

# **Portfolio of Compositions**

**The 3<sup>rd</sup> Channel: fusing the *live* with the *acousmatic***

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## **Abstract**

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This thesis consists of a unified portfolio of eight compositions focused on and exploring alternative versions of the 3rd channel, which is a personal approach to composition and a way to describe my compositional technique. The instrumentation employs a variety of forces, and it is mainly for solo instruments and small/chamber ensembles – always with the accompaniment of a tape part – plus a summative, large-scale installation for eight speakers. The presented works were composed between December 2009 and August 2013. The commentary presents an individual, in-depth analysis of the eight pieces in order to reveal the methodology of their compositional process(es).

## Acknowledgements

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## **Author's Declaration**

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I declare that all of the work in this portfolio and commentary, and the research upon which it is based are my own work. Where reference is made to the work of others, the extent to which that work has been used is indicated and acknowledged in the bibliography and the body of the text. This work has not been already accepted for any degree and neither is it being concurrently submitted to any other university or for any other degree.

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## List of Works and Recordings (running total: 122')

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### Disk I

1. *4 3* (2010-12) – for three celli, kettle, plastic bags, conductor and tape.  
**[Video-recording, 7'].**
2. *The Man with the Hammer* (2010-13) – for two percussionists, masks and tape.  
**[Video-recording, 17'].**
3. *L'I meant* (2012) – for countertenor, actress, mezzo, prepared saxophone, balloons, temple blocks and tape. **[Video-recording, 16'].**
4. *rings true* (2011-13) – for solo guitar, finger slide, faceOSC and tape.  
**[Video-recording, 12'].**
5. *Re: All* (2012) – for soprano, classical guitar, make-up set, audience participation and tape.  
**[Video-recording, 13'].**
6. *for Giacomo Pozzuto* (2013) – for cor/oboe, piano and tape. **[Video-recording, 8'].**
7. *NARcissus* (2012-13) – for 'juice', narrator, water, electric guitar and tape.  
**[Video-recording, 22'].**

### Disk II

8. *WMA* (2010-13) – a time-specific installation for eight speakers, and audience participation. The work is submitted in the following formats:
  - a. **[Eight mono sound files, 27'].**
  - b. **[Panned stereo mix – no added reverberation, 27'].**
  - c. **[Panned stereo mix – with added reverberation based on an impulse taken from Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, York, 27'].**
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## **Introduction**

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This thesis consists of a unified portfolio of eight compositions focused on and exploring alternative versions of the '3rd channel', which is a personal approach to composition and a way to describe my compositional technique. The instrumentation employs a variety of forces, and it is mainly for solo instruments and small/chamber ensembles – always with the accompaniment of a tape part – plus a summative, large-scale installation for eight speakers. The presented works were composed between December 2009 and August 2013. The commentary presents an individual, in-depth analysis of the eight pieces in order to reveal the methodology of their compositional process(es) .

## The '3rd channel'

There was also, as so often, a third alternative, which was neither to glory in confusion nor to let quotations worry and disturb an [...] original linear discourse, but rather to create new forms in which quotation was a necessity: meta-forms for meta-music.<sup>1</sup>

The 3rd channel is a practical exploration of fusing the *live* with the *acousmatic* elements in music. It proposes the fusion of pre-recorded sounds (tape part) with the live performance, and creates an environment where the *live/acoustic* (as a first channel) and the 'tape'/*acousmatic* (as a second channel) coexist in order to construct a new meaning, not as two separate things but as one, unified creation.



Fig. 1 – Youngman (2012), shadow sculpture by Tim Noble and Sue Webster (image courtesy the artists).

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music and After: Directions Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 164-165.

To put the channel in a visual context, I have taken as example the shadow sculpture art-form. In this case, the light in combination with the seemingly abstract – even chaotic – objects create a new meaning which is the shadow reflection on the wall. On this basis, the *live* and the *acousmatic* are fused in order to create new environments.

Part of the compositional process of the channel is the use of pre-recorded sounds in the tape, and that explains why all of the works in this submission include a tape part. The importance of the 3rd channel lies in its design and inner logic, as it becomes the point of intersection of the two domains. Furthermore, the growth of the channel proves that it finds its place in the changeability of new music, and goes to show that it has become a new compositional process and a wider framework for composers and artists. It appears to be ‘all-embracing’ of all genres in music, and it can allow for cross-media work (i.e. theatre, dance, installation art, etc.). The 3rd channel is a personal approach to composition and it serves as a way to describe my compositional techniques.

## 1. 4 3 (2010-13) – for three celli, kettle, plastic bags, conductor and tape<sup>2</sup>

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### 1.1 Introduction

All music, any organisation of sounds is then a tool for the creation of consolidation of community. – Jacques Attali<sup>3</sup>

*4 3* was premiered in March 2010 by the Red Note ensemble in Scotland, and chronologically, it is the first work that was produced for this folio. It presents an early idea of the 3rd channel, and explores notions of sound collage and use of reality. Upon this revelation, *4 3* is an attempt to *construct Englishness* (explained below) through a canvas of pre-recorded material based on field recordings from the composer's everyday routine. The score of this work was created with the animator Poppy Aristidou.

As the title suggests, the line-up of *4 3* is *for three* performers and tape. The original concept was that the instruments can be different in every performance, so long as there are two melodic instruments to serve the first (tonal) section. However this different approach to the initial instrumentation changed during the next versions in York, due to the extensive devising for a specific *ad hoc* celli ensemble. The principal idea of *4 3* ended up as a fixed instrumentation for three celli, conductor, kettle and tape (hence the title: *for four* people and *three* performers). The following illustrates the genesis and the development of *4 3* up to its final version:

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<sup>2</sup> Video contained in Disk 1, number 1.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Attali, 'Noise and Politics', in Cox and Warner, *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music* (Continuum: The University of Michigan, 2004), p. 7.

- **2010**, March: for Baroque cello, contrabass recorder, harpsichord and tape (Red Note Ensemble, Edinburgh)
- **2011**  
 June: for three *celli* and tape (Chimera Promenade Concert)  
 November: for three celli, *conductor* and tape (Upgrade seminar)
- **2012**, October: – for three celli, *kettle*, conductor and tape.

The devising process was a joint effort with conductor/cellist James Whittle (Fig. 2), even though the structure, the thought process and the collection of materials behind the piece were entirely my responsibility. Yet, the experience and intuition of James as conductor added an emotional degree which brought the piece to life, and, as a cellist, provided a degree of detail which refined the sound-world of a composition. In other words, this composition radiates an organic confidence of handling *three*, of even *four* experienced cellists. The following sections will present the materials of *4 3*.



Fig. 2 – From the video-recording of *4 3*, Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall (photography by Radek Rudnicki).



## 1.2 Materials and Methods

I'm going to work every day. The irony is, going to work every day became the subject of probably my best poetry. But I couldn't see that at the time. And it took me another ten years to wake up to it. – Philip Levine<sup>4</sup>

Roughly summarised, *4 3* is a sound-collage made of different seemingly unrelated materials. *4 3* emphasises an empirical representation of *Englishness* based on my lifestyle, filtered and magnified by the live and the pre-recorded samples, and realised by English performers.<sup>5</sup> Subsequently, the recordings have organic links to the city that I live in, and they are defined by mutually reinforced stereotypes, connected with notions of Englishness (such as kettle sounds, train announcements, drunken arguments, etc). The treatment of sounds goes beyond their timbral characteristics, and this approach involves the decoding of any extrinsic meaning that takes place during the piece.

In so doing, the audience can connect the extrinsic links between the kettle, the train announcements and the different native English accents from the *live* dialogue. Through these sounds, a reduction of listening becomes exceedingly difficult, and the spectators eventually come to the conclusion that the sound-fabric in *4 3* was not created randomly; rather, it was carefully crafted by collecting *energies* that relate to a specific concept, which in this case is the idea of *constructing Englishness*. The principal idea of how the piece was constructed is revealed in the last text performed by the conductor:

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Philip Levine, *The Cortland Review* (1999). The interview is available online at <http://www.cortlandreview.com/issue/7/levine7i2.htm> [accessed 20 September 2013].

<sup>5</sup> The pre-recorded samples include: train sounds and train announcements, kettle sounds, pre-recorded dialogues from the voice-overs in the tape.

The live sounds include: dialogues of an *absurd* text by the composer, a poem performed as a monologue by the conductor, and live kettle sounds.

*That's all.  
That's everything I've been subjected to.  
With a sense of narrative closure.<sup>6</sup>*

I should clarify that this is not how England sounds; rather, 4 3 offers a surface for the audience to translate and add their own meaning to the work. Each composition in this folio brings music to the bare minimum, where the performers then focus on the detail of each *act*. This approach belongs to the 3rd channel: it creates a clear split between domains (live vs acousmatic) and genres (Baroque and *musique concrète instrumentale*), and this is how the organic contrast within the music obliterates its simplicity.

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<sup>6</sup> From the ending poem in 4 3 (text by the composer).

## **2. *The Man with the Hammer* (2010-13) – for two percussionists and tape<sup>7</sup>**

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### **2. 1 Introduction**

My obsession with the surface is the subject of my music. In that sense my compositions are not really ‘compositions’ at all. One might call them time canvases in which I more or less prime the canvas with an overall hue of the music... I prefer to think of my work as between categories. Between time and space. Between painting and music. Between the music’s construction, and its surface. – Morton Feldman<sup>8</sup>

*The Man with the Hammer* is a music-theatre piece for two percussionists and tape. It belongs to the early experiments of the 3rd channel, and it employs a more *authentic* and *personal* use of reality, as opposed to *4 3* which is mostly a collection of sounds from my everyday routine. The initial idea for *The Man with the Hammer* was inspired by Anton Chekhov’s short story *Gooseberries* (1898). The following is the extract from Chekhov’s story:

It’s a general hypnosis. Every happy man should have someone with a little hammer at his door to knock and remind him that there are unhappy people, and that, however happy he may be, life sooner or later will show its claws, and some misfortune will befall him – illness, poverty, loss, and then no one will see or hear him, just as he now sees nor hears others. But there is no man with a hammer, and the happy go on living, just a little fluttered with the petty cares of everyday, like an aspen tree in the wind – and everything is all right.<sup>9</sup>

*The Man with the Hammer* is a devised work with the percussionist Martin Scheuregger and it deals with the notion of pre-rehearsed improvisation. In the initial stages I have

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<sup>7</sup> Video contained in Disc I, number 2.

<sup>8</sup> Morton Feldman, ‘Between Categories’, in *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings by Morton Feldman*, edited by B. H. Friedman (Cambridge, MA: Exact Change, 2000), p. 88.

<sup>9</sup> Anton Chekhov, *Five Great Short Stories* (New York: Dover, 1990), p. 78.

presented text scores from pre-existing literature that I was subjected to at the time, including books such as *The Raven*,<sup>10</sup> *The Island*<sup>11</sup> and other sources that deal mainly with sources of fragmented material (descriptions and transcriptions of door knocks from over twenty films). As a work based on recontextualisation, *The Man with the Hammer* is an attempt to take the cliché out of the cliché, by reconstructing rhythmic stereotypes such as ending drum fills from the rock tradition and door sounds/knocks. The presence of the composer became an organic part of the performance. This was due to two reasons:

- a. This approach is linked to my compositional process(es), as an element of controlling the layers of improvisation (or, as I label it, 'improved improvisation'). This ensures that the composition does not escalate from the pre-rehearsed ideas and forms between the composer and the performer.
- b. This work is the basis of the *emotional* works, and, as will be explained later in depth, the composer-as-subject becomes an organic part to the performance due to the connotations that are attached to him (in this case, the recordings of my operation).

*The Man with the Hammer* started life as a work for solo percussion, and, although I conceived the piece in 2009, I continued finding new ways of looking at the material in it and welcomed opportunities to look at it afresh. The following shows the genesis and the development of *The Man with the Hammer*:

- 2009: Pre-compositional sketch for **solo** percussionist, inspired by the Chekhov story.
- 2011, November: For **two** percussionists. Presented a draft version at the PhD Upgrade Seminar.

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<sup>10</sup> Edgar Alan Poe, *The Raven* (1845).

<sup>11</sup> Victoria Hislop, *The Island* (2005).

- 2012, February: For two percussionists, **masks** (as part of the theatre), **light** and **tape**. Performed at the Chimera March concert.
- 2013, January: Audio/video-recording of *The Man with the Hammer*. Final additions and changes (extra theatrical elements such as the use of **dice** and **live spray-painting** of a blank canvas).

In relation to other works in this folio such as *L'I meant, rings true*, and *NARcissus*, *The Man with the Hammer* is a darker piece, and it acts as an 'omen of chaos' of something bad or even disturbing that is about to come (a primary element of the Theatre of the Absurd). This aesthetic is a direct reflection of the time and age we live in, in which the *mainstream* culture praises imperfect (beauty) models, cinematic anti-heroes and post-apocalyptic scenarios.

## 2.2 Materials and Methods

In music we composers are forced to use instruments that have not changed for two centuries. – Edgard Varèse<sup>12</sup>

In many ways *The Man with the Hammer* is a negative work, and the tone is set by involving mainly low register drums (for the creation of drones) and no pitched percussion. The choice of the instrumentation results to an unpitched quality, and a 'fresh' cluster of soundscapes emerges due to the abnormal use of some unusual objects (such as dice, whip sounds produced by a belt, 'unwanted' stick sounds, spray paint sounds, and the agung cymbals from the gamelan tradition).

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<sup>12</sup> Nick Collins and Julio d'Escriván (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Electronic Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 22.

The work is set within a percussive line-up spaced out as a stereo pair (left and right), in which the two percussionists are separated accordingly in order to function in their own 'bubble'.<sup>13</sup> Yet, the creative interplay between composer and the percussionist is palpable, and this is ensured by the fact that it factors in the kinetics as part of the theatricality. *The Man with the Hammer* is a music theatre piece, not only because there is an inherent theatre in percussion playing, but also because the listeners are engaged in the visual aspect of the music, especially in the relationship of the two composers/performers.

A theatre-centric interplay is visually apparent in the first part of the work, where the two performers are positioned back to back. This highlights their *blind* 'dialectic',<sup>14</sup> which is coordinated and synchronised by the use of breaths. This is an extension from the *attacca levare* from the conducting tradition, where the conductor sets the pace with – sometimes – one in-breath. This focus on the aurally-based interplay of the performers through the breaths is contrary to 4 3; the use of breaths in 4 3 is more of a musical element rather than a functional element that drives the piece, as happens in *The Man with the Hammer*.

This is the first composition to be considered as *purely devised*, meaning that it was constructed with the involved performers from scratch, as opposed to 4 3 and *rings true* which are considered as *semi-devised* (due to the existence of a starting, through-composed scores). The submitted score acts as a transcription of the final performance, and it was created in tandem with the graphic designer Panayiotis Tofi. In *The Man with the Hammer*

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<sup>13</sup> The separation was influenced by the idea of Baudrillard, 'to each his own bubble, that is the law today' – Jean Baudrillard, *The Ecstasy of Communication*, trans. Bernard and Caroline Schutze (New York: Semiotext(e), 1988), p. 39.

<sup>14</sup> The notion of the 'dialectic' in this case is used in its Hegelian origin, as quoted by Walter Benjamin in the first page of his essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935). Benjamin defines 'the Hegelian process of change in which a concept or its realisation passes over into and is preserved and fulfilled by its opposite'.

the percussionist and I only used notes of concise bullet-points of the sections with the timings as a reference point. We worked through rough sketches, and nothing was ever that concrete until the final performance (if even that). I should mention at this point that the following works in this folio, with the exception of *rings true*, are also *purely* devised.

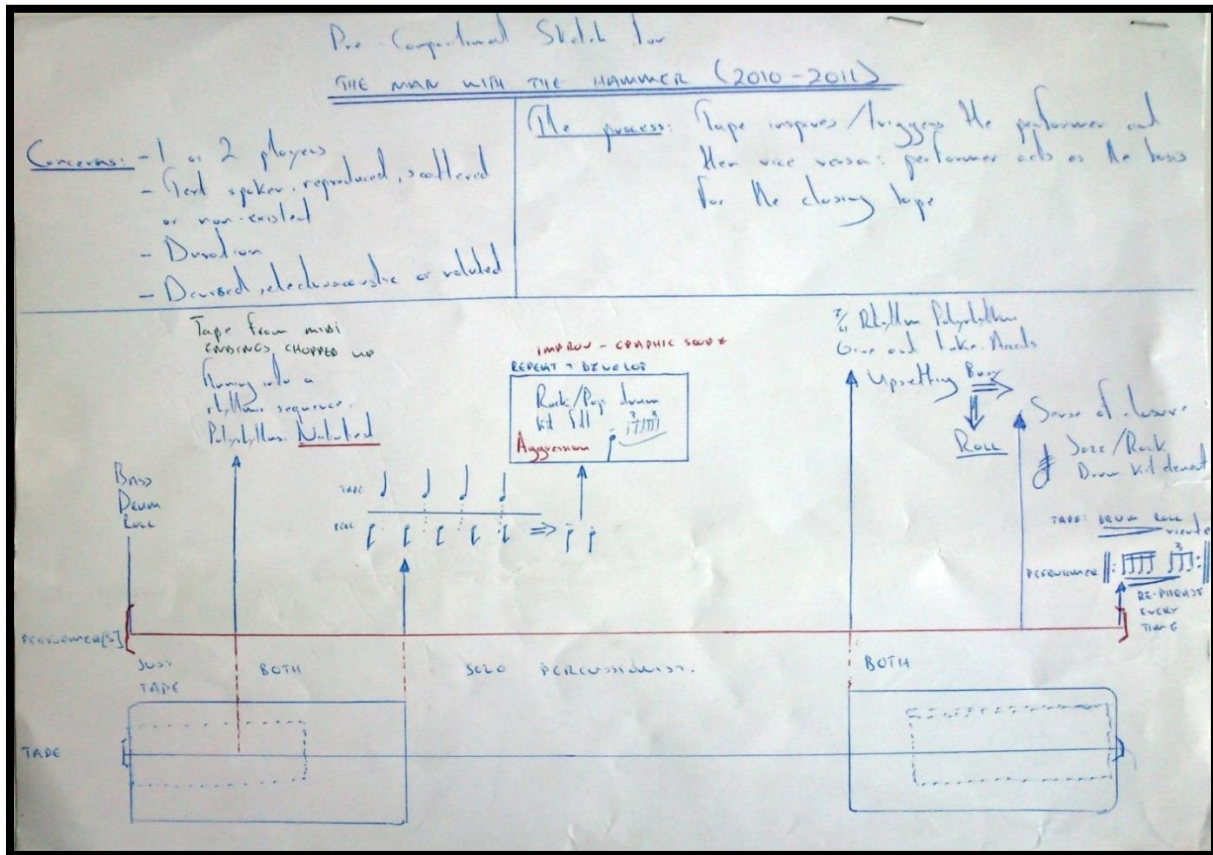


Fig. 3 – The original pre-compositional sketch of *The Man with the Hammer* (Leeds, 2010-11).

To finish with the use of the 3rd channel, the pattern in *The Man with the Hammer* consists of a considerable format which makes it unique when it comes to its realisation. As shown above, the development consisted of four stages. In the third stage, the Chimera (ensemble) performance, the work was presented in the expected form of the channel (performers on stage, working with the tape). But, the final version was constructed as part of a ‘meta 3rd

channel': the performers played the piece in one take, without the tape, but having the tape part in mind. It was not until later that the tape was added in the post-production mixing. This approach explores a *freer* exploration of the live material and proves that another version of a 'meta-channel' is possible with this compositional process.



Fig. 4 – From the video-recording of *The Man with the Hammer*, Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall (photography by Radek Rudnicki).



### 3. 'μοιρολόι (n.)' – *L'I meant* (2012) – for actress, countertenor, mezzo, tenor saxophone, balloons, temple blocks and tape<sup>15</sup>

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#### 3.1 Introduction

I decided to call my music 'organised sound' and myself, not a musician, but 'a worker of rhythms, frequencies and intensities'. Indeed, to stubbornly conditioned ears, anything new in music has always been called noise. But after all what is music but organised noises? And a composer, like all artists, is an organiser of disparate elements. – Edgard Varèse<sup>16</sup>

*L'I meant* is the first work of the 'μοιρολόι (n.)' cycle, a Greek word which translates as threnody, requiem or lament. It is a bilingual,<sup>17</sup> music-theatre piece composed for the actress Lauren Garnham and the singer James Cave. Similarly to *The Man with the Hammer*, this work was devised and constructed with the performer, in this case the singer/countertenor, who influenced the construction of this work.

Yet *L'I meant* could be recreated by any other male singer if he modified the tape (based on the original) to fit his own personal characteristics.<sup>18</sup> The submitted score functions as a post-transcription of the video-performance. In *L'I meant*, the illustrator Dr Harry Mouchos created an equivalent visual score, which allows for reproduction through time-space notation. Additionally it has a certain organic quality to it: the actual faces of the countertenor and the actress are recognisable in the drawings of the score.

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<sup>15</sup> Video contained on Disc I, number 3.

<sup>16</sup> Edgard Varèse and Chou Wen-Chung, 'The Liberation of Sound', *Perspectives of New Music*, 5:1 (autumn-winter, 1939), p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> In Greek (with a Cypriot accent) and English.

<sup>18</sup> Unlike Aperghis' *Récitation Nr. 9* (1977-78), which can also be performed by a woman or countertenor accordingly, the protagonist in *L'I meant* can only be reproduced by a male singer in order to fit the plot which is based on a love triangle.

This work was performed at the first YoCoCo concert,<sup>19</sup> and it was presented as a paper at the CePRA<sup>20</sup> event 'Performing Research/Researching Performance' in July 2012.<sup>21</sup> After screening the video-performance of the piece, commentators have suggested that *L'I meant* could be viewed as a 'political' composition: it involves different layers of realities acting dialectically in a sequence of performance rituals (what I label as 'acts'). It was also noted that the piece functions within different layers of communication through transformation of sounds, and there is a political message hidden within *L'I meant*, which is opposed to the theme of loss. Indeed, there is a feeling that this work falls into a politically-shaped art idiom: it produces effects and forces the spectators to reconsider a general narrative of loss through this abstract study of hypothermia.

### 3.2 Materials and Methods

The wide-open sonic world of electroacoustic music encourages imaginative and imagined extrinsic connections because of the variety and ambiguity of its materials, because of its reliance on the motion of colourful spectral energies, its emphasis on the acousmatic, and not the least though its exploration of spatial perspective. – Denis Smalley<sup>22</sup>

The plot in *L'I meant* is based on a compilation of neurology texts, a FlyMonarch e-mail apology concerning delayed flights, and the true story of a love triangle from the *Titanic* (2012 marks the centennial anniversary of its sinking). Moreover, to create a strictly ordered pattern, a series of field recordings have taken place.<sup>23</sup> While these sounds seem

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<sup>19</sup> York Composers Collective, 1 March 2012, Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall.

<sup>20</sup> Centre for Practice-Led Research in the Arts, University of Leeds.

<sup>21</sup> 'Performing Research/Researching Performance', a CePRA study day at the School of Music, University of Leeds, 7 July 2012.

<sup>22</sup> Denis Smalley, 'Spectromorphology: Explaining sound shapes', *Organised Sound* 2:2 (1997), p. 110.

<sup>23</sup> The field recordings include: interviews of Cypriot Navy Seals on their experience in cold water, recordings of a baby's multiphonic-like sounds and coughs, amniotic fluid sounds, scuba diving sounds (breaths at a moment of claustrophobic underwater turmoil), CT scan machine voice-overs from the NHS oncology department ("breath in, hold your breath, breathe normally", hand dryers (white noise), and WC flush sounds.

unrelated, they are all connected to a unified narrative: the condition of hypothermia. The new soundscapes that emerge can be broken into three principal components: breaths, water and cold (temperature). To illustrate Smalley's theory above, by analysing the nature of both the live and the pre-recorded we conclude that the sounds in *L'I meant* have a triple meaning:

1. they have to be appreciated in their original sense
2. they offer a musical transformation to the timbral quality of the piece
3. they have to be understood in the new context.<sup>24</sup>

This proves that there is a certain freedom attached to the 3rd channel and generally to the medium of sound art from the perspective of sound treatment.



Fig. 5 – From the performance of *L'I meant*, Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall (photography by Nik Morris).

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<sup>24</sup> This is contrary to the legacy of Pierre Schaeffer's *reduced listening* and *sonic objects*, in which the materials are divorced from any extra-musical associations that are attached to them. From Pierre Schaeffer, *Traité des objets musicaux* (Paris: Seuil, 1966), pp. 95, 114-117.

Similarly, in *4 3* and *The Man with the Hammer*, the audience is trying to tie the links of a carefully constructed performance, and through this they arrive at the message of the works: in the first two works the notion of ‘constructing Englishness’ and the ‘omen of chaos’ accordingly, and in the case of *L’I meant* it is a study on the function of breath, and the effects of hypothermia on the body. This was also recognisable with the use of pre-existing music such as Purcell’s ‘Cold Song’ from his semi-opera *King Arthur*,<sup>25</sup> George Katsaros’ ‘The drafted sub-lieutenant’,<sup>26</sup> and Radiohead’s ‘Exit Music (For a Film)’.<sup>27</sup> These songs are quoted and presented in an easily-digestible format as part of the work’s meta-language and linked with their lyrics.<sup>28</sup>

*L’I meant* is dedicated to all the people who lost their lives due to hypothermia during the harsh winter of 2011.

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<sup>25</sup> Henry Purcell, *King Arthur* (1691).

<sup>26</sup> George Katsaros, ‘Ο Έφεδρος’, in *Αλβανία* (1973), album.

<sup>27</sup> Radiohead, ‘Exit Music (For a Film)’, in *OK Computer* (1997), album.

<sup>28</sup> At this point, I knew there was a potential problem in terms of copyright, however the material was either out of copyright (Purcell), paraphrased in the context of music (as a mash-up in Katsaro’s song) or rendered almost unrecognisable (Radiohead).

#### 4. *rings true* (2011-13) – for solo classical guitar, finger slide, faceOSC and tape [ca. 12']<sup>29</sup>

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##### 4.1 Introduction

Notion of a book (of a text) in which is braided, woven, in the most personal way, the relation of every kind of bliss: those of 'life' and those of the text, in which reading and the risks of real life are subject to the same anamnesis. – Roland Barthes<sup>30</sup>

*rings true* is a music theatre piece and a presentation of a modified 3rd channel based on a 'virtual performance'. It is the first of the *personal* pieces of this folio (alongside *Re: All* and *NARcissus*), which imply a programmatic nature: *rings true* is influenced by a personal break-up at the time of its composition. Ambrose Field describes the choice and use of personal sound material as 'personification'. He goes on to suggest that this compositional approach

has highly personal and human extramusical connotations. 'Sonic personification' can be a powerful tool for composers wishing to utilise environmental sounds as it can be used to create a point of contact with the audience.<sup>31</sup>

As one of the personal works *rings true* deals with a nostalgic reflection of the past, hence the concept of the virtual performance: a live performance interacting with a virtual performance (i.e. present and past). The freedom that it is attached to the score(s) highlights the philosophy of the 'Death of the Author', as introduced by Roland Barthes in his book *Image, Music, Text*.<sup>32</sup> The final scores (score Alpha and score Beta) were created in tandem with animator Poppy Aristidou. In relation to the other works of this folio, *rings true* was likewise constructed over different stages and versions.

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<sup>29</sup> Video contained in Disk 1, number 4.

<sup>30</sup> Susan Sontag (ed.), *A Barthes Reader* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1982), p. 412.

<sup>31</sup> Ambrose Field, 'Simulation and Reality: The New Sonic Objects', in *Music, Electronic Media and Culture*, ed. by Simon Emmerson (London: Ashgate, 2000), p. 49.

<sup>32</sup> Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p. 33.

The different stages are:

- **2010**, September: Creation of the tonal/melodic section.
- **2011**, February: The first workshop with Stefan involved the presentation of a draft material from *rings true* and showcased experimentations on the capabilities of the contemporary classical guitar.
- – May: the second workshop and evening performance of score Alpha by Stefan (Fig. 1).
- **2013**, March: Creating the tape (performance and samples), testing the faceOSC, and video-recording the final version, transcribed as score Beta.

## 4.2 Materials and Methods

In regard to pre-recorded samples and materials, *rings true* consists of the original realisation of the score Alpha<sup>33</sup> by Stefan from the first performance,<sup>34</sup> and of two field recordings (from a mobile phone) of my ex-partner's voice.<sup>35</sup> It is aurally apparent that the samples of the tape which are Stefan's performance and the mobile phone samples are not processed. The reason for this kind of 'unprocessed reality' is to maintain the audience's interactivity and engagement on a direct level.<sup>36</sup>

The rationale behind the limited choice of material is to focus on the realisations of the score, as this is *not* a devised work from scratch with the performer involved. Rather, the score(s) consist of a considerable format: they provide the structure, and the extended techniques are not at any degree random. So, in *rings true*, the score(s) and the first performance (score Alpha) *become* the 3rd channel, and this reveals a post-first

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<sup>33</sup> See Appendix I: submitted as supporting material in the scores.

<sup>34</sup> See Appendix II: an audio recording of the performance is contained in Disk 2, number 9.

<sup>35</sup> These include two short and original song-fragments, composed and sung by my ex-partner about our relationship.

<sup>36</sup> Field, *Music, Electronic Media and Culture*, pp. 43, 45.

performance construction of the 3rd channel, from something that was not considered as such.



Fig. 6 – From the first performance of *rings true* (score Alpha), Rymer Auditorium (photography by Ben Eyes).

#### 4.4 Theatrical Technology

In the modern period space was predominantly space traversed... In the 'postmodern' period the speed with which space is traversed is no longer governed by the mechanical speed of machines such as airplanes, but rather by the electronic speed of machines such as computers and video links which operate at nearly the speed of light. A mutation in technology therefore has, arguably, brought the technologism inherited from the spatial perception of modernist aesthetics into line with the perceptions of modern physics.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Victor Burgin, *In/Different Spaces* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 42-43.

Even though I was interested in using real-time equipment in this work, my intention in *rings true* was to break away from any machine technology which makes references to technological issues of style. From a theatrical perspective, the faceOSC functions within the principle of 'cause and effect'. The programmer in charge allocates sound-manipulation effects to facial actions, such as blinking, frowning, or smiling. After testing and experimenting with the technology, it became clear that a scream-like face was the most reliable parameter when it comes to allocating effects on. Additionally, the concept behind the theatrical technology was to highlight the narrative of the love story in *rings true*. The scream could be read as the pain of a love separation, which adds a negative tone to the work. Of even more significance, is the choice of the effect for the scream: the performer triggers a distortion effect (via a scream-like grimace) to what is fed into the microphone. One could argue that *rings true* is not a music-theatre piece due to the limited visual theatricality in the actions and that it falls in the category of 'instrumental theatre'.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, the technology in this case *is* the theatre, and the theatre magnifies the narrative. The use of faceOSC in *rings true* was a joint effort with Benjamin Eyes, who introduced me to the idea of *theatrical-processing*.

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<sup>38</sup> For more on 'instrumental theatre' see Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music and After: Directions Since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 176-184.



**5. *Re: All* (2012)** – for soprano, classical guitar, make-up set, audience participation, and tape<sup>39</sup>

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### 5.1 Introduction

Sound occurs among bodies [...] sound is never a private affair. – Brandon LaBelle, *Surface Tension: Problematics of Site* and *Site of Sound: Of Architecture and the Ear*<sup>40</sup>

*Re: All* is a performer-specific music-theatre piece for solo soprano and tape. As a devised work, it was created working in tandem with the soprano Ana Beard-Fernández and the violinist Dr Ilias Devetzoglou. *Re: All* belongs to the same type of compositions as *L'I meant*. Yet there are limitations in this approach and so the extent to which it is reproducible is indicated in two approaches:

- a. as a performer-specific work, this version of *Re: All* can only be performed by Ana (due to the unique nature of the involved material: human [Ana's] voice).
- b. *Re: All* could be performed by another female singer (or even dancer), even though that it would imply recreating some parts of the tape part to fit the new 'character'.

*Re: All* is a journey from-and-to language through various points in time (*then*: future and past), and a study on anthropology, based on the experiences and the nonsense sounds of a 19-month-old child. It belongs to the *personal* pieces (with *rings true* and *NARcissus*), it was presented at the YoCoCo winter concert,<sup>41</sup> and it is dedicated to my niece Aphrodite.<sup>42</sup> The final score was created by graphic designer Panayiotis Tofi.

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<sup>39</sup> Video contained on Disc I, number 5.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted in Alan Licht's *Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories* (New York: Rizzoli International, 2007), p. 213.

<sup>41</sup> YoCoCo Winter Concert, Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, 29 November 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Being inspired and celebrating the birth of new members in the family by dedicating newly composed works can be common in music, such as Stevie Wonder's 'Isn't She Lovely' from his album *Songs in the Key of*

## 5.2 Materials and Methods

'Time', too, is a cultural construction, even less rooted in biology than notions of 'space'. All living creatures that interact with others in their environments may be said to have a 'sense' of *timing* – that is, the ability to coordinate their movements with the movements of other objects in their environment. But that's not the same thing as the *idea* of 'time', which seems to require, at the least, the cognitive capacity to compare one state of affairs with another state of affairs retained in memory and attend to the change between 'then' and 'now'.<sup>43</sup>

The above sentiment points out the idea of *time*, and the notion of 'constructing time' which is a key element in this composition. In Deleuzian terms, *Re: All* presents two *territories* of time, and these are the 'present-as-past', and the 'present-as-future'. It shows the character development of a little girl through to being a woman, via the treatment of the collected sounds. Influenced by the nature of the prefix 're' from e-mail titles, *Re: All* is a *response* to *all* the musical sounds I have been subjected to, and that have been produced by my – then – 19-month-old niece. The word-play and the duality of the title make reference to the fact that this work deals with reality; here a series of field recordings of the baby have taken place in order to construct a compositional journey, where the soprano shifts from being an infant to becoming a woman.

The level of specificity goes beyond the performer and extends to time-specific elements, as those nonsensical sounds are no more present in the vocabulary of the – now mature – aforementioned child. Christopher Small proposes a general idea of site-specificity, which invites the reader to question the notion of *here* and *now*. He writes:

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*Life* (1976). Interestingly, Wonder also included field recordings of himself playing with his daughter as part of a lengthy outro to the song.

<sup>43</sup> Faye Ran, *A History of Installation Art and the Development of New Art Forms* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 8.

What does it mean when this performance takes place at this time, in this place, with these participants? [...] What is really going on here?<sup>44</sup>

Just to contextualise, if Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge*<sup>45</sup> was part of a 3rd channel (by this I mean if the – *then* – 12-year-old boy treble Josef Protschka was performing live, alongside with a tape part), then it would be a time-specific work, or maybe a *phase-specific*. This is due to the changeable sounds which are incorporated into the timbre continuum of the work, and therefore when the voice of the boy treble changes through puberty, the piece would be completely different to the original one. The following phases illustrate the genesis of *Re: All*, where the material in this work was collected and created over three recording series, which appear in this chronological order:

1. **Field recording of the baby:** creating the basic structure (musical *exoskeleton*).
2. **Studio workshop recording with the soprano:** filling the gaps of the basic structure, and setting a framework for the violin additions.
3. **Studio workshop recording of the violin player:** layering of violin moments to create the key effects in the work (evacuation motif, sigh motif).

This work arrives within a context based on my fascination and interest in sounds produced by infants (also in other works such as *The Man with the Hammer*, *L'I meant* and in *NARcissus*). By collecting raw, nonsensical sounds produced by a baby, the idea of composing a music-theatre piece for homogenous, voice-like instruments such as solo violin was thwarted, and realised. The application of 'vocal style' in violin playing can be

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<sup>44</sup> Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> Karlheinz Stockhausen, *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1955-56).

found in David Milsom's book *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance*.<sup>46</sup>

### 5.3 Reality

All true language is incomprehensible, like the chatter of a beggar's teeth. – Antonin Artaud<sup>47</sup>

Aside than being a work based on fragments of long developmental stretches (evacuation/ 'sirens motif', baby sounds), *Re: All* approaches the context of the vocal treatment from opposite directions:

- a. phonetically – by exploring the timbral characteristics of sounds, and
- b. phonologically (partially) – by exploring the meaning within the phrases.



Fig. 7 – From the performance of *Re: All*, 29 November 2012 Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, York (photography by Radek Rudnicki).

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<sup>46</sup> David Milsom, *Theory and Practice in Late Nineteenth-Century Violin Performance: An Examination of Style in Performance, 1850-1900* (London: Ashgate, 2003), p. 83.

<sup>47</sup> Susan Sontag, *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1976), p. 36.

But beyond that, the aim of *Re: All* was not to communicate a message within a specific language; rather, it engages the audience through the nonsensical sounds of a baby. And even though the instructions to the baby in the field recordings are in Greek, the social context of the piece is not affected by the language used. *Re: All* deals with a realistic ‘vocal writing’, the core of language, which zooms in the *grain* of the throat and the ‘whole carnal stereophony’ of the voice. As Barthes writes,

[...] it suffices that the cinema capture the sound of speech *close up* (this is, in fact, the generalised definition of the ‘grain’ of writing) and make us hear in their materiality, their sensuality, the breath, the gutturals, the fleshiness of the lips, a whole presence of the human muzzle (that the voice, that writing, be as fresh, supple, lubricated, delicately granular and vibrant as an animal’s muzzle), to succeed in shifting the signified a great distance and in throwing, so to speak, the anonymous body of the actor into my ear: it granulates, it crackles, it caresses, it grates, it cuts, it comes: that is bliss.<sup>48</sup>

A similar working approach of the vocal treatment by Georges Aperghis can be found in his work *Récitation Nr. 11*, which is a study on the musicality of speech.<sup>49</sup> To conclude, *Re: All* not only constructs a performer-specific environment, but also functions as a *phase-specific* tool for remembering sounds from the past, which are no longer reproducible by the particular performer. Jen Harvie elaborates:

Site-specific performance can be especially powerful as a vehicle for remembering and forming a community for at least two reasons. First, its location can work as a potent mnemonic trigger, helping to evoke specific past times related to the place and time of performance and facilitating a negotiation between the meanings of those times.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Sontag, *A Barthes Reader*, pp. 413-4.

<sup>49</sup> Georges Aperghis, *Récitation Nr.11* (1977-78).

<sup>50</sup> Jen Harvie, *Staging the UK* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 42.

## **6. *for Giacomo Pozzuto* (2013) – for cor/oboe, a glass of water and pianist<sup>51</sup>**

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[...] one need not return to notions of either site or self as fixed or finite entities. One need not imply an unproblematic notion of a located self, or a resolution of the tension between conceptual and ‘real’ sites. One need not make an absolute distinction between material and human objects. – Jen Harvie<sup>52</sup>

### **6.1 Introduction**

*for Giacomo Pozzuto* is a performer-specific music-theatre piece for the oboist Giacomo Pozzuto. The line-up involves two performers: one oboist (doubling cor anglais) and a pianist on a grand piano. *for Giacomo Pozzuto* was the last piece to be composed for the submission of this folio, and it illustrates the compositional strategies of my later experiments. It was presented in Giacomo Pozzuto’s final MA recital at Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall on 26 September 2013. The final score was created in tandem with Soteris Hadjidemetriou.

On a procedural level, the performer-specificity in *for Giacomo Pozzuto* affects the interpretation of the composition, meaning that it would not *work* once it was performed by any other oboist for two main reasons:

1. Gathering and setting materials from the particular soloist (his preferences, his limitations – i.e. avoiding flutter tongue), would result in a different performance by other players.
2. The sort of vocal materials contributed by this performer would sound alien and disjointed to any other voice/character on stage.

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<sup>51</sup> A video is contained on Disc I, number 6.

<sup>52</sup> Jen Harvie, *Staging the UK* (Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 42.



Fig. 8 – From the August rehearsals of *for Giacomo Pizzuto*, Rymer Auditorium (August, 2013).

Hence, the development of this work was designed through two compositional phases:

1. one cor/oboe workshop with the performer back in March 2013.
2. the devising of the piece during August 2013 with the performer.

The March workshop involved a thorough demonstration of the cor and the oboe, which showcased not only the performer's capabilities, but also the possibilities and limitations of the two instruments. Over the coming months the design of the piece was set in motion over pre-compositional sketches and mind-mapping on the development of the pre-recorded material. In August, we took the workshop as a starting point and figured out

ways of how to inhabit a musical space while pulling the workshop apart and restructuring it.

## 6.2 Performer-specificity

Site-specific work takes things a stage beyond the simple staging of a theatre work in an odd location and seeks a whole new form of work in theatrical terms. That new form of work is composed of three integral and active elements: 1. the performance; 2. the place [performer]; 3. the public. And it is the deep engagement of these three elements that constitute site[/performer]-specific works.<sup>53</sup>

I started forming the notion of performer-specificity during a seminar with Rebecca Saunders, the composer in residence at the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (2010). In her pre-concert talk of the work *chroma*,<sup>54</sup> Saunders mentioned that she is interested in solo pieces for specific performers. Her solos are focused on the performers' capabilities and their limitations, and that it could take up to three years to compose a solo work.<sup>55</sup> Alongside that analogy I started thinking about designing works for specific performers, and not just as the likes of Luciano Berio's *Sequenza III*.<sup>56</sup> *for Giacomo Pozzuto* is a piece tailored for the specific performer and allows for no reproduction by any other oboist mainly due to the vocal contributions of the character.

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<sup>53</sup> Clifford McLucas, quoted in Nick Kaye, *Art into Theatre: Performance Interviews and Documents* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1996), p. 213.

<sup>54</sup> Rebecca Saunders, *chroma* (2003, rev. 2010).

<sup>55</sup> Another example to illustrate Saunders' logic is her work *blaauw* (2004), for double-bell trumpet, and *Shadow* (2013) for solo piano.

<sup>56</sup> Luciano Berio, *Sequenza III* (1965), which was designed for and devised with Cathy Berberian according to her preferred sounds and ideas.



## 7. *NARcissus* (2012-13) – for ‘juice’, narrator, light and tape<sup>57</sup>

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The composer’s surface is an ‘illusion’ into which he puts something real – sound. – Brian O’Doherty questioned by Morton Feldman<sup>58</sup>

### 7.1 Introduction

*NARcissus* is one of the two substantial works of this portfolio. Lasting 23 minutes *NARcissus* is a bilingual, performer-specific, music-theatre work for the ‘juice’ vocal trio. In terms of character-development, what is especially noteworthy about *NARcissus* is the exploration of another level of performer-specificity: it draws on the performers’ biographies, and it involves samples from the composer’s close family circle. The final score was created by graphic designer Panayiotis Tofi.

### 7.2 The programmatic content

The duality of the word ‘nar’ in the title suggests that the instrumental line-up involves a narrator,<sup>59</sup> and it is also based on my personal University of York username which fits the theme, since it is dedicated to my late father (Nektarios Andrea Rodosthenous). *NARcissus* is the first work of the ‘Mythology’ cycle of compositions, in which the Greek myth of Narcissus is clearly a subtext of this work. Knowing that Narcissus is a love story on the notion of loss of love, and magnified by the fact that it is a mnemosyne for my late father, the tone of this work is altogether darker.

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<sup>57</sup> Video contained on Disc I, number 7.

<sup>58</sup> Licht, *Sound Art*, p. 136.

<sup>59</sup> The narrator here is used mainly to introduce the sections. One thing, however, that will become apparent later on is that he is the driving force of the music, in which he performs a song for ‘juice’ to improvise on. Perhaps the argument might be that in *NARcissus*, the narrator role is used in its extremes (from a performance point of view), unlike other examples from the contemporary classical canon such as Frederic Rzewski’s *Attica* (1972).

Like most of the works in this folio, there is an interest in the examination and application of human behaviour to a musical environment. In this case, the attention is focused on the reaction(s) of the involved performers ('juice' as a case study), and the loss of their first/strongest love. As part of my work ethic, this work has morphed over three compositional periods:

1. **2010-2013 (ongoing up to the time of the performance):** 'juice' workshops for composers to help explore and understand the skills and limitations of vocal singing. This was a chance to understand the abilities of 'juice' and aspects of vocal writing which they tend to avoid.<sup>60</sup>
2. **2012:** March: recording of interviews during a short studio session with 'juice'.
  - July–August: Field recordings of the mother, the wife and the granddaughter.
3. **2013:** July: working with 'juice' to test the work in a musico-theatrical way.<sup>61</sup>

### 7.3 Emotional Performer Specificity

When one attempts to represent 'reality' on the stage, this always transforms the spectator into a voyeur. – Romeo Castellucci<sup>62</sup>

*NARcissus* and *rings true* have their own emotional value and that is the main reason why the composer is an essential part the performances and the recordings. The purpose of this work is to create an emotional space which modulates into personal dimensions that have real, tactile contact with the audience. This is achieved by drawing on the involved performers' biographies, and the reason for this is explained below. Director Romeo

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<sup>60</sup> Taking into account Rebecca Saunders' notion of solo works, *NARcissus* took in essence three years to be completed, including the workshops as part of testing the material. Techniques such as glottal stops, or extreme in-breaths which can be harmful and tiring to the singers or even simply the fact that they do not whistle were avoided after recommendations from the singers during the workshops.

<sup>61</sup> *NARcissus* was devised over two rehearsals.

<sup>62</sup> Romeo Castellucci interview by Jonathan Marshall, 'The Castellucci Interview: The Angel of Art is Lucifer', *RealTime*, <http://www.realttimearts.net/article/52/7027> [accessed 17 October 2013].

Castellucci keeps distancing himself from the mainstream roots by using *raw* reality on the stage. As a result audience members faint, leave or just stay to confront this reality, as it has a traumatic effect on them. Barthes draws attention to the fact that voyeuristic curiosity is part of the human nature and that it can magnify our interest in one piece. In his words,

[w]hy do some people, including myself, enjoy in certain novels, biographies, and historical works the representation of the 'daily life' of an epoch or a character? Why this curiosity about petty details: schedules, habits, meals, lodging, clothing etc? It is the hallucinatory relish of 'reality' (the very materiality of *that once existed*).<sup>63</sup>

Reality turns the atmosphere of the performance of *NARcissus* and *rings true* into a voyeuristic experience.

#### **7.4 The Interviews**

It may rewrite or problematise the nature of the relationships between all components of the event: (a) between audience members as individual and audience as mass; (b) between audience member and performer; (c) between audience mass and performer; (d) between performer and architecture and so on. This inevitably broadens the deep, structural possibilities of theatre.<sup>64</sup>

The scale of what was would happen in the studio session soon became clear: it then had to be approved by the performers in order for the piece to be completed. The interview was not a technical workshop on the capabilities and the limitations of 'juice'. It was something deeper and more direct, almost like an interrogation (a procedure that was magnified by the use of light). Moreover, by expanding the scope of the interviews, the listener experiences an environment of confession.

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<sup>63</sup> Sontag, *A Barthes Reader*, p. 408.

<sup>64</sup> Clifford McLucas quoted in Mike Pearson, *Site-Specific Performance* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 176.



Fig. 9 – From the performance of *NARcissus*, 25 July 2013, Rymer Auditorium, York (photography by Radek Rudnicki).

It is also interesting to note a comparison by Mike Pearson from his study *Site-Specific Performance* in which he suggests that the audience and the performer are thrown together in *sociopetal* arenas; within these environments ‘the audiences are thrown into proximity, audiences may feel not only the closeness and tough of performers but also of each other’.<sup>65</sup> There is an interesting link to the recent musical *London Road*,<sup>66</sup> in which the interviews were the starting point of the production. I was fascinated by the idea of a real event (i.e. the interviews of real people with their London accents) being the basis of a work. In *London Road* the music soon gains an added emotional dimension as the text is musically decomposed. I wanted to involve this textual focus in *NARcissus* as well.

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<sup>65</sup> Mike Pearson, *Site Specific Performance* (2010), p. 175.

<sup>66</sup> *London Road*, book and lyrics by Alcky Blythe, music and lyrics by Adam Cork (National Theatre, London, April 2011).

The recording session was based on three questions about the notion of the loss of one's first/strongest love. The questions are not present in the recording nor asked by the narrator, but through the answers the audience is summoned to engage their brains in order to decode the meaning of this sequence. The three questions of the piece appear in this order:

- a. What did you feel when you were with him?
- b. What do you remember?
- c. How did he leave you?

The underlined logic of *NARcissus* is contained within the last question. 'How did he leave you?' is a leading statement which seems to boil all thoughts down to a simple concept – on the different stages of the loss of love (addiction, helplessness, depression, death).

## **7.5 Reality**

That is what representation is: when nothing emerges, when nothing leaps out of the frame: of the picture, the book, the screen. – Roland Barthes<sup>67</sup>

The predominant force in *NARcissus* is contained in the reality of the interviews; this approach dealing with moral and ethical issues has surrealistic roots. However, one needs to be cautious when dealing with raw material which is highly personal due to ethical considerations. From this point of view, there is something about the interviews which demands respect, and a normalised reasonableness when using these samples. *NARcissus* was the recipient of the Centre for Modern Studies small grants award in July 2013.

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<sup>67</sup> Sontag, *A Barthes Reader*, p. 411.

## **8. *ΩMA: A journey to Y/Work* (2010-13) – an 8-channel surround sound installation for unattended computer, microphone and audience participation<sup>68</sup>**

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### **8.1 Introduction**

[...] the location, in reading of an image, object, or event, its positioning in relation to political, aesthetic, geographical, institutional, or other discourses, all inform that ‘it’ can be said to *be*. – Nick Kaye<sup>69</sup>

*ΩMA* is the second of the substantial works and the final submission of this folio. This is the longest composition with a fixed duration of 27 minutes, and is my first work in the installation medium. It is a time-specific, 8-channel, surround sound installation sited within the Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall. As defined by Licht’s categories of sound art, *ΩMA* falls into the first category, which is:

An installed sound environment that is defined by the space (and/or acoustic space) rather than the time and can be exhibited as a visual artwork would be.<sup>70</sup>

It is worth noting, however, that *ΩMA* as a time-specific work is also defined by the notion of pre-allocated time.<sup>71</sup> The installation is positioned in an ambisonic ring which invites audience participation in the optimum position of the sound (i.e. the centre of the ring).<sup>72</sup> The audience members are invited to contribute vocally to the piece and this is magnified in the theatre of the set; a live dynamic microphone mounted on a stand, a stool and a lamp highlight the performance space for participants to interact vocally with the piece (Fig. 10).

Additionally, the piece starts with field recordings from train announcements – “Please

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<sup>68</sup> Audio (8 mono channels and 2 stereo mixes: one without reverberation, one with a site-specific reverberation impulse taken from the Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall), contained on Disc II, number 8.

<sup>69</sup> Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> Licht, *Sound Art*, p. 16.

<sup>71</sup> *ΩMA* was performed every 28th and 57th minute of the hour. This relates to the programmatic content and will be explained in the following section.

<sup>72</sup> At this point, I should mention that there is no height dimension in *ΩMA* (channel Z).

familiarise yourself with the equipment in your area...” – while the audience is orienting within the space. *ΩMA* is the summative piece of my experiments, and the final test for the 3rd channel, because the composer invites the audience/live element to interact with the acousmatic.



Fig. 10 – From the performance of *ΩMA*, 19 June 2013, Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, York (photography by Radek Rudnicki).

The original title of this work was *Work-shop/ship*. The duality is explained in the division of the word ‘work’ and the word ‘ship’. The journey to York has a double meaning: the actual train journey to York<sup>73</sup> and the metaphorical sense of my voyage of sound discovery.

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<sup>73</sup> Which reflects another element of A.P.V.: before entering the performance, the spectators were given the actual tickets from my Leeds-York journey, collected during 2010-13. The ‘train journey’ is also contained in the recordings of the train announcements, which is aurally apparent in the introduction and the ending of *ΩMA*.

*ΩMA* also means ‘raw’ in Greek, which as we shall see in the following paragraphs, illustrates the compositional development of this piece. Thirdly, it derives from the ending word for cancer names (lymphoma, melanoma, seminoma, etc). This is a reminder about the relentless toll that cancer takes on people’s health, and it is dedicated to relatives and friends who lost their lives from the disease.

## 8.2 Materials and Methods

The pleasure of representation is not attached to its object. – Roland Barthes<sup>74</sup>

*ΩMA* is based on a series of eight acoustic instrumental workshops which I have conducted during my doctoral thesis from 2010 to 2013.<sup>75</sup> In these workshops I have recorded trumpet (Dr Matt Postle), erhu (Dr Cheong Li), flute (Dr Manos Panagiotakis), recorders (Dr Charlotte Pugh), cor/oboe (Giacomo Pozzuto), soprano/tenor saxophone (James Mainwaring), cello (James Whittle), and bass/clarinet (Patrick Burnett). The choice of the instrumental forces was planned in order to create interesting timbral interactions. So the question arises as to how much was sketched out *a priori*?

There is a ‘directed improvisation’ focus in *ΩMA* in the sense of making music together in the moment, rather than responding to the randomness in music, or even being part a collective *ad lib*. The work belongs to a family of sonic clouds/moments that relate to one another, and the sectionality is dominated and shaped by the composer. The following are the sections in *ΩMA*:

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<sup>74</sup> Sontag, *A Barthes Reader*, p. 409.

<sup>75</sup> No electric or electronic instruments were involved (i.e. electric guitars or live electronics).



- On tonality
- On drones (low register)
- On key clicks/*col legno*
- On the ‘bouncing ball’ motif
- On bends/*gliss*
- On multiphonics
- On the ‘ambulance’ motif
- On growling/noise
- On *vibrato*/trill
- On speed (fast sequence)
- On duration (long)
- On criticism/comments (by the performers)

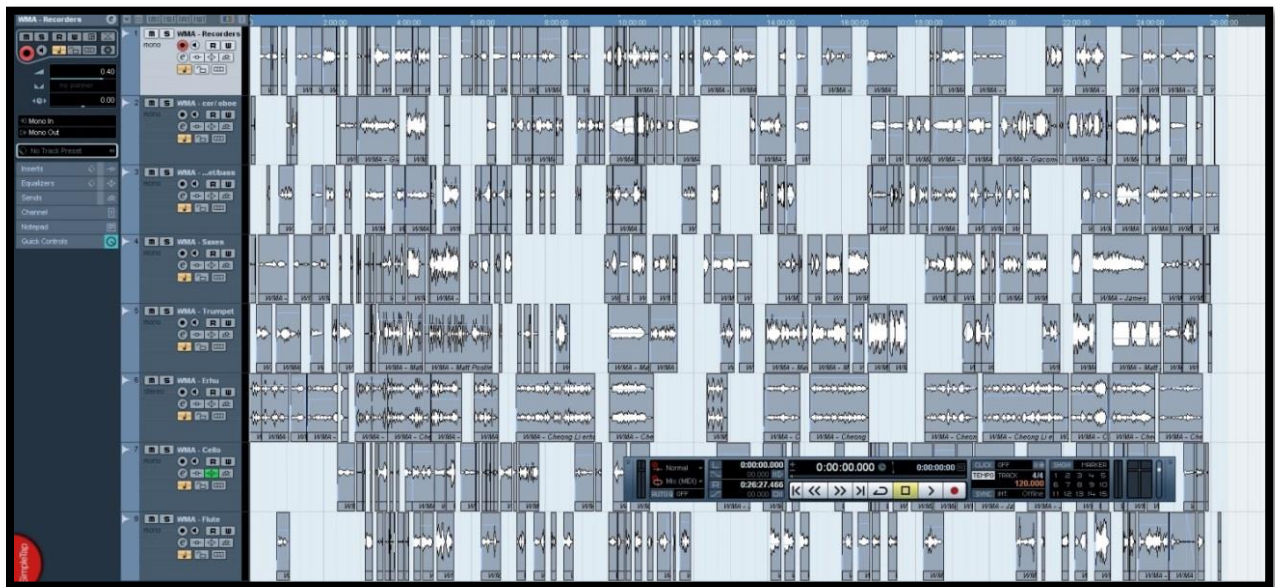


Fig. 11 – DAW screenshot from the editing process of  $\Omega$ MA (June 2013).

To conclude with the realisation of the workshops, I should mention the post-production process of  $\Omega$ MA. Intuitively, a lot of ‘scanning through’ workshop material took place in order to reveal the evocative sonorities for the final edit. Fig. 11 from the DAW of  $\Omega$ MA suggests this was an editing-intensive process. The concentrated result of the editing does not mean that the sounds were in any way manipulated by any means of sound synthesis,

hence the Greek meaning of *ωμά* (raw). Not even by the use of reverberation, which is nonetheless inseparable from the Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, the venue that was intended to be performed in. Yet, even though the eight mono tracks differ in quality, time and place, the reverberation in the Lyons hall *ties* the performances into an entity.

### 8.3 On site-specificity

But the notion of ‘space’ is not biologically given. ‘Space’ is an idea, a concept, a relatively high-order abstraction of something that location, position, proximity, and movement seem to use (or to other cultures) to have in common, namely, some ‘field’ in which they occur. Indeed, even to define the concept of ‘space’ in that way, as the field or arena in which objects are located and move, is to privilege one meaning of ‘space’ over others. – Faye Ran<sup>76</sup>

What is noteworthy about *ΩMA* is the focus on the cultural extensions of the space in which it is performed. The Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall is translated as the pivotal point for music, and it creates an environment to which the eight musicians return acoustically to re-perform together, in a newly created ‘space’ and ‘time’.<sup>77</sup> In this way, anthropologist Tim Ingold proposes that:

A place owes its character to the experiences it affords to those who spend time there – to the sights, sounds and indeed smells that constitute its specific ambience. And these, in turn, depend on the kinds of activities in which its inhabitants engage. It is from this relational context of people’s engagement with the world, in the business of dwelling, that each place draws its unique significance.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ran, *A History of Installation Art*, p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> Another suggestion of space would be to present the installation in the Trevor Jones recording/live room; this adds an organic dimension to the piece, and it emphasises its theatricality, because this is where all took place (created, recorded and mixed). One can go on from this to argue that this new site would impose a very effective parallel reality to the audience participation, because it would have the same feel as a session musician being recorded (and this is where the audience participation would make *ΩMA* as the ultimate test).

<sup>78</sup> Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 192.

To articulate the importance of *ΩMA*, I should point out that it lies in the reflection of an aesthetic duality in its compositional approach because not only it is ‘technologising humans’ (by presenting *live* performance in an *acousmatic* medium, i.e. installation), but also because it is ‘humanising technology’ (by treating an 8-surround sound installation as eight performing individuals).<sup>79</sup>



Fig. 12 – Francisco Lopez, *Düsseldorf*, Contemporary Art Museum Yucatán Mérida (Mexico, 2009; image courtesy the artist).

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<sup>79</sup> Netaudio London & Sound and Music present *Simon Emmerson on Live Computer Music* (online interview, 2010). [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78z1\\_8J8oVE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78z1_8J8oVE) [accessed 20 November, 2013].

## Concluding Remarks

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[The Third Utopia]: We should rediscover how to not imagine, but to enact utopia. The point is not, again, about planning utopias. The point is about practising them.' – Slavoj Žižek<sup>80</sup>

This thesis is an attempt to readdress how – or whether – the fusion of *live* with *acousmatic* sounds is possible in contemporary music. Through eight original performances and the analysis thereof, the research project investigated how we can rebalance the relationship between the *live* and the *acousmatic* through the notion of musico-theatrical interactions. The eight works of this folio display a breadth of material, musical techniques and diversity presented through the different versions of the 3rd channel. Moreover, an in-depth analysis of the works shows that they are equally balanced between experimentation and self-expression through the use of reality and different explorations of performer specificity. In order to address the necessity of critical rigour, the theoretical notions embedded in this portfolio were based on ideas by Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, Barthes and Žižek. This research also retains connections between music and theatre by referring to stage directors such as Jan Fabre and Romeo Castellucci, and music theatre composers such as Mauricio Kagel and Georges Aperghis.

To conclude, the 3rd channel as a framework is useful in presenting sonic and expressive possibilities. It combines the advantages of both acoustic and acousmatic music, and, due to its limitless nature, it may additionally be incorporated or employ other disciplines; however, in this thesis, a musical 3rd channel was investigated with notions of music theatre and reality.

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<sup>80</sup> Slavoj Žižek: *The Reality of the Virtual*, dir. Ben Wright (2004), film.



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**APPENDIX** – The following pieces should be considered as supporting material for reference.

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- APPENDIX I: *rings true* (2011) – for classical guitar and finger slide.  
**[Score from the performance of score Alpha submitted as supporting material in the scores].**
- APPENDIX II: *rings true* (2011) – for classical guitar and finger slide.  
**[Audio recording from the performance of score Alpha, 11'30", contained in Disc II, number 9].**