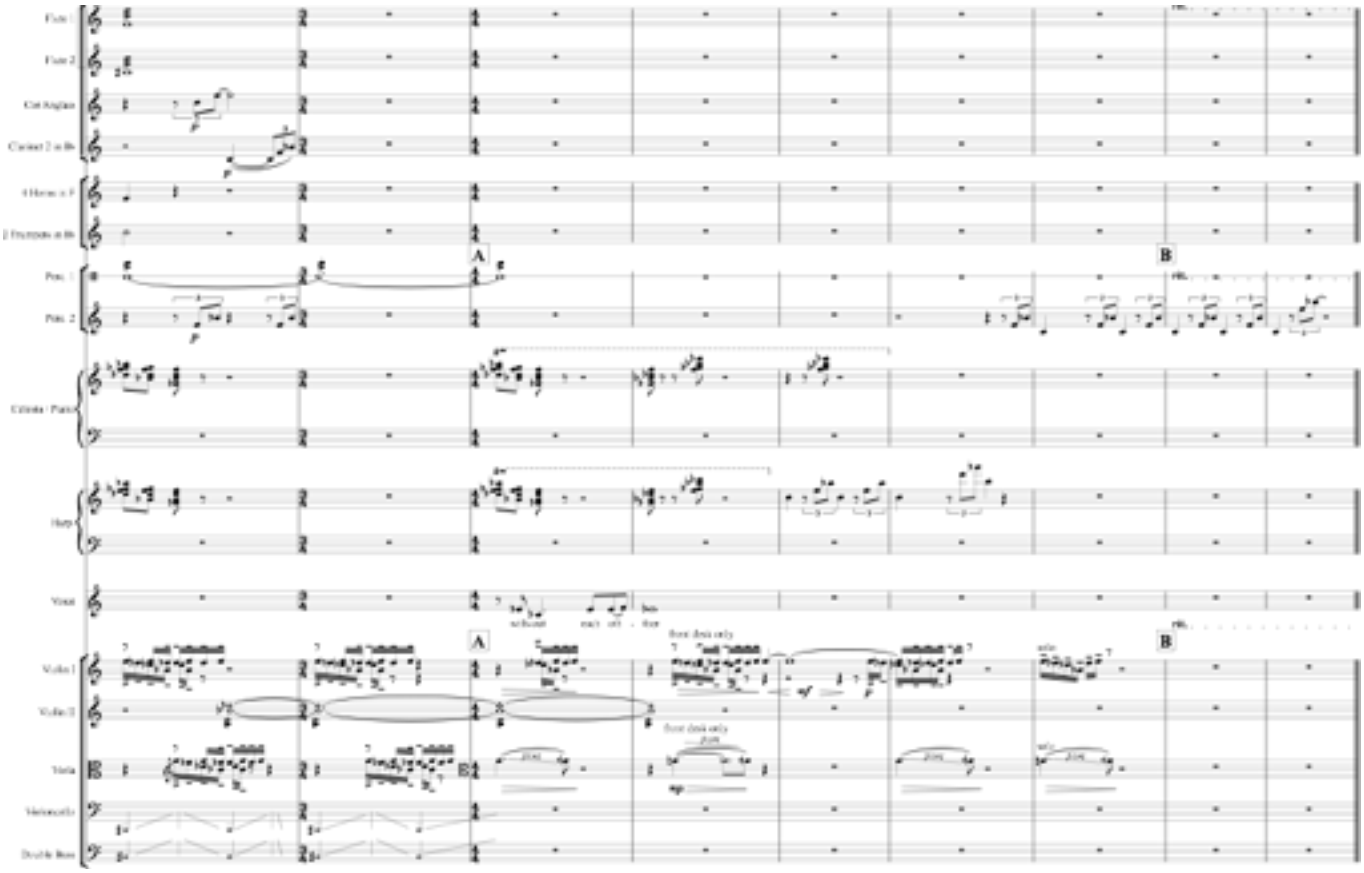
[38] Wallen (1990 revised and orchestrated 2010) b.229



Ex.51, major 7ths and 9th on a first inversion C major triad in Muhly's *Shrink, Part III*[39]

In the later parts of my portfolio, the harmony stretches further again, beyond extending to the seventh, ninth and thirteenth extensions of the triad. I began to incorporate quarter tones within otherwise tonal sonorities, often connected to a portamento so as to expose in slow motion the idea of stretching harmony by expanding the boundaries of each chord. Examples are in the opening viola portamenti of *Walls and Windows*, the sliding string chords in *Lust and Lustre*, or the string writing at the end of *Dream big for tomorrow* below:

[39] Muhly (2019) Shrink b.427

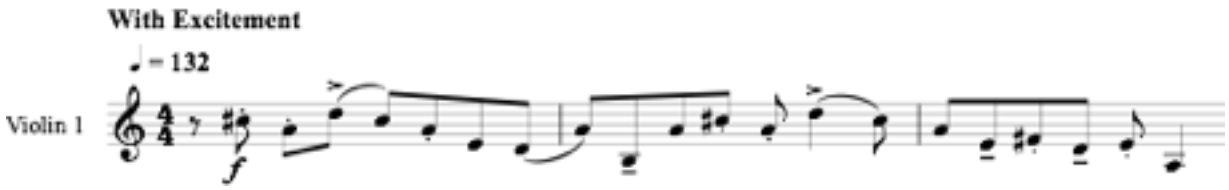


Ex.5m quarter tones and portamenti in strings at the ending of *Dream big for tomorrow*

Quarter tones are most prevalent in the string quartet *Elasticity,* wherein I had a professional contemporary ensemble in mind. The concept behind the piece was to write music which expanded and stretched both harmonically and motivically, but retained a buoyant bounce and spring. The quarter tones expand the harmony of the legato passages, but also add an element of surprise and playfulness to faster sections, when a quarter tone pizzicato or short note is used as an accent or interruption in the melody, as in Luke Bedford's *Wonderful Two-headed Nightingale*.

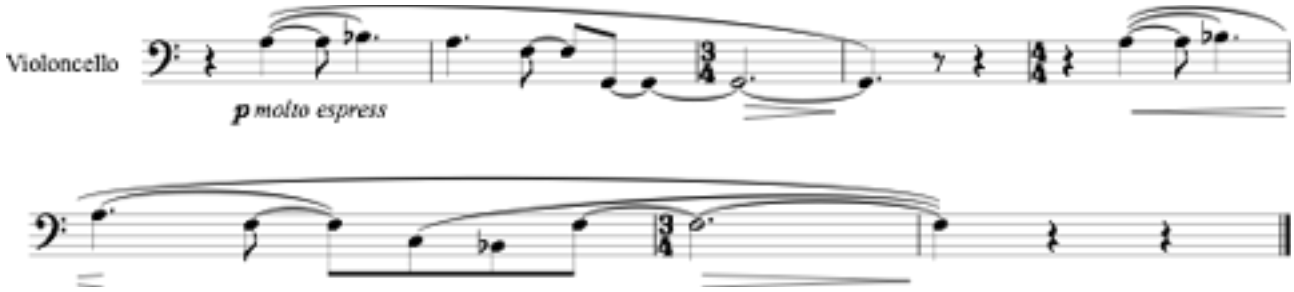
Melodic writing

My portfolio presents a melodic style across all works, with melodic writing often ornamented, motivically developed, or implying pitch centres through repeated notes or chromatic motion. In *Elasticity*, an opening theme is heard in the first violin:



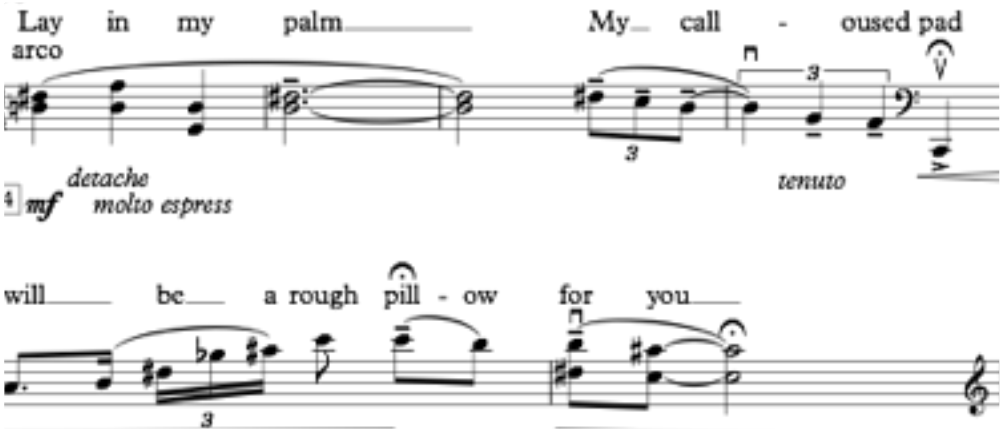
Ex.5n opening theme in Violin 1 of *Elasticity*

Later, a new, slower 'B' section begins, marked 'Meno Mosso'. The melody begins this time in the cello, and features a transposed fragment of the opening melody. The second pitch of the opening theme (an A in first violin) is removed, to emphasise a chromatic line in the first three notes, leading towards the top note of the phrase.



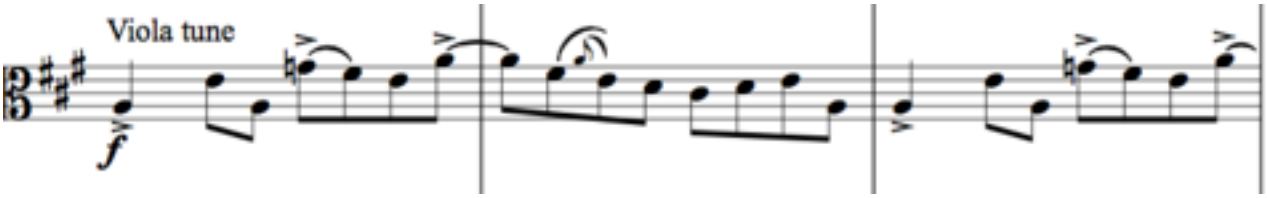
Ex.5o cello part showing motivic development bar 127 of *Elasticity*

In *Forever Interrupted,* again the melody outlines pitch centres as well as using semitones for expressive effect. The phrasing was written as a text setting, as shown below, before this was replaced with spoken word. Here the opening outlines a D major triad, before falling from a D to a C sharp to heighten tension, this time at the end of a phrase as opposed to the middle:

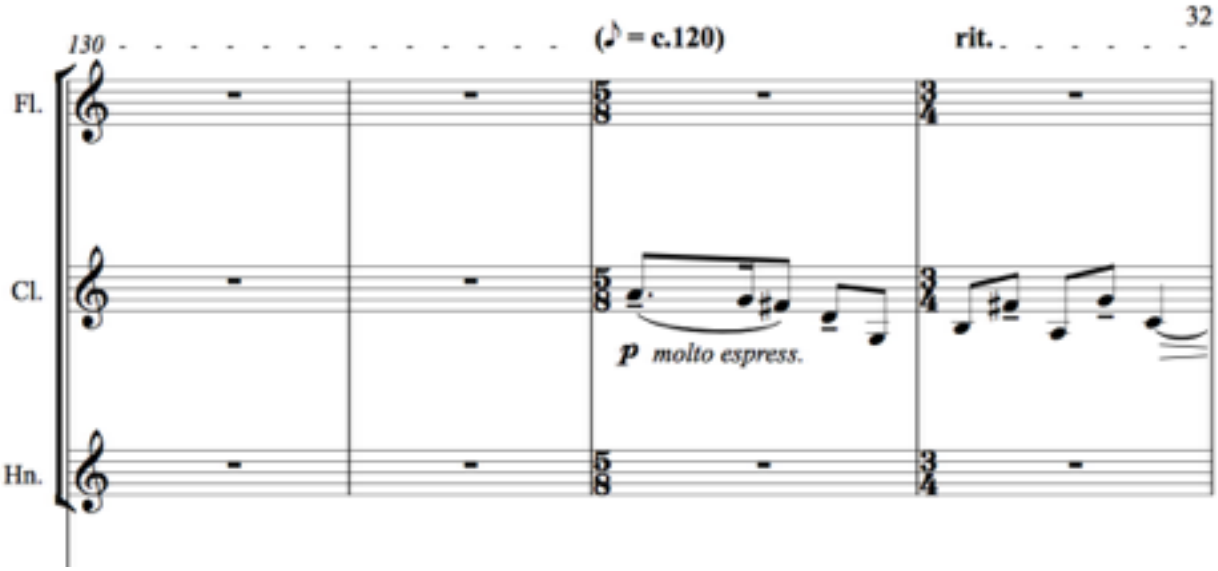


Ex.5p melodic line in *Forever Interrupted* outlining harmony and falling semitone voice leading at end

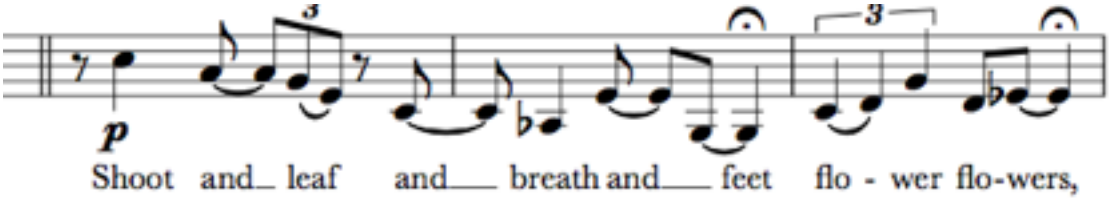
Both examples from the cello part of *Elasticity* and *Forever Interrupted* are marked with phrase marks that imply a balanced structure to the melodies, phrased in relatively equal length 'sentences' that make up a melodic theme. In *Lust and Lustre, Shoot and Leaf and Breath and Feet,* and *Walls and Windows*, similarly phrased melodies appear as themes, often creating an outline of modal or triadic harmony as well as emphasising chromatic / semitone motion within a balanced four-part phrase structure:



Ex.5q Melodic theme in Walls and Windows, repeating the A pitch centre and accenting semitone from G natural to F sharp



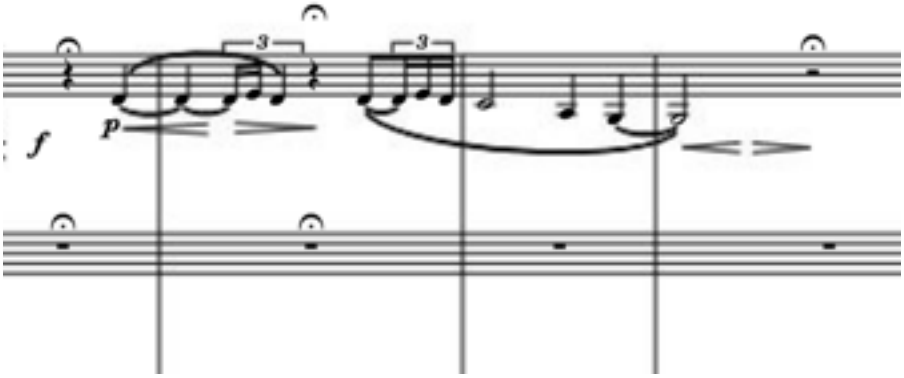
Ex.5r, clarinet echoes theme at the end of *Lust and Lustre* outlining D and G major with tenuto emphasis on F# (semitone) and D (dominant)



Ex.5s, bar 166

Shoot and leaf and breath and feet, melody outlining C6 chord followed by semitone voice leading between A flat and G, and D and E flat

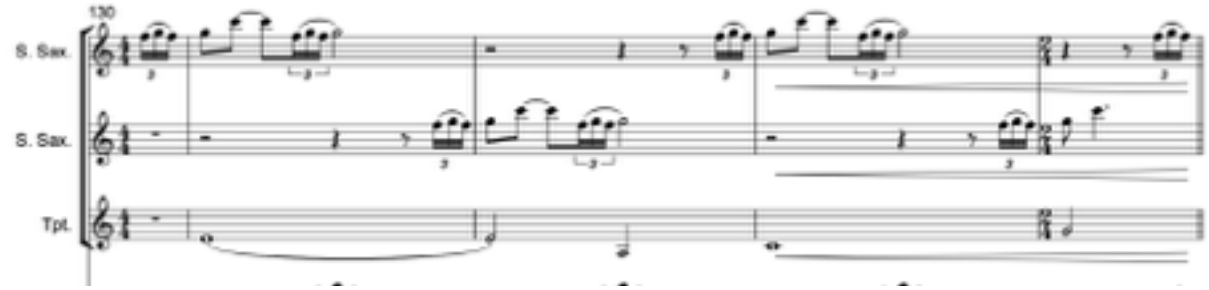
Errollyn Wallen's works include melodic themes, such as her cello concerto, her songs, and other chamber and choral music, whilst Graham Fitkin's themes tend to be more riff-based, short, rhythmic, repeated motifs. Both composers have a tendency to add ornamentations and inflections to their melodies, which is a feature of my writing, in capturing essences of virtuosity, or varied playing styles. The ending of Wallen's *Mighty River*, for example, is marked as 'free', and triplet ornaments mimic a vocal inflection of the melody:



Ex.5t, ending of *Mighty River* horn solo[40]

Similar ornamentation is found in much of Fitkin's work, such as *CUD* for big band, *Sciosophy* for solo piano, and *Torn Edge* for the composer's own band, shown below:

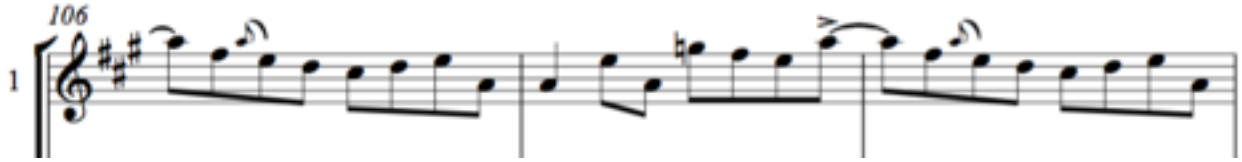
[40] Wallen (2007) Mighty River b.360



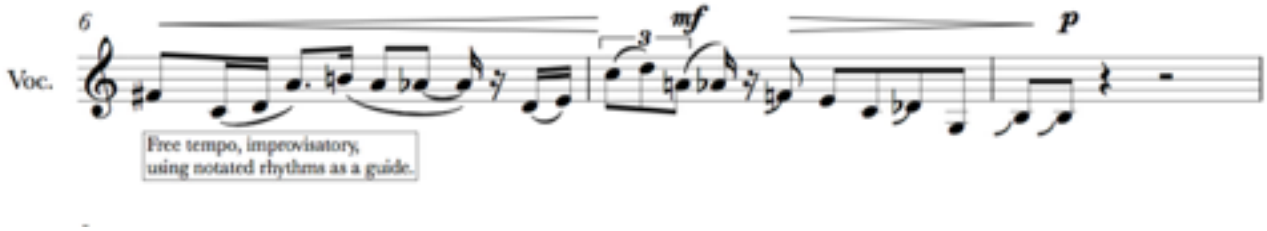
Ex.5u, bar 130 *Torn Edge,* triplet ornamentation within main theme[41]

Such writing may come back to the notion of composing by improvising at an instrument or with voice, and transcribing inflections, as is my own practice. Below are some examples of melodies or solo passages that reflect an improvisatory feel encouraging expression from the performer through rubato and notated ornamentation of the line:

Ex.5v, trumpet solo in *Blue Lab*

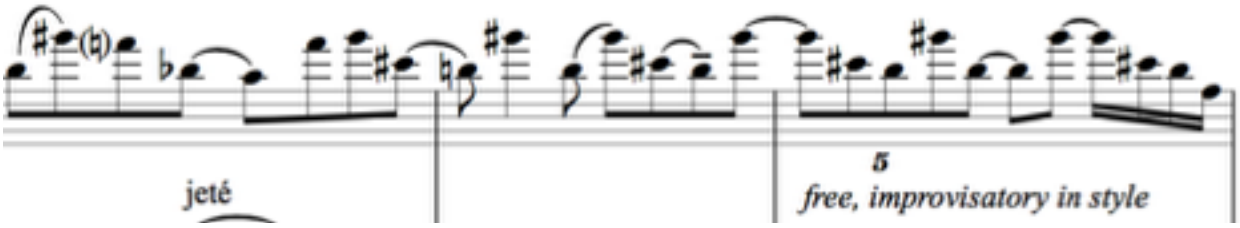


Ex.5w, grace note ornamentation of melody in *Walls and Windows*

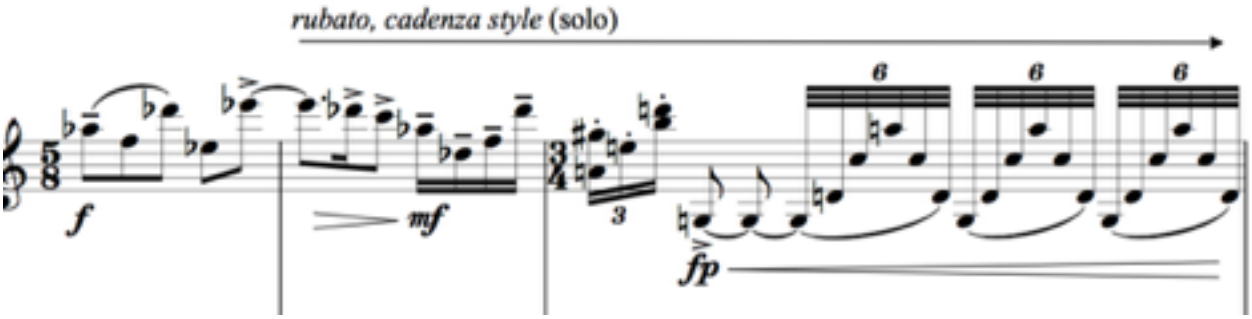


Ex.5x, scoops and free tempo in opening vocal of *Shoot and Leaf and Breath and Feet*

[41] Fitkin (2016) Torn Edge b.130



Ex.5y, cadenza-style notated violin solo in *Elasticity*



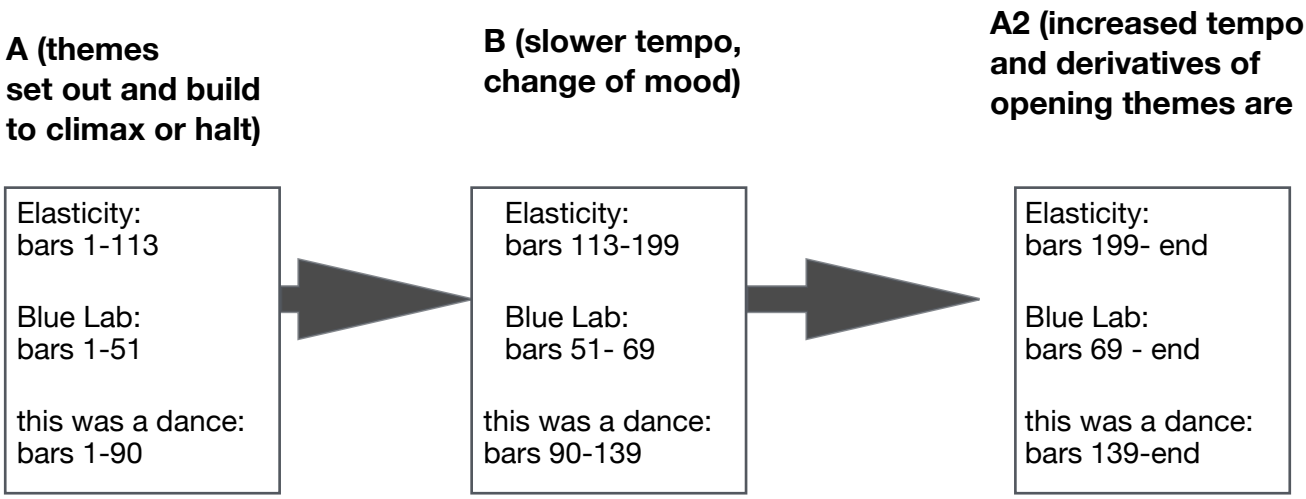
Ex.5z, cadenza-style notated violin solo in *Lust and Lustre*

Ex.5aa, trumpet part *Strange and Wild / Remote and Unfamiliar,* solo passage with notated ornamentation and pauses

Repeated material in small and large scale

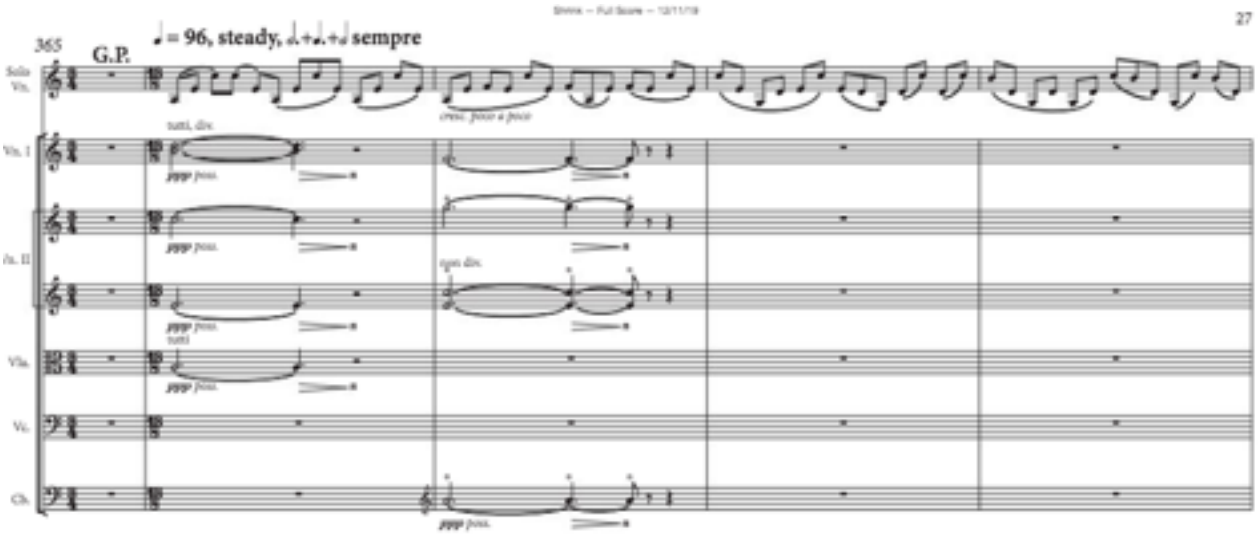
In addition to using melodic writing for expressive, and idiomatic means in this way, my work relates to that of Wallen and Fitkin in how motifs and themes play a part in structuring the music. Wallen's *Mighty River,* for example, develops through motivic fragments but the beginning and end tie together with a returning theme of the *Amazing Grace* quotation. Themes also return as a structural device in her cello work *Dervish,* and the middle section on the music is based on fragmented motifs of the initial themes. The most notable parts of my portfolio which include melodic themes that return later in the music are *Lust and Lustre* and *Dream big for tomorrow,* however, pieces such as *Blue Lab* and *Elasticity* unfold through fragmented or developed versions of opening themes. Much of Fitkin's chamber music, such as *Hard Fairy, Aract,* and *Sciosophy,* builds through layering of repeated material, with blocks of repetitions becoming the bulk of the thematic content. The unchanging tempo in Fitkin's repetitive passages is what provides the groove, often with syncopated patterns or offbeat accents layering to add excitement.

The overall structures in my portfolio tend to be a mix of both the above approaches: repetitions in the small scale in riff-based climactic build-ups, and larger arcs of form with repeated themes such as an ABA structure. I am guided by a desire to create contrasts in the material – moments of stillness, a climax followed by a change of mood, or a slower pace. *Elasticity, Blue Lab,* and *this was a dance* each feature a 3-part arch structure comprising opening material, a slow or more still passage, and a vigorous return to opening material with greater levels of energy than the first time. The return to a variant of the opening material provides a tangible link to the recapitulation of opening themes within the traditional sonata form structure of exposition–development–recapitulation.

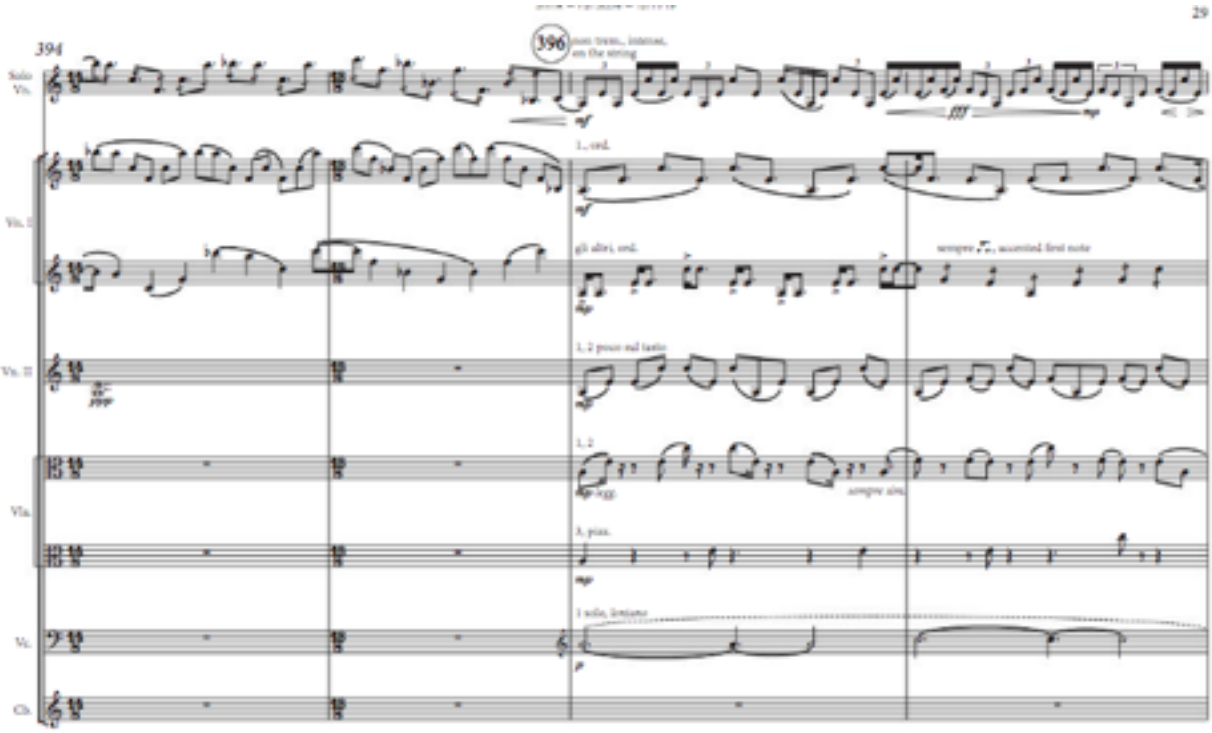


In *Blue Lab* and *What will the future be?* the motivic variations of a single short theme are more explicitly featured. *Blue Lab* features a violin solo beginning in bar 12 which is based on variants of the four-note pattern. This motif is passed around the orchestra, changing with each iteration and developing up to an initial climax in what could be described as a short stretto. In the final section of the piece, the motif continues to develop as part of this stretto effect, combined with a repeated syncopated pedal and the trumpet theme from bar 51.

In the 'B' section of *What will the future be?* the violin begins a series of pitches which gradually increase speed through diminishing note values. The motif beginning at 2'32'' changes from crotchets and minims to triplets, then finally to quavers by 3'24'', again utilizing the effect of shortening note values and phrase length to build to a climactic end with an unchanging pulse. The musical form in *Blue Lab* and *What will the future be?* unfolds from the starting point of a short, melodic stimulus which undergoes changes but maintains insistent repetitions. The ending passage of *Walls and Windows,* whilst a new structural section, is a fragment of the fast melody both repeated and phased between players in a canonic effect. These types of repeated build ups tend to constitute a section within a larger form, whereas Fitkin's earlier mentioned piano pieces are structured solely through the build up of such layers, repeated motifs or phasing. Nico Muhly's piece *Shrink,* an exploration of melodic intervals, has several examples of both approaches, using rhythmic patterns as well as melodic themes which make use of repetition on a small and large scale. The example below shows an opening pattern which later is heard in a variety of note length variations superimposed on top of one another, as a way of creating a pattern in the texture around a single motif without the more obvious effect of phasing.



Ex.5bb, solo violin theme in Muhly's *Shrink* part II[42]

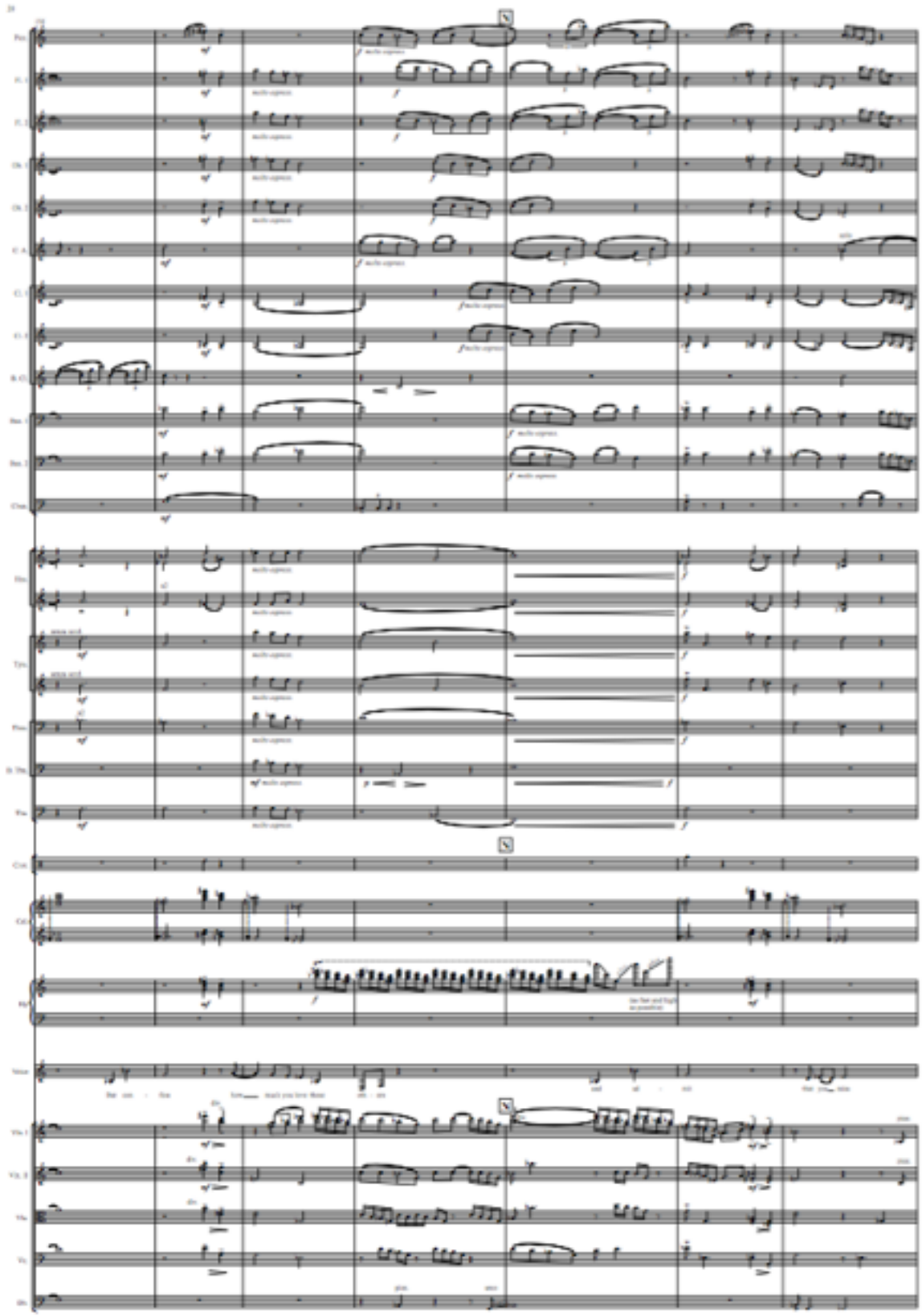


Ex.5cc, rhythmic variations layered in texture bar 396 of *Shrink part II*[43]

In *Elasticity* and *Dream big for tomorrow,* repetitions are embedded into the texture in this way so that repeated fragments of the theme are varied in note length. The four-note descending motif in *Dream big for tomorrow* is heard below in canonic quavers and semiquavers.

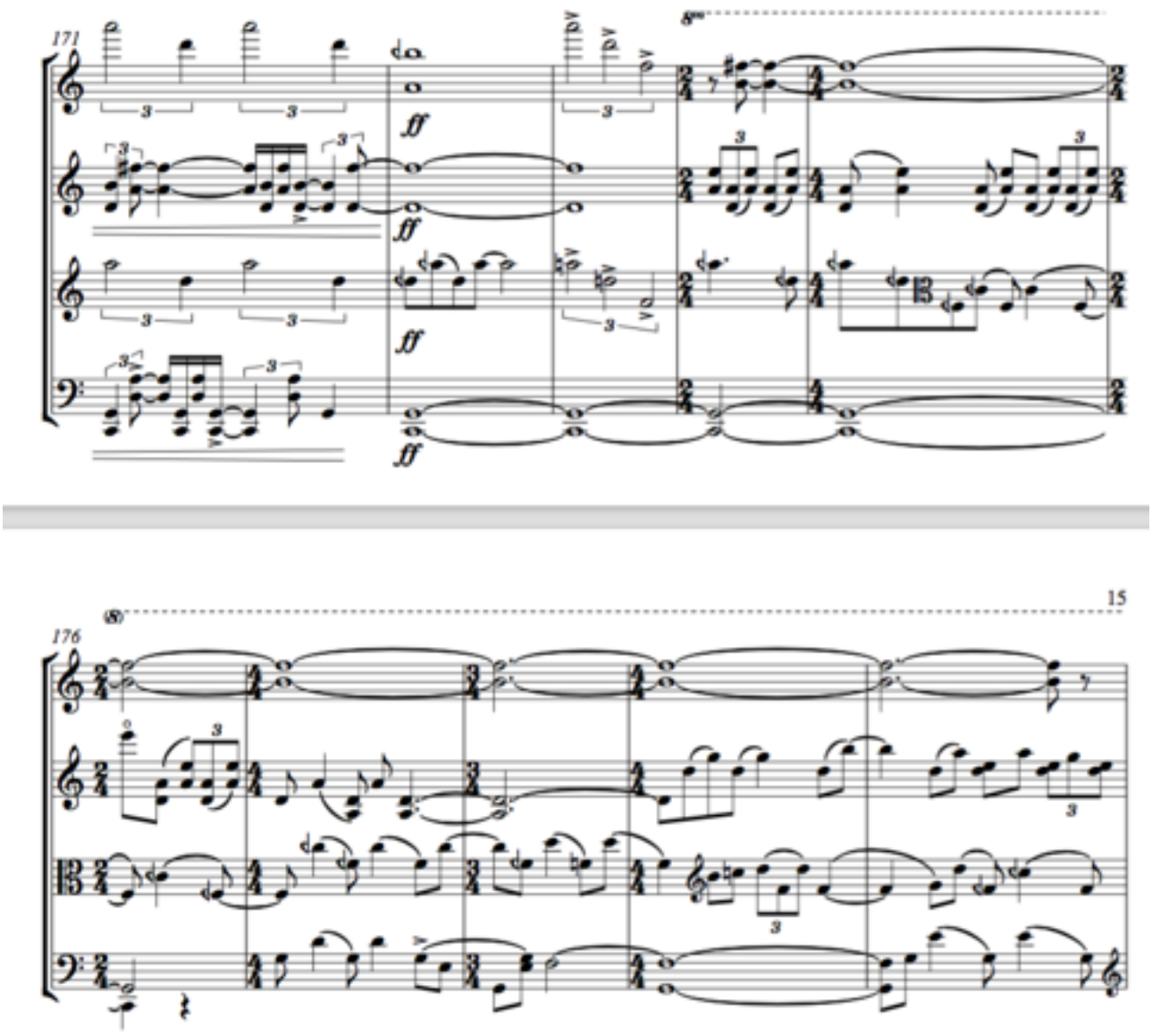
[42] Muhly (2019) Shrink b.365

[43] Ibid. b.396



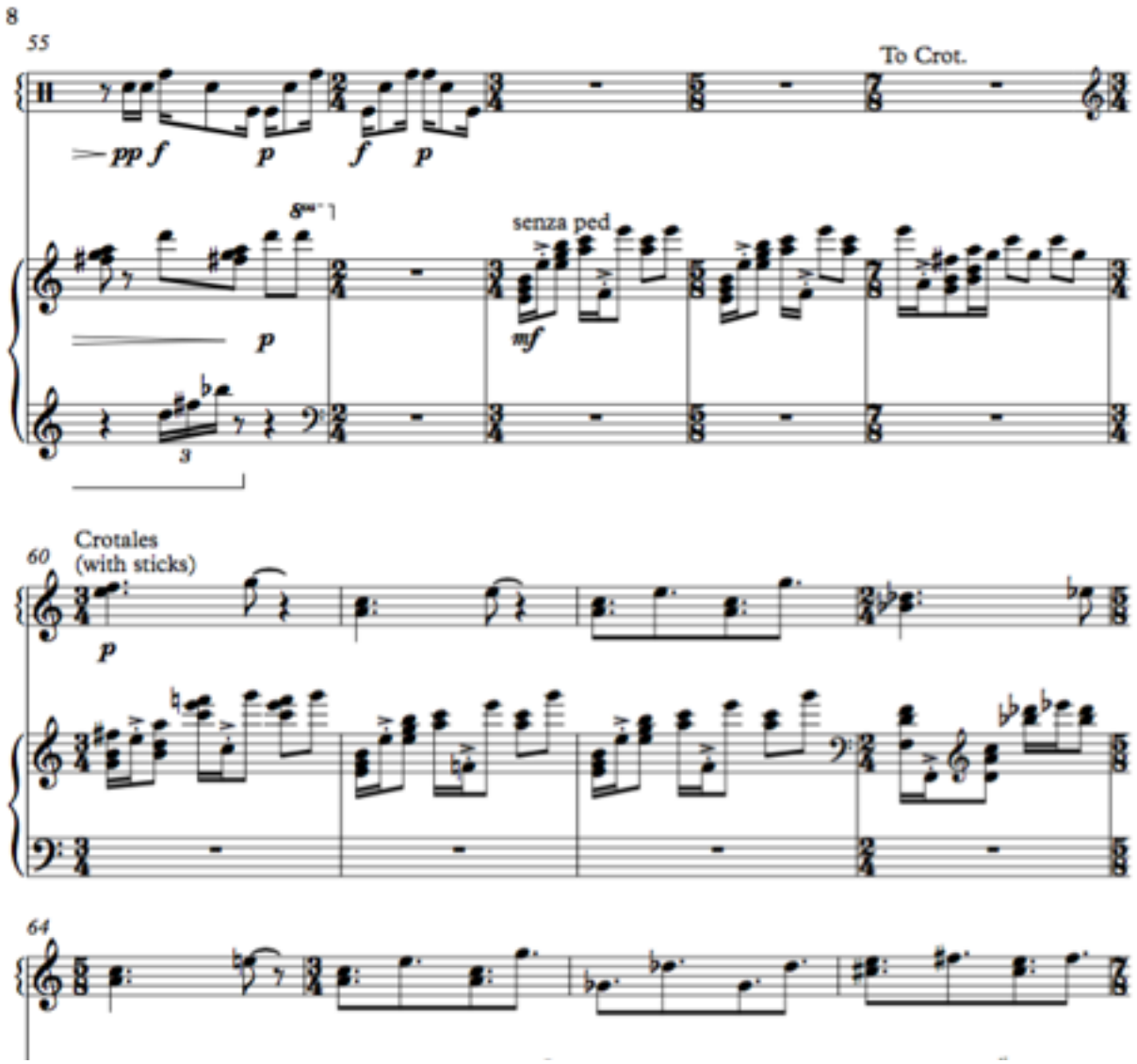
Ex.5dd, Dream big for tomorrow phasing texture with shortening note values

The repeated fifth in *Elasticity,* which is passed around players, changes note length as well as inverting intervals and changing octave so that repetitions are irregular:



Ex.5ee, Elasticity, intervallic 4th / 5th motif changing note values from crotchets and quavers to triplets or semiquavers

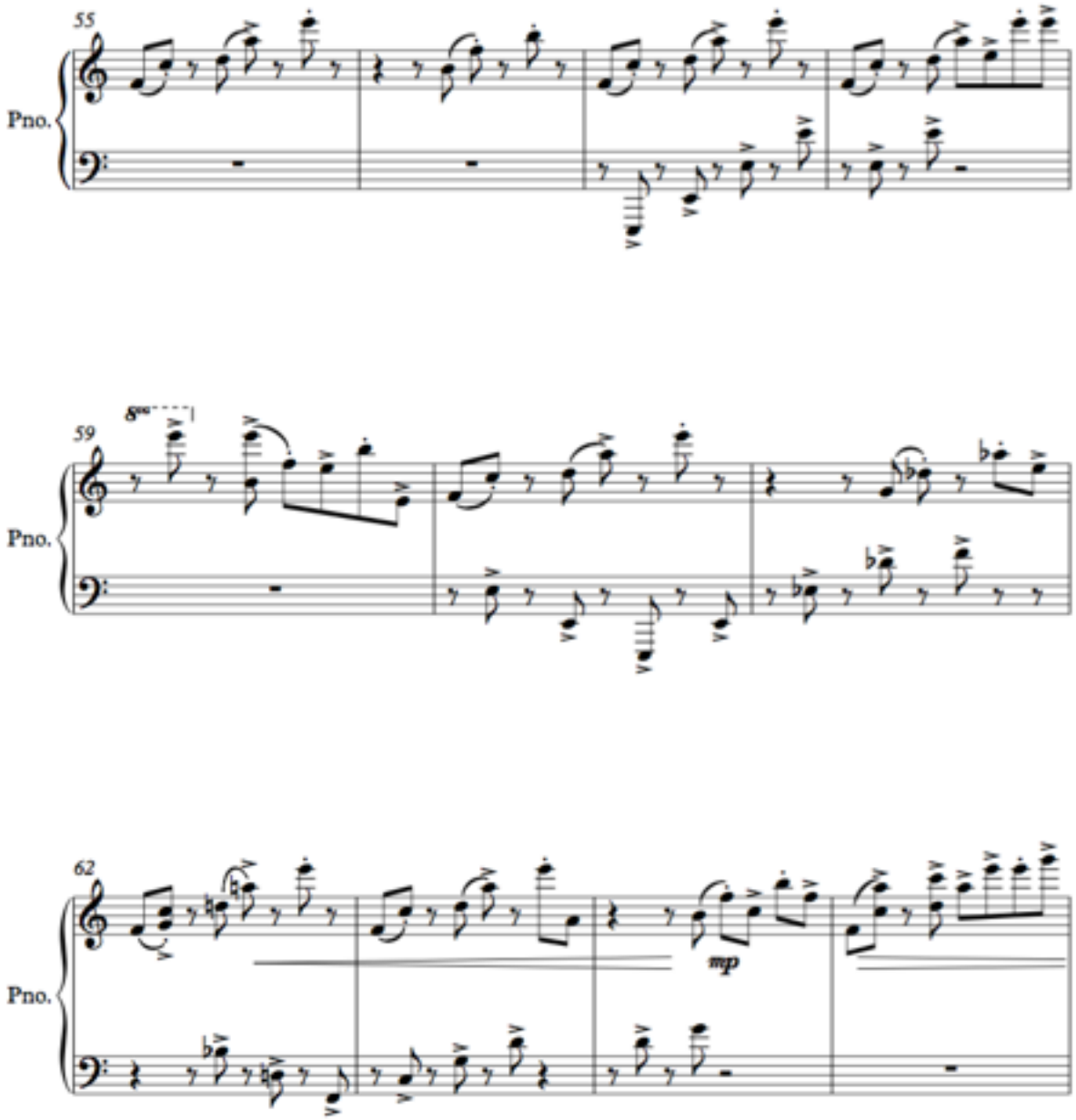
I seek to use repetitions as a way not only to build texture, but to set up expectations - only to then suddenly change course, or lead on to new material as growth out of another idea. Groove-based patterns - a repeated rhythmic pattern at a consistent tempo - make up the thematic content of the two less melodic pieces within the portfolio, *this was a dance* and *Charleston.* Both works are inspired by movement, dance, and groove.



Ex.5ff, rhythmic patterns in bar 60 *this was a dance*

In *this was a dance* I created small-scale patterns which collapse each time until the end of the piece, constantly changing listeners' expectations and interrupting the groove before it can get going. The ⅞ bar, for example, in 59, adds an extra quaver to the pattern, making the repetitions become disjointed. *Charleston* has a more prolonged period of repeated rhythmic ostinati, only to

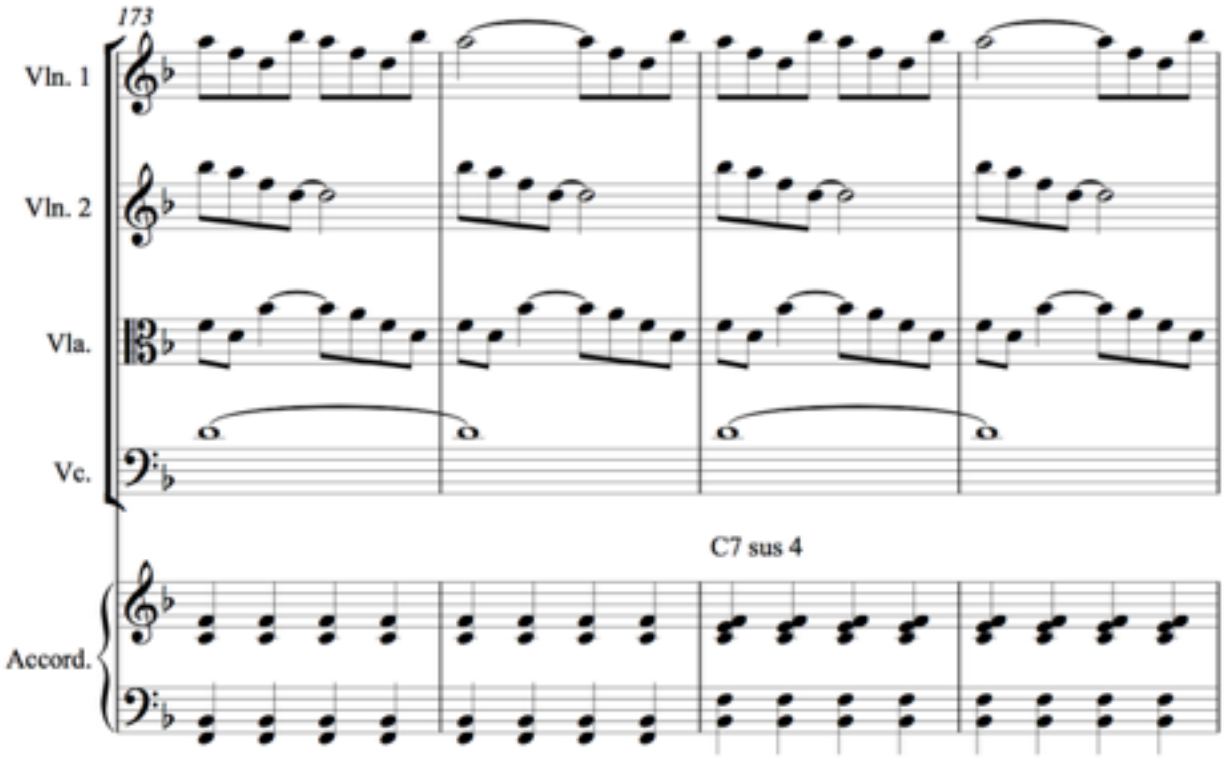
be interrupted by an offbeat quaver pattern before regaining momentum again.



Ex.5gg, Charleston bar 55, when initial rhythmic groove is distorted by offbeat quavers

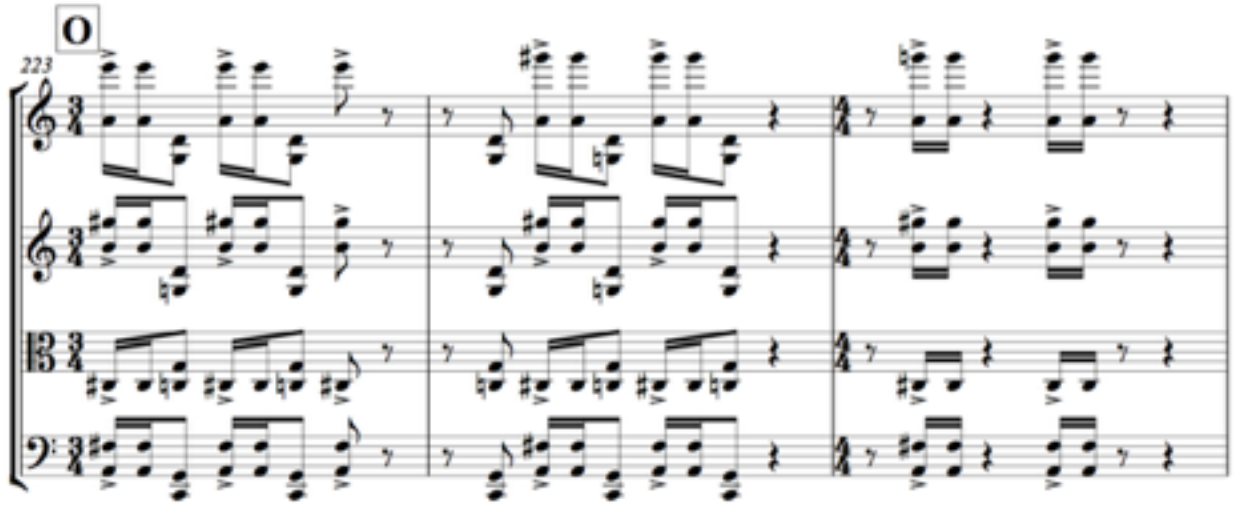
There are, nonetheless, moments in my portfolio's orchestral music when repeated rhythms build momentum through a chord or pedal note, akin to the technique used of relentless quaver motion in the strings of Wallen's *Mighty River*, or the semi quavers at the start and end of her string piece *Photography. Blue Lab's* bar 28-36 is an example in the strings, or *Dream big for tomorrow* at bar 100, however, both these examples are syncopated patterns for an emphasis on offbeats or a pushed rhythmic feel. From repeated patterns I often fragment or shorten rhythms to build to a climax as a

structural device, so the music feels as though it is getting faster with shortening note values and more insistent repetitions. In *Walls and Windows* and *What will the future be?,* this technique is combined with phasing:

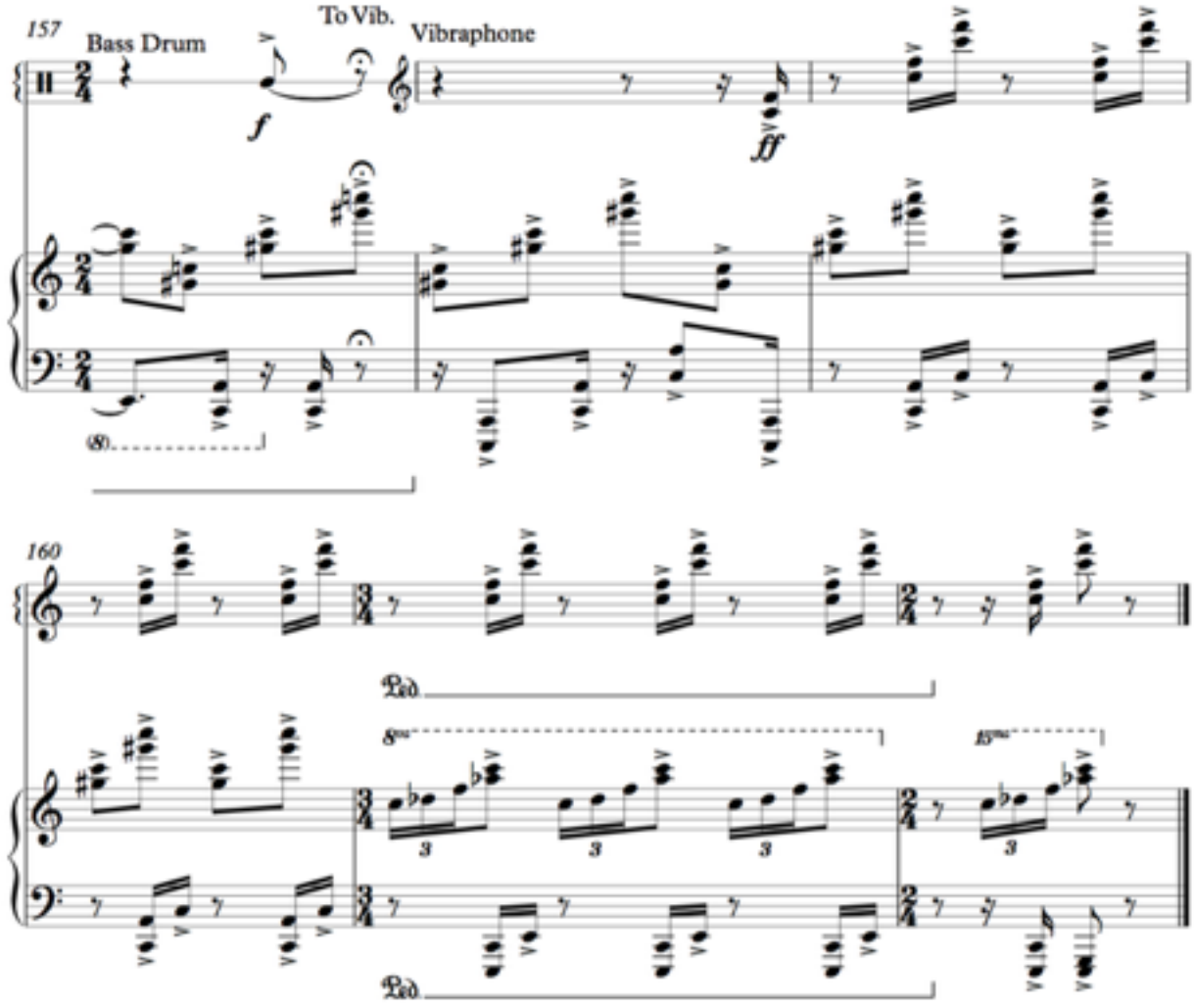


Ex.5hh, building repetitions bar 173 to end of *Walls and Windows*

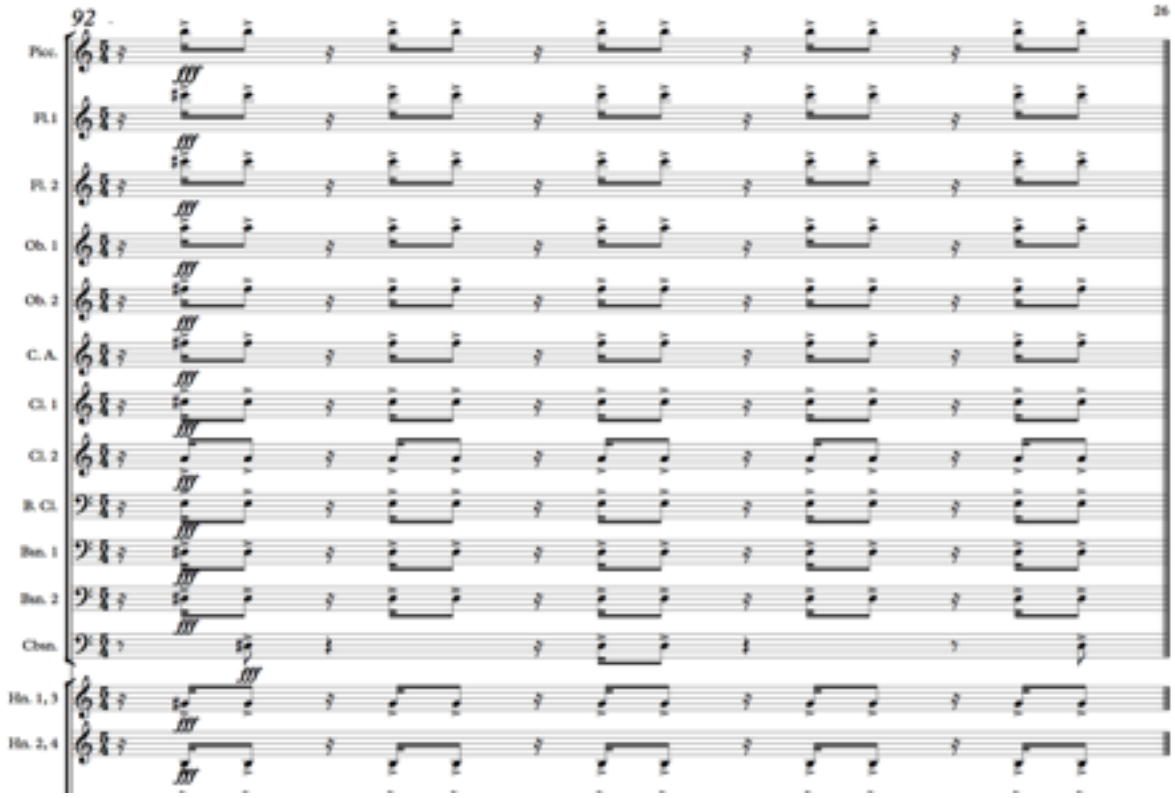
In the following examples from *Elasticity, this was a dance,* and *Blue Lab*, it is the homorhythm which intensifies the repetitions as ensembles repeat fragments in a unified, loud climax:



Ex.5ii, building repetitions becoming fragmented 223 - 225 of *Elasticity*

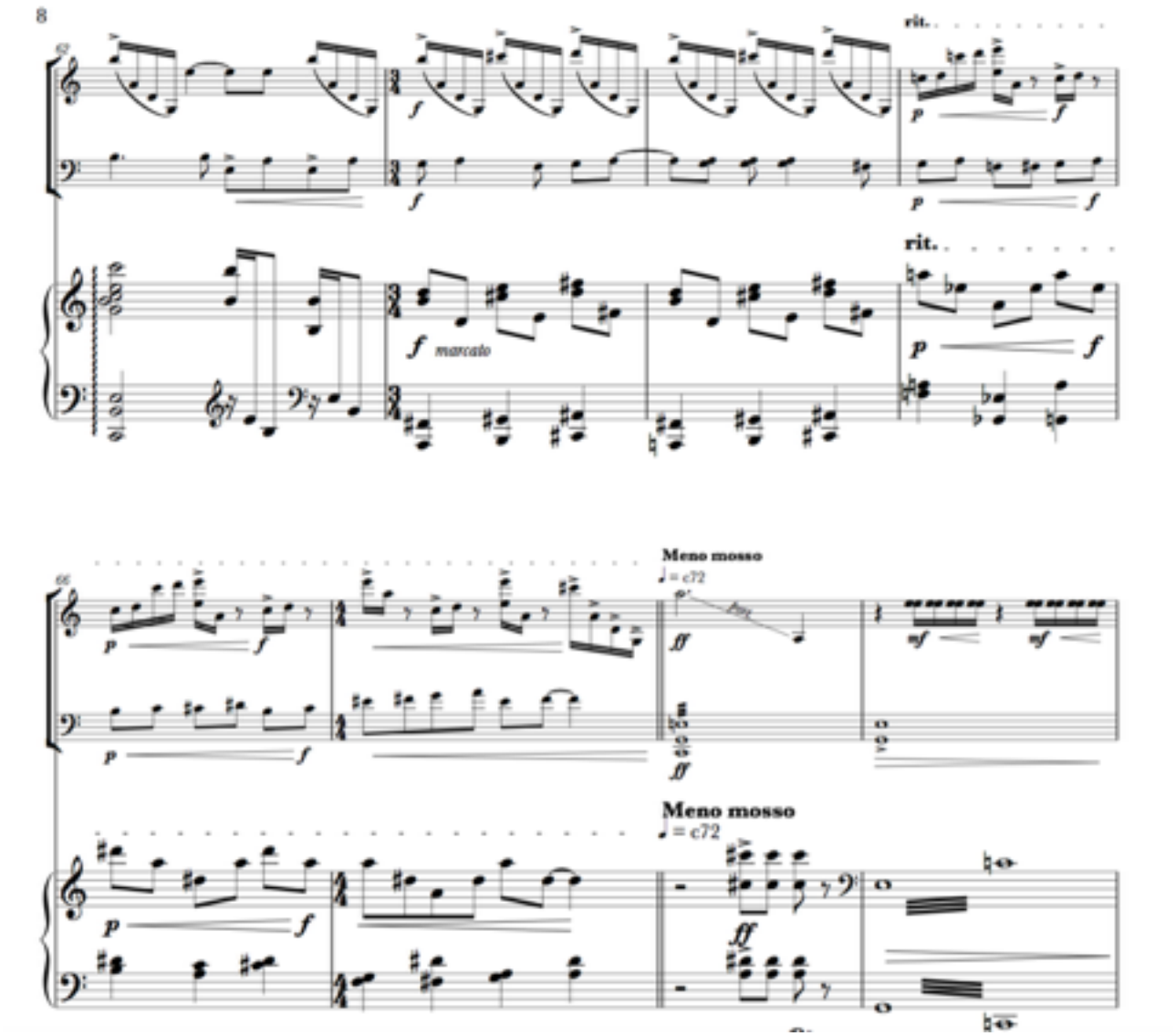


Ex.5jj, building repetitions becoming fragmented bar 158-end *this was a dance*



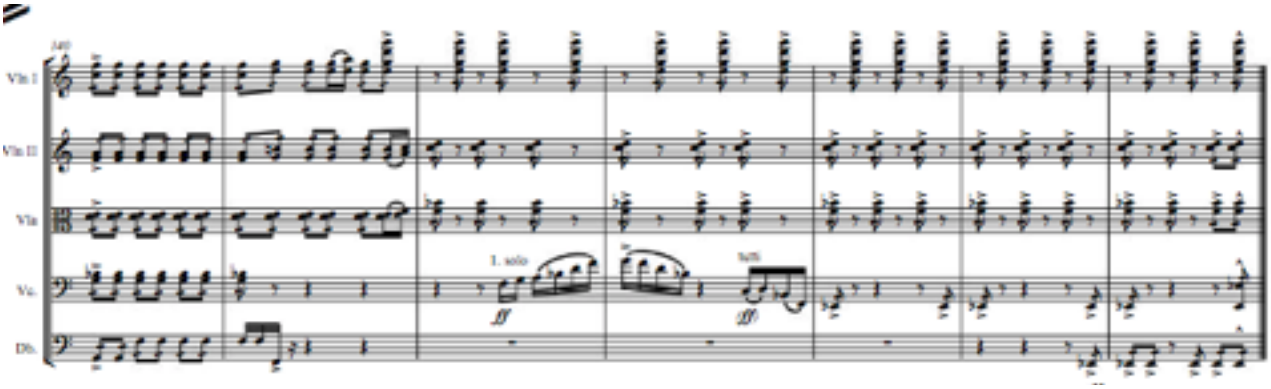
Ex.kk, repeated rhythm ending *Blue Lab*

There are moments of rhythmic repetition and fragmentation in the violin bar 65 of *Block*, however, the ritardando marking and extension of the bar length from ¾ to 4/4 is to slow the pace of the music, contradicting the shortening of the phrases in the violin. The music does lead to a slower climax point at the meno mosso, but the examples from later works demonstrate a greater ability to build towards musical climax through rhythmic repetitions combined with dense textures and insistent, unchanging tempo.



Ex.5ll, repeated rhythm in piano and cello while violin part fragments to shorter figures in bar 67, *Block*

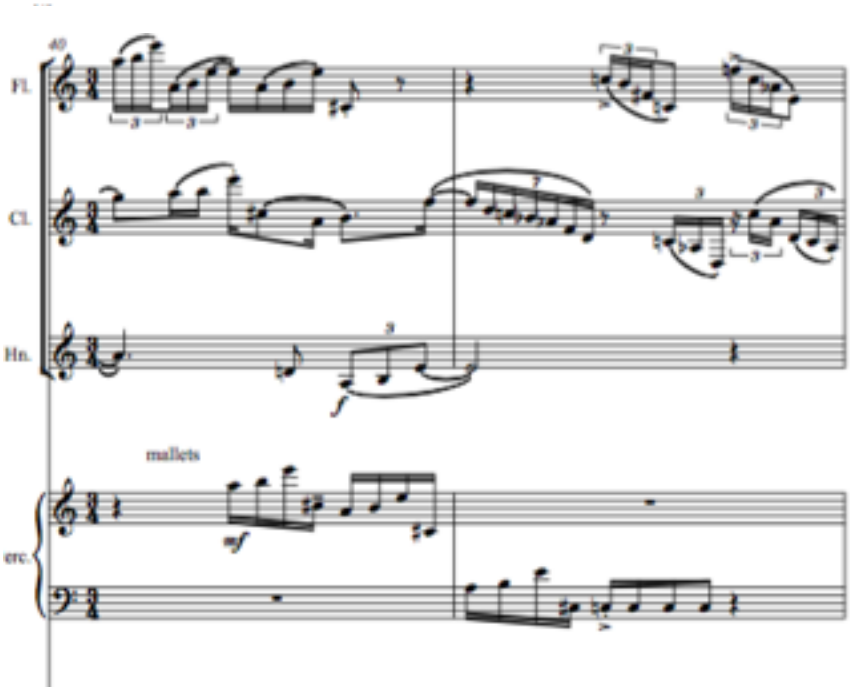
In *Blue Lab, this was a dance* and *Walls and Windows*, repeated fragments build to a climax which end the music in a sudden cut off, the excitement of the build up cutting off dramatically before the music exhausts itself, as in the Fitkin piano pieces already mentioned: *Aract, Sciosophy* and *Flak,* and the first movement of Wallen's *Photography* (excerpt below):



Ex5.mm, the sudden ending of Photography I by Errollyn Wallen[44]

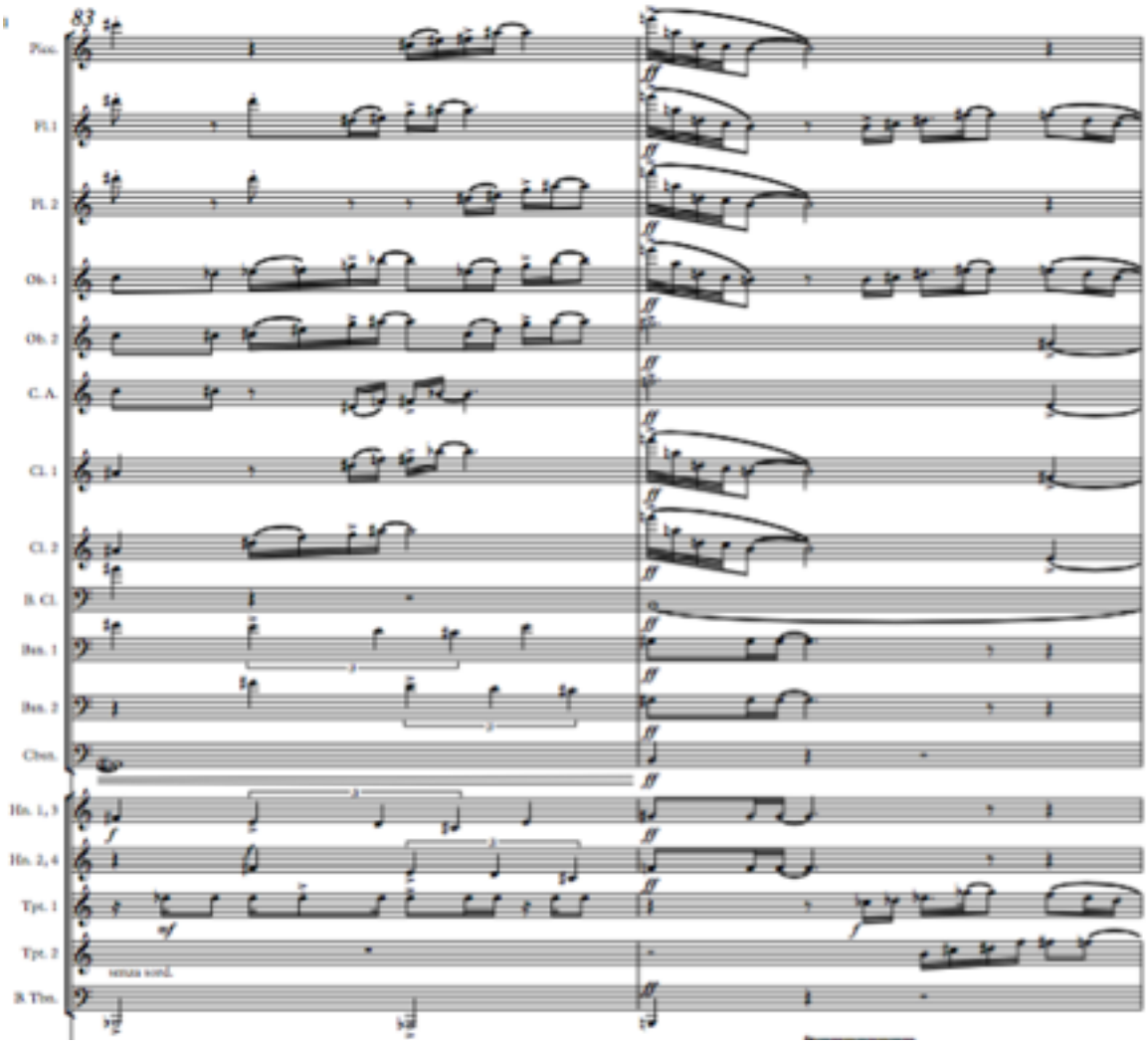
Textures and timbres

The earlier works of my portfolio often rely on melody and accompaniment style textures, with more intricate interplay between parts and dovetailing of instruments later becoming apparent in the larger scale works such as *Lust and Lustre, Blue Lab*, and *Dream big for tomorrow.* Shown below is some more rhythmically complex dovetailing of a cascading figure in *Lust and Lustre*, a later work, by comparison with an earlier and less complex example in *Blue Lab* , demonstrating a change in the levels of textural intricacies present in my music as my research developed.



Ex5.nn, Lust and Lustre dovetailing woodwind

[44] Wallen (2006) Photography I b.140



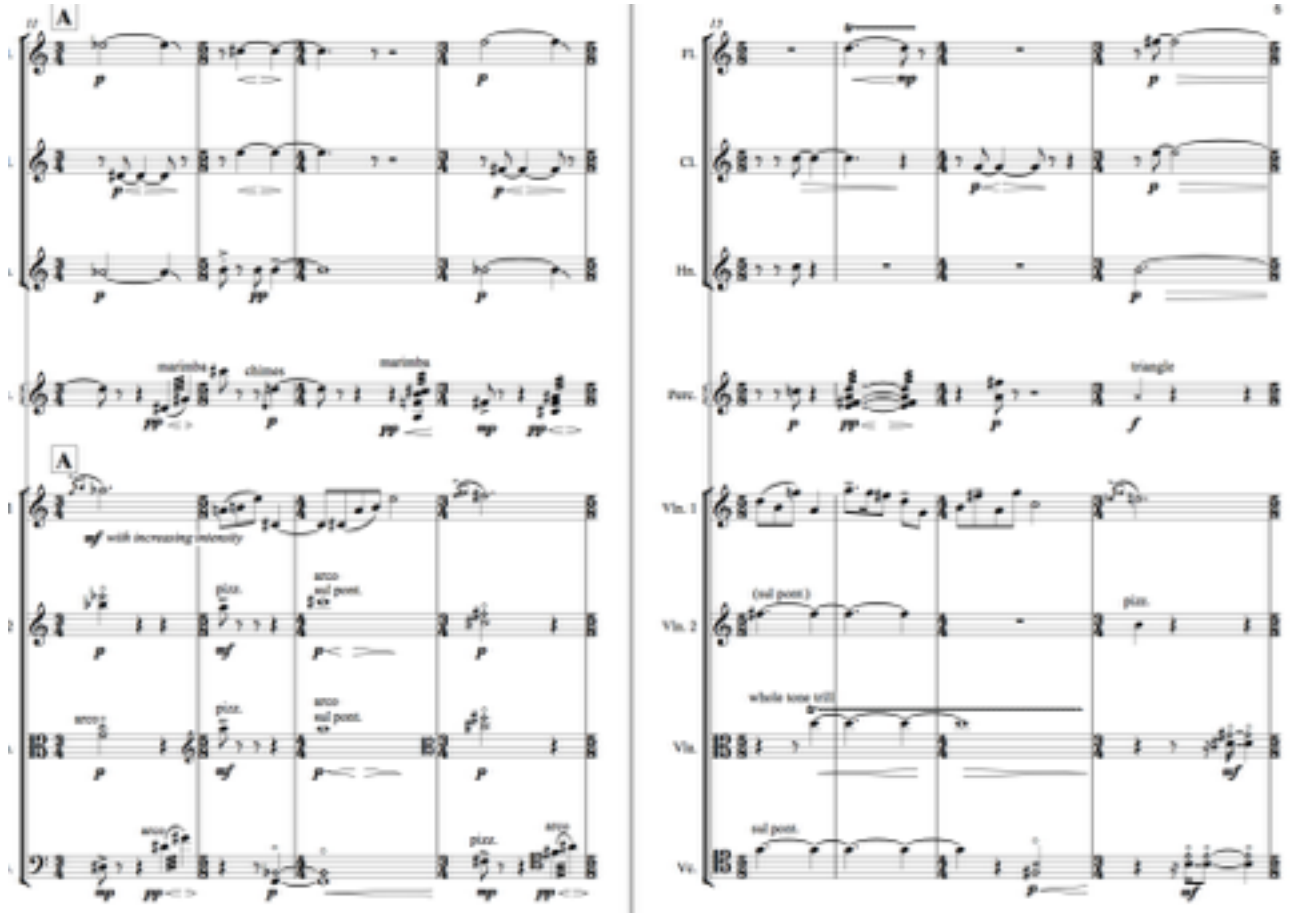
Ex5.oo, *Blue Lab* dovetailing brass and woodwind

The way in which I approach texture and timbre is the most notable development in my compositional technique from *Block* in 2017 to *Lust and Lustre* or *Dream big for tomorrow* in 2020. The textures and timbres in my later works have an affinity not only with Nico Muhly but also with contemporary classical composers Edmund Finnis and Kaija Saariaho. Earlier parts of the portfolio, such as *Block, Blue Lab* and *Strange and Wild / Remote and Unfamiliar* maintain the notion of melody and accompaniment, or melody and countermelody, throughout. Various fragments of motifs decorate the main melody at certain points, and accompaniment varies between held notes and moving quavers or repeated rhythms. Listening to the textural layers in the music of Edmund Finnis (*Between Rain*), Daniel Kidane (*Be Still*), Oliver Leith (*Honey Siren*) and Kaija Saariaho (*Orion*), I became intrigued by the idea of creating textures which were both still and moving, adding a flickering or glow to a sustained sound. This sound world is used for a prolonged period from the opening of *What will the future be?* until 1’52’’. I tried to achieve a similar effect again

layering tremolo, sul ponticello and harmonic strings or bowed crotales and piano string glissandi in *Dream big for tomorrow*, combining the clear resonance of harmonics or bowed crotales with the scratch and metallic grit of sul ponticello and tremolo violin, or a piano string glissando (example below.) When working with chamber ensemble writing *Lust and Lustre,* with less scope to layer as many sounds given the smaller number of players, I opted for circular bows in the strings to add a flicker and grit to the texture, paired with ringing sounds of gongs, glass and chimes in the percussion. Later I incorporate harmonic glissandi in the strings as another way of creating a sustained texture that has an oscillating, spinning or wavering element. This final part of the portfolio culminates in a more fluid use of melodic and spectral textures, opening with a violin melody that incorporates romantic aspects in its phrasing, before tumbling motifs bring about a B section beginning bar 59 which develops colours and textures instead of melodic phrases.

In the latter part of my portfolio, whether for folk group, orchestra, chamber group or solo with electronics, the textures and timbres of my writing became a distinctive feature in the opening bars. This is in part inspired by Nico Muhly, who has, in my opinion, a characteristic choice of timbre across his chamber and orchestral music. An obvious example is his piece *Clear Music* as it is scored for cello, celeste and harp, putting the piercing sound of high harp and celeste at the forefront. Often his works open with a ‘ping’ of high-pitched percussion and plucked strings or similar sounds, examples being *Doublespeak* performed by Eighth Blackbird, or *Throughline* for orchestra. It sounds to me like a burst of light due to the intensity of the high-pitched sounds, and I could imagine both a melody or a sustained texture emerging from this sound. The timbres present in the later pieces *Lust and Lustre* and *Dream big for tomorrow* include pinging sounds of harp harmonics paired with celeste, or triangle paired with string pizz, as well as more sustained ringing timbres such as bowed crotales, wine glass, and violin harmonics.

Punctuations including percussive hits and pizzicati are used most extensively in *Lust and Lustre*, wherein the flashes of colour which orchestrate the accompaniment are short swells or accents, lines dovetailing or moving quickly between instruments akin to Anton Webern’s orchestrations. I use this method to create colourful accompanying textures as opposed to melodies, and lines which sit beneath the surface of the main theme.

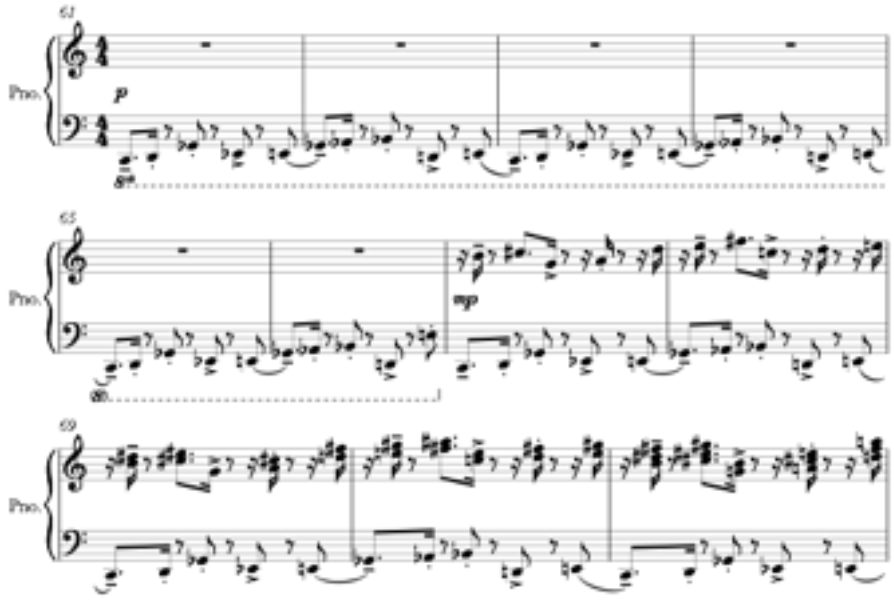


Ex.5pp accents and swell across different timbres in *Lust and Lustre*

It is notable that this type of accompanying texture is part of *Lust and Lustre* as well as *Dream big for tomorrow*, two later pieces in my portfolio. A progression from the simpler textures of *Block*, the first piece of the portfolio, can be seen and heard in the more adventurous textures employed in my later pieces. A similar progression can be noted in the two orchestral pieces which bookend the portfolio: whilst the rhythmic and tonal palette of *Blue Lab* and *Dream big for tomorrow* are similar in scope, the use of more detailed or intricate textures in the latter sets them apart.

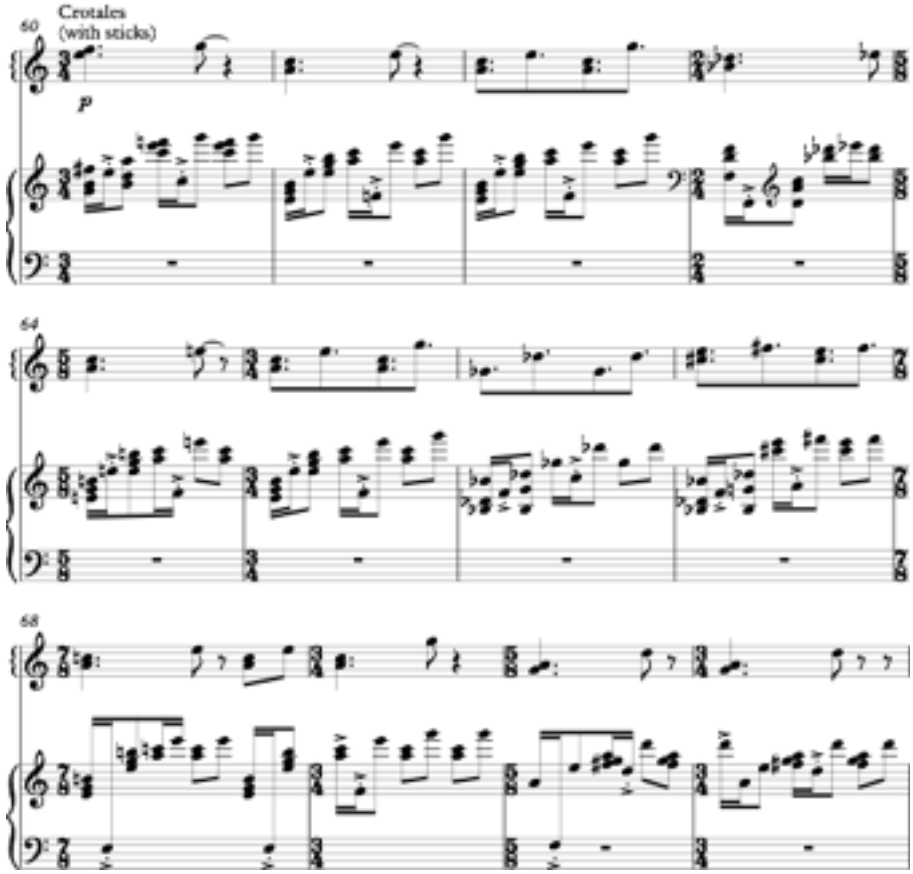
In both *Shoot and Leaf and Breath and Feet* and *Forever Interrupted*, the texture includes spoken word which needed to be heard and understood but also intertwined within the music, integrated as part of the texture. At times the text is accompanied by melodies or repeated rhythms, however, there are moments when texture takes the lead and a bed of sound lies under the text to enable the words to be heard but in the context of a particular atmosphere, similar to the bed of sound in *What will the future be?*, or for example the piano tremolo opening of *Walk With Me* from the song cycle.

The block chord textures of *Block,* moving in parallel motion with dense, closely voiced chords, is a piano texture which I go on to develop further in *this was a dance*. In *Charleston* there is a more definitive nod to this style of texture, despite the part not being written in a pastiche or imitation of stride piano, there is an energetic leaping bass line inspired by the energy of a busy left hand in ragtime music. Similarly, in *Shoot and Leaf and Breath and Feet*, I take the idea of a left-hand part which jumps repeatedly to and fro in swung piano music but is more dissonant and syncopated.:



Ex.5qq, bar 61 Shoot and Leaf and Breath and Feet, piano left hand movement

In *this was a dance,* the leaping piano part moves across both hands in triplet rhythms as opposed to swing. Combined with the block chord texture and repeated rhythmic patterns, the piano writing becomes, texturally, more in the style of post-minimalist American composers such as John Adams (*Hallelujah Junction I*), David Lang (*sweetness* from *The Woodmans* film score), or Judd Greenstein (*Change*), or a less busy variation on Graham Fitkin's energised piano grooves. Removing the swing element and developing homorhythmic passages, the music evolves into an indie-classical influenced feel, which retains the intervallic leaps and dense block chords:

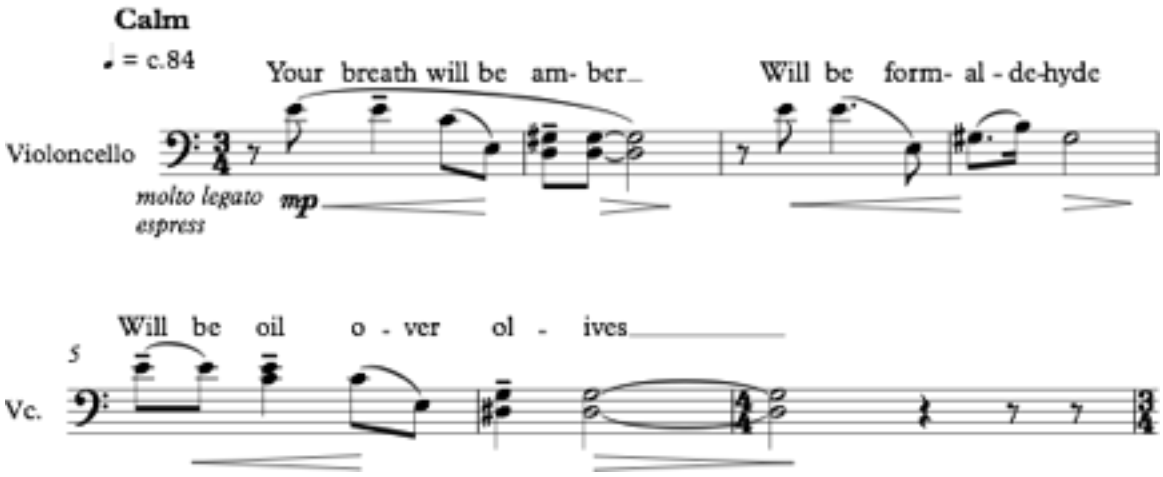


Ex.5rr, homorhythmic texture in piano *this was a dance*

Musical approach to combining art forms

In both *Forever Interrupted* and *Shoot and Leaf and Breath and Feet*, I worked in collaboration with the same spoken word artist, Harry Jelley. In our first collaboration, for cello and electronics, we initially discussed themes which could be present in both the music and text, before writing some ideas separately. Our chosen themes were cycles and growth. My research set out to explore how other art forms can inspire and enrich compositional processes on a number of levels, from programmatic elements to performance settings and audience. I wanted to create a structure which featured interplay between how different voices interacted with the music, enriching the music throughout the process as opposed to adding a layer on top. Voice 1 intertwines with the cello part through use of a distinctive, descriptive texture and a leitmotif associated with the word “marble”,

whilst Voice 3 juxtaposes the tense samples of breathy sounds with untroubled, plucked chords on the cello, suggestive of a lute or lyre used historically in storytelling. In Voice 2, I set the words to a melody as though writing a song as a starting point:



Ex.5ss, word setting process demonstrated in *Forever Interrupte*d

I removed the words and continued developing the piece as instrumental music, almost as though the text had acted as a scaffold for the melody, only to be removed as the piece is displayed in spoken and instrumental means.

The text and music intertwine on a structural level as well as through programmatic, expressive elements such as word-painting and mood. Use of the material in this way forms an intricate duet, as opposed to text and accompaniment, or music furnished by the multimedia presentation to provide distraction for an audience.

In collaboration with producer David Coyle, the audio work *What will the future be?* was to incorporate a mix of sampled sounds / field recordings, and recorded poetry narration. Instead of placing these elements one after another, or creating a soundscape and musical accompaniment, I decided to integrate the 'non-musical' sounds into the piece as though they were instrumental parts: the train recording as a percussive instrument, shortened (1'54'') or elongated (1'40'') to imitate a rolling timpani or bass drum hit; the clanging of pots and pans matching the rhythms and pitch of the looping string parts becoming a repeated riff on top (4'27''); the bird sounds being emulated in the violins at the opening so as to become an intertwined musical line (0'35'').

Working with a non-professional dance group on a piano piece, I wrote a piece in the style of a Charleston – a dance which they had worked on earlier that year. The elements of the Charleston which I incorporated were the tempo, accents and swing so that the skeleton of the form was in place and the dance steps would fit the music. As a way of exploring the possibilities around the theme, I used intervallic leaps and patterns to shape the melodies and pitches, straying from the traditional harmonies or instrumental textures of the 1920s-style music and allowing the dancers to interpret the steps within a more contemporary movement sequence.

Chronological trajectory

Techniques of melodic and rhythmic motivic development through fragmentation and repetitions can be traced from the beginning of my research, *Block* and *Blue Lab*, through to the end of my portfolio *Dream big for tomorrow, Elasticity* and *Lust and Lustre. Blue Lab* sees my work favouring syncopated and triplet rhythms in contrast to *Block*, and beginning to think about incorporating solo or improvisatory melodies into my work. This idea expands more boldly in *Shoot and leaf and breath and feet,* wherein part of the score is notated as a chord chart for a changeable texture left to improvising performers, as I start to collaborate with artists from other fields. *Blue Lab* also features a repeated syncopated rhythm and an unchanging pulse at times, and establishing groove in my works becomes a priority when writing for piano and percussion at the midpoint of my research, *this was a dance*. It is in the final part of my portfolio that the use of sustained textures take precedence over groove-based or melodic patterns, in the works *Dream big for tomorrow, What will the future be?* and *Lust and Lustre,* and this was combined with the elements already mentioned that emerged over the course of the research: motivic fragmentation and repetitions, syncopated or triplet rhythmic grooves, improvisatory melodies or collaborations with improvising musicians.

6. Conclusion

The first part of this essay notes the key factors that are having a direct impact on the way contemporary music is created, performed and consumed in the UK today. This context provides an insight into the idea of the ‘adaptable composer’, and how being adaptable in my work methods becomes pertinent to the analysis of my musical language in the later part of the essay. Indeed, the

term ‘composer’ itself is becoming redundant in some circumstances, when a greater level of *adaptability, context and collaboration* is likely to be part of the creating process. The potential changes cited in how some composers work, from genre fluidity to multi-disciplines to entrepreneurial and curation skills, are all linked to cultural developments in the UK and elsewhere: digital dissemination of music; a move toward multi-hyphen careers or freelance opportunity, replacing traditional career structures whether by choice or necessity; a recognition of other styles in educational settings and the striving toward further inclusivity within music institutions, programming and ensembles. This research is not limited to the analysis of contemporary music in a scholastic setting, but also the changes and issues within the music industry, and how the broader cultural context of music creation and consumption motivates, shapes and inspires myself and others artistically. I hope to contribute a portfolio of compositions as research to suggest that engagement with diverse materials can result in an expanded aesthetic and technical palette as well as a pluralistic approach that may cultivate further artistic and profitable opportunities.

The principal aims within my research—cultivating works which indicate the potential of collaboration; producing scores which appeal to the musical and analytical sensibilities of mixed performers; expanding my harmonic language; demonstrating a varied career model driven by entrepreneurial ethos; and creation of original works which raise my profile as a composer—determine how I negotiate my continuing compositional voice or musical language. As a result of my research and work as a composer in this vein, I have been awarded funding to create a cross-genre E.P. combining jazz, folk and contemporary classical composing and performing a series of original songs and interludes.

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8. Programme Notes

this was a dance

this was a dance is a piece which distorts rhythmic ideas and goes on to create blurrs of distant, floating, echoing sounds. The initial rhythmic idea returns at the end and spirals out of control. The repetitive, wonky groove of the piece evolved from ideas of movement and dance, however, during the writing process I enjoyed distorting the rhythms and breaking up the groove in places. It is now called 'this *was* a dance'.

Blue Lab

Blue Lab references a bass line from a song by the jazz-funk duo, Blue Lab Beats. In this work, I explore ways of featuring gestures, sounds and harmony from this eclectic duo within a three-part, classical form. The soundworld goes beyond being a specific stylistic reference, rather that it forms the tonal and timbral palette of the piece.

Block

Block was written as part of a compositional research project exploring the boundaries of tonality, in terms of both structure and sonority. The piece is the beginning of a journey which aims to push the limits to which music can be considered tonal by focusing on consonant chords and intervals while avoiding the notion of tonal progression as a horizontal concept. The work develops its structure through the driving force of a repeated motif which is developed throughout. Sonorities are piled together, built from separate vertical 'blocks', each chord an individual brick within the construction.

Elasticity

Elasticity is made up of music that can stretch, adapt, bend, compress, but retains it's bouncing, relentless buoyancy. The springy melody from the opening becomes a languorous slow melody in the second half, bending notes with microtonal chords against whistling harmonics.

Lust and Lustre

Lust and Lustre is a work that moves between passionate, romantic melody and glassy, glistening textures. The opening sensuous melody, presented in the violin, is fragmented, broken up into short motifs which tumble downwards canonically. After the return of the first melody, the music floats in a stasis, a contrast to the forward motion of the opening phrases. Gongs, glass and harmonics spin and glimmer in delicate textures coloured by quartertones and scraping, breathy timbres.

Forever Interrupted

Forever Interrupted is the result of a long-distance collaboration between Newcastle-based poet, Manchester-based composer and London-based cellist, working with images of space, suspense and cycles. Through the focus of a rolling marble, the piece absorbs other motifs inspired by the performance context: breath, wood, fingers, movement.

Shoot and Leaf and Breath and Feet

Everything. Overflowing. Spilling. Walk with me to the bluest horizon on a path like this... Poet Harry Jelley imagines an alternative world, after the ecological destruction of the climate crisis. We start off in a dry, cracking, groaning planet, only to be taken to a utopian, imagined place where nature is so saturated, there are so many flowers and birds and colours, that we run out of names for them. The piece is a song cycle made up of three songs with poetry narration woven between them.
1. Introduction
2. Shoot and Leaf and Breath and Feet
3. Walk With Me
Feel free to sing along to the final refrain.

Walls and Windows

As a composer I love collaborating with improvising musicians from different genres. I wrote the slow melody of *Walls and Windows* which the group really made their own, inspired by the melancholy nature of isolation, and a fast tune inspired by the way small communities came together. It features folk-like structures as well as contemporary techniques, improvisation and harmonies and rhythms influenced by jazz and post-minimalist styles. The piece was funded by RVW trust and the Fidelio trust as a project for online dissemination.

What will the future be?

Responding to the events of the Covid-19 pandemic, *What will the future be?* is an audio work which documents the town of Morley as it emerged from national lockdown in 2020. Local poets

recorded can be heard reciting amidst a musical landscape reflecting the quiet, unnerving emptiness of the former-industrial town, and the celebration of neighbours caring for one another. Music was written and performed by Claire Victoria Roberts on violin, voice and synths, with recording, mixing and production by David Coyle.

Charleston

A contemporary take on the driving, swinging rhythms of the 1920s dance halls, *Charleston* is a short, vibrant piano piece written for the dancers of HiJinx theatre. Characterised by swivelling, twisting steps back and forward, swinging arms, pearls and feathers, the dance of the charleston became a craze in America following its appearance in the black musical *Runnin' Wild*, in 1923. The music is in a quick 4/4 time and references the ragtime-style stride piano which was popular for dancing the charleston, leaping about the piano in syncopated rhythms.

Strange and Wild / Remote and Unfamiliar

Strange and Wild / Remote and Unfamiliar are words from an article by Professior John Bowen, 'Walking the Landscape of Wuthering Heights'. Bowen describes how the harsh landscape and unpredictable climate are an active and shaping presence in Bronte's novel, and this inspired me to hunt through the book for key references to nature, weather and surroundings. The songs range from swampy graveyards to sparkling chandeliers, blowing winds and thick snow. Bringing together musicians from across Yorkshire, the performance has been supported by The Finzi Trust, Split Infinitive Trust, Leeds Inspired and the Leeds Minster.

1. *Bitter Northern Skies*
2. *Marshes*
3. *Penistone Craggs / Golden Rocks*
4. *Chapel*
5. *A Splendid Place*
6. *Moors*

Dream big for tomorrow

Dream big for tomorrow is a work born out of a year-long collaboration with Camden Symphony Orchestra, singing and workshopping music with the players, and receiving training in music facilitation from Sound and Music. The text is taken from creative writing workshops run by Sheila Hayman, lead second violin of CSO, who also works with Freedom From Torture. Write For Life,

the FFT creative writing group, held sessions based around themes of celebration in past, present and future.