

Composing and devising music theatre

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Abstract

This commentary is a theoretical, research-based explanation of the eight pieces contained in the portfolio, all of which were composed with the hypothesis that the visual aspect of musical performance is as important, and is as performative as, the aural aspect.

The portfolio explores the use of text in musical composition by setting texts, and charting a progression from scores using conventional musical notation ('Oh mihi, Duncia!', 'um', 'Brainbow mouse'), to those using verbal notation (*ahamkara*, 'geneRic speCtator, 'five tableaux for five musicians'). 'Cornucopian cloud' is situated at the half-way point between these two, using a graphical cue notation for physical communication between players alongside specific musical material, while the final piece, 'nothing new', compresses the transition from musical to verbal notation into its concept and structure.

This progression is the primary research concern of the pieces' composition, as seen in the focus on the act of making performance which shifts from composer to performer. The incorporation of text into the compositional process through a process of assimilation is analysed, as explored through the creation of scores for devising pieces of music theatre. Devising is considered as the function of the score as a textual stimulus for performers. Consequently, all the pieces require improvisation, except 'Brainbow mouse'; all are visual, physical pieces.

A supplementary theme pervading the portfolio is the influence of 'Surrealist intentions', to quote Nicolas Calas: the idea that two objects, which may not be expected or thought of as being similar or related, but which can be seen to have an interactive relationship through their juxtaposition. In this light words and music, words and movements, and music and movements, are considered, alongside the existence of an artwork's 'self'.

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Lists of Accompanying Materials

Scores

The following scores of works, listed chronologically, are included in the portfolio:

<i>‘Oh mihi, Duncia!’ or,</i>	
a Mob of Metaphors: a service	for Officiant, Barbershop Quartet and Female Chorus
um	for speaker and chamber ensemble [fl.cl.perc.pno.vln.vc]
Brainbow mouse	for chamber ensemble [fl(=picc).cl(=bcl).pno.vln.vla.vc]
<i>ahamkara</i>	for three voices
Cornucopian cloud	for as many celli as possible
geneRic speCtator	for two performers
five tableaux for five musicians	for any five musicians
nothing new	for bass clarinet

Since some of the titles are written specifically with italics, to avoid confusion throughout this text the titles all appear as they do here and in inverted commas (‘’), except for *‘Oh mihi, Duncia!’*, which includes inverted commas as part of its title, and *ahamkara*, which is italicised without commas to distinguish it from the eponymous concept.

While these works were written across a twelve month period, and are discussed chronologically as such, they have all been revised in this time; the argument is relevant to them all.

Media Files

i. Audio CD Track and Performers List

1. 'Oh mihi, Duncia!' or, a Mob of Metaphors: a service [08'20"]
Performed by The 24, in a public concert in the Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, University of York, 30th November 2011.
2. 'um' [01'17"]
Performed by The Chimera Ensemble, in the 2011 Postgraduate Forum Composers' Workshop in the Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, University of York, 19th October 2011.
3. 'Brainbow mouse' [07'09"]
Sampled sound recording exported from Sibelius 7 on 13th September 2012.
4. *ahamkara* [04'14"]
Performed by Juice Vocal Ensemble, in a Composer's Seminar in the Rymer Auditorium, University of York, 19th June 2012.
5. 'Cornucopian cloud' [05'59"]
Performed by York Cello Ensemble, in a public concert in the Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, University of York, 12th June 2012.
6. 'geneRic speCtator' [11'16"]
Performed by Kate Boyd and James Whittle, in the York Spring Festival of New Music 2012 Cage Day Showcase, in the Sir Jack Lyons Concert Hall, University of York, 13th May 2012.
7. 'nothing new' (extract) [02'43"]
Performed by Sarah Watts, in a Composer's Seminar in Room 106, University of York, 26th June 2012.

(Media Files cont'd)

ii. Data CD of Video Files Track and Performers List

[The two files on this CD are .mp4 files.]

1. 'Oh mihi, Duncia!' or, a Mob of Metaphors: a service [08'53"]

[Performers as detailed on the previous page.]

2. 'five tableaux for five musicians' [08'25"]

Performed by The Assembled, in a public concert in the Rymer Auditorium,

University of York, 18th June 2012.

Author's Declaration

I, James Whittle, hereby declare that the commentary, musical scores, audio recordings and video recordings that comprise this portfolio, are all my own work. Where pieces were composed by me collaboratively, through working with ensembles (as is the case with 'geneRic speCtator' and 'five tableaux'), the pieces were each from my own original idea, and I was the director of the ensemble members' engagement with each process, resulting in the performances presented here.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the support and guidance given to me by my supervisor Professor Roger Marsh throughout the course of this year, which has enabled me to carry out my research into making theatre work with an open and perceptive mind. I have always left supervisions feeling inspired, motivated and positive for my music. I have been fortunate to work with Dr Catherine Laws in The Assembled ensemble, who has given me much inspiration through the ensemble's activities and performance regarding theatre, performance, and performativity. I would also like to thank Professor William Brooks, Dr Thomas Simaku, and Dr John Stringer, all of whom continue to encourage and inspire me in numerous ways, as they have done over the course of my time in York, with their profound and humorous insights.

I am grateful for all of the ensembles and students who have contributed towards this portfolio by performing my music: the University of York students in The 24 choir and their conductors Graham Bier and Jonathan Brigg, The Chimera Ensemble, conducted by Benjamin Gait, York Cello Ensemble, and The Assembled. Outside of the university, I am grateful for the friendly input and advice given to me by Juice Vocal Ensemble, Kate Boyd and Sarah Watts, in workshopping, collaborating and performing *ahamkara*, 'geneRic speCtator' and 'nothing new' respectively.

Finally, I would like to thank my wonderful family and friends for always being there and supporting me in my studies.

Part I – Text, Theatre and Musical Composition

1. Text in Context: ‘*Oh mihi, Duncia!*’

i. The Text-setting Process and the Textual Stimulus

My approach to the devising of music theatre has involved a strict method of text-setting.¹ For humans, words are the fundamental communicators of meaning. Our understanding (or not) of these and other texts shapes our experience. When we are made to realise the true meaning, value or existence of a text that we did not know of before, the sensation can be epiphanic.

Words, the essence of theatre, have provided stimuli to composers for centuries. In my pieces I have dealt with the stimulus provided by a single word, such as with *ahamkara* and ‘Cornucopian cloud’, to that of an entire text, as in ‘*Oh mihi, Duncia!*’ and ‘nothing new’. In either case, and anywhere in between, the aim has been not to word-paint programmatically by incorporating standard techniques (such as the contrast between syllabic and melismatic settings, or the construction of harmony and tonality inspired by a narrative found in the linearity of one’s reading of the text). Instead, each piece has sought to let the word (or words; the text) speak for itself to the spectator, by investigating their contexts and combining these with an informed reading of the meaning of the text.

There can be multiple layers of meanings to a text. In performance, some of these cannot be accessed or communicated within certain processes of artistic composition. As a

¹ In this essay ‘text’ is used to refer literally to a literary source, despite the relevance to musical performance of recent criticism of theatre and phenomenology examining the concept of the (or ‘a’) body as a text. These theories are considered in Chapter 6, Concluding Remarks.

relevant example, let us take a text-setting methodology in music which does not reflect the provenance of a text, but chooses to focus solely on the words of a poem. This method, however valid, allows the composer to take a subjective approach, to which the performer responds in kind, and for a text (and its performer) to speak for itself (or himself), but superficially. Without the potential for the communication of context as well as text, the spectator will only be able to reach so far into the meanings of the text with his lens of interpretation, through which he is guided by composer and performer.²

One such example can be seen in a comparison between the text-setting of Arnold Schoenberg's *Pierrot lunaire, Op. 21* and Albert Giraud's *Pierrot Lunaire: 50 Rondels Bergamasques* by Roger Marsh. Schoenberg selected twenty-one of the fifty poems and rearranged them into 'Three Times Seven Poems'; he uses only a translation from French to German by Otto Erich Hartleben. Marsh, on the other hand, has set all fifty poems in their original order; the original French is combined with a new English translation. Consequently, Schoenberg's recontextualisation of the original text is vastly different to Marsh's, in terms of what can be learned about the text.

A spectator to Schoenberg's setting will not hear the whole text, evidently, and what they do hear, unless they are provided with the original French, will have been a different version of the text which obstructs meanings and connotations in the French with others that do not exist in the French. But a spectator to Marsh's setting will not only be able to hear the complete text, and, if an English or French speaker, understand it, but thanks to Marsh's close setting of French alongside English, they have the benefit of being able to compare the

² I have chosen to use the term 'spectator' after recent art criticism by Guy Debord and Jacques Rancière, in which they discuss the activity and passivity of the spectator. While these writings refer to the visual arts, the term is useful to acknowledge the visual and aural aspects of musical performance, comparable to these. As a spectator, one is a witness to theatre: they are conscious of an action happening; it performs, whether the performer intends the action to or not. (These performative actions may or may not be artistically composed.) A spectator may be active in this way, or passive in the sense that their perception is limited to consciously produced and performative actions, which can only come under the remit of art, of any media, theatre, music, dance, or others.

translation line for line. They will also experience the narrative that Giraud presents through his arrangement of the poems, allowing themes to evolve naturally to the spectator. By contrast, Schoenberg isolates certain themes in his rearrangement that constrains the arch of Giraud's own narrative sequence to those themes alone.

It would be fair to say that while both works offer, to differing extents, subjective interpretations of Giraud's text, only Marsh's setting also offers an objective presentation of the text and its context, for as Marsh states, 'there is no single narrative, but rather...a number of mini-narratives.'³

Similarly, I have intended to avoid subjective interpretation of text as much as possible, since any musical decisions that I made have themselves conditioned the perceptible subjectivity that identifies the piece as itself, and by me.⁴ This view is comparable to that of the Russian film director Andrey Tarkovsky, who has written that,

unless there is an organic link between the subjective impressions of the author and his objective representation of reality, he will not achieve even superficial credibility, let alone authenticity and inner truth.⁵

The artist's subjectivity is inevitable in his work, but the way the artist treats his subjectivity in relation to a text can make all the difference to the artwork, resulting in its relative

³ Marsh, Roger. "A Multicoloured Alphabet": Rediscovering Albert Giraud's *Pierrot Lunaire* in *twentieth-century music*, p.110.

⁴ For example, the choice to set the piece for Officiant, Barbershop Quartet and Female Chorus is not a subjective interpretation of anything found explicitly in the text; rather, it is the contextual style of the texts that warranted them suitable for the piece. The relationship between these roles and the musical material is discussed on pages 21-24.

⁵ Tarkovsky, Andrey. *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*, p. 21.

perceptibility to a spectator. Tarkovsky later develops this point with an observation of artistic practice that could be used critically of Schoenberg:

What we are talking about is being faithful to the truth of the characters and circumstances rather than to the superficial appeal of an interpretation of images.⁶

However, it would be mistaken to criticise Schoenberg with Tarkovsky's claim that 'the true artistic image is always based on an organic link between idea and form', as especially when considering the work's impact and influence on composers ever since. Schoenberg's textual rearrangement is not without its musical and structural intentions. Naturally, Tarkovsky admits,

my point of view is subjective. But that is how it has to be in art: in his work the artist breaks down reality in the prism of his perception and uses a foreshortening technique of his own to show different sides of reality.'⁷

Those 'different sides' can be familiar or unfamiliar to a spectator; both present issues to the composer. A familiar text can enable the spectator to imagine stylistic preconceptions for the piece, and to locate the piece in any number of contexts of which the spectator is

⁶ Tarkovsky, Andrey. *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*, p. 26.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

aware (such as other settings of the text, or other works by the author). An unfamiliar text is arguably more challenging, since the spectator must attempt to understand first the text, as well as its context within a new piece of music, and then within the performance of that new piece of music. A text can therefore be analysed as having three layers of meaning: the literal, the outward definition of words themselves; the metaphorical, implied definitions of collected words and phrases across the text (where their reoccurrences become symbolic motifs in relation to their objects); the contextual, whereby the previous two layers are regarded within the scheme and style of the text as composed by the author.

I have used these definitions of mine to select texts conscientiously, to correlate their literal and metaphorical meanings with my literal and metaphorical concerns. Each piece's musical language, and therefore the notation, has adapted to suit the text. In the process of spectation, assuming activity and not passivity, the spectator interprets the performance, the music and the text. For a composer aware of this fact, and of the chance that any audience may include spectators unfamiliar with the text, the text-setting process can become complicated: does the composer recognise that there may be a large distance between his text and his spectator, so that the piece may fail to communicate all that it could?

While a presentation of unfamiliar text alone could make sense to the spectator, it would, however, limit the depth of understanding that the spectator could reach in the course of a performance, were it not that the context of the unfamiliar text was also conveyed.

Such information can be found typically in a concert programme note. But to simply state the context there – the themes and ideas in the piece which are intended to be perceptible to a spectator – would be to simply provide a description of a composition and its aims, rendering its performance redundant. Programme notes are an expected part of the concert-going experience. Contextually, they are part of performance. I have sought to construct

programme notes carefully so that they support their pieces with specific information which guides the spectator, but does not control his perception of judgment of the piece (based on prior claims in a programme note of what the piece aims to express). The intention here is to support my compositional process of making text, as the primary motivation for each piece, and its context, foremost to the spectator. To aid this communication, programme notes are to be found at the front of each of my scores for the performer's consideration.

It is implausible to construct a way of knowing whether or not any spectators would know of any text appearing in musical performance, let alone its author or context. My decision in '*Oh mihi, Duncia!*' was to not only communicate the words of Alexander Pope (1688-1744) in *The Dunciad* in a straightforward manner (enabling them to be unequivocally clear to the spectator), but also the contexts of those words. This decision led to the incorporation of texts other than the poem itself. Therefore, in '*Oh mihi, Duncia!*', extracts from the Preface and prolegomena of *The Dunciad* appear before an extract from *The Dunciad* poem.⁸ Similarly, in *ahamkara*, a consideration of the meaning of that word led to the assimilation of a variety of texts, the difference being that these texts were abstracted to aid the concept, of 'ahamkara', so that their original sources need not be conveyed through the piece.

The context of the text, then, is, to the composer, as important as the text itself. It was my intention in '*Oh mihi, Duncia!*' to present simply the stylistic context of the poem as far as possible, equal to and necessary for a presentation of the text. The compositional process was therefore one of assimilating the literary techniques of Pope, through my literary analysis and research of literary criticism, to inform my musical forms that could better express the scheme and style of the poem.

⁸ *The Dunciad* was published during Pope's time with accompanying essays by the author and the editor. These included 'Martinus Scriblerus Of the Poem', which is referred to with the 'Preface' as the poem's prolegomena.

The programme note for ‘*Oh mihi, Duncia!*’ reflects this process. Its first paragraph comprises my original text with an unset quotation from *The Dunciad* (IV.604):

A prophecy is accompanied by a lament for our fate: in the post-apocalyptic world governed once more by Night and Chaos, our religious epic voices an isolated populi stranded in a merciless, nonsensical world. Thus, an heroic epic narrates the precipitative Action that is its restoration, as commanded in the cataclysmic yawn of our goddess Dulness: ““MAKE ONE MIGHTY DUNCIAD OF THE LAND!””

Thereafter, quotations from the set poetic text appear in between text which I adopted from the Preface and prolegomena of *The Dunciad*, alongside original text written in the style of these. A reading of the programme note before hearing (or during the performance of) the piece was therefore akin to reading the prolegomena before reading the poem.⁹ Both serve their subject in defining the work’s themes, aims, structure, even its name:

Hence also we learn the true title of the poem; which with the same certainty as we call that of Homer the Iliad, of Virgil the Aeneid, of Camoens the Lusiad, we may pronounce, could have been, and can be no other than The DUNCIAD.¹⁰

⁹ The piece was performed on 30th November 2011 by The 24 choir at the University of York.

¹⁰ Pope, Alexander, ed. Ward, Sir Adolphus William. ‘Preface’ to ‘THE DUNCIAD’ in *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope*, pp.353-354.

Hence also we learn the true title of the piece; which, we may pronounce, could have been, and can be no other than *OH MIHI, DUNCIA!*¹¹

Added to the literal, the metaphorical and the contextual is a fourth layer of meaning, the recontextualised: a process carried out actively by any reader of a text, by any artist approaching a text to create a new piece from it, and by any spectator to the artist's work; for the spectator will only be able to observe what has been observed and selected for communication by the artist. It is so that this emphasis on the composer's subjective choice may be overcome, allowing the text and context to communicate freely, that both must be researched fully, to provide a fair portrait of the text.

Moreover, this process supplies the composer with ample material to colour the text with nuanced references to its contexts, allowing a greater amount of freedom when moving from one layer of contextual reference to another. While the composer's individuality cannot be completely removed, some progress can be made towards its subversion, with the intention to focus on the communication of the source text, since those elements which are the direct choice of the composer, and those of the author of the text which the composer wishes to communicate, are thrown into greater relief so as to be distinguishable from each other. The spectator may then enjoy the same freedom of movement from one context to another, within the moment of their own process of recontextualisation, of both the text and the piece setting the text, which is in this case musical performance.

¹¹ See Appendix 1 for the full programme note and a coloured analysis of its construction.

ii. Literary and Performance Contexts

The composition of “‘*Oh mihi, Duncia!*” or, a Mob of Metaphors: a service’ (September-October 2011) demonstrates this technique of literary analysis and recontextualisation, combined with the understanding and analysis of the context of performance. Unlike other theatrical works, in whose compositional process words featured prominently, (‘um’, *ahamkara*, ‘Cornucopian cloud’ and ‘geneRic speCtator’), the title ‘*Oh mihi Duncia!*’ was decided later, as a summary for the piece’s themes. The choice of titles has been fundamental to my process, so that the concept of the work is always to the fore, in order to communicate as much to the spectator as is possible.

‘*Oh mihi, Duncia!*’ is scored for Officiant, Barbershop Quartet and Female Chorus; both this fact and the title indicate the three themes of the piece. The first was to set part of Pope’s *The Dunciad*, a mock-epic satire in four books written in 1722, revised in 1729 and again in 1741, when Book IV was added. I selected this last Book, the subject of which has been described as the ‘total eclipse of the arts and learning’,¹² and from it to set the last thirty lines. These lines are separated from the 626 that come before, and as such are a parenthetical epilogue, where the ‘one, great and remarkable Action’ of the goddess ‘Dulness’, who conquers England (for a second time), is finally told.¹³ The epilogue acts as a compression of this one event, which the entire poem meanders slowly towards. It can be no coincidence that a satirical poem concerned with the ‘virtues’ of idleness and idiocy (which for Pope are raised to the height of immorality) should spend its length prophesying and preparing for an action that is only depicted at its very end. As literary critic Alvin B. Kernan has written,

¹² Knuth, Deborah J. ‘Pope, Handel, and the “Dunciad”’ in *Modern Language Studies*, p. 27.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.347-438.

the overall plot of *The Dunciad*...is made up of a very large number of seemingly random events, fantastic scenes, and individual character sketches...[t]he spread of ignorance and darkness quickens in Book IV.¹⁴

Faced with the problem of introducing the poem to a contemporary audience, and intending for them to gain much from the idea of immorality, 'Night and Chaos' overrunning England, I decided to model the structure of the piece on the structure of the poem and its prolegomena, drawing on several published versions of these texts.¹⁵ In this way I could reflect and keep intact the compression effect of the poem.

To achieve this, it was necessary to analyse the poetry and research the context for the poem's publication, as well as a range of literary criticism. Pope's original publications featured a wealthy prolegomena, two of which sources have been included in the composition of '*Oh mihi, Duncia!*'

The first is a Preface, '[p]refixed to the first five imperfect Editions of the DUNCIAD, in three books, printed in DUBLIN and LONDON, in octavo and duodecimo, 1727' written by 'The Publisher'.¹⁶ The editor, Sir Adolphus William Ward, notes that this 'Publisher' is likely to have been the satirist colleague of Pope, Dr Jonathan Swift, to whom *The Dunciad* is dedicated. Indeed, it has its own exaggerated ironies, such as this distorted quotation of Statius' *Thebaid* (which Pope had in part translated in 1703):

oh mihi bisseños multum vigilata per annos,

¹⁴ Kernan, Alvin B. 'The Dunciad and the Plot of Satire' in *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, p. 261.

¹⁵ The structure of the piece is discussed during the course of further discussion of the textual sources and their relation to musical material: see pages 18, 22-23, and 26.

¹⁶ Pope, Alexander, ed. Ward, Sir Adolphus William. 'Preface' to 'THE DUNCIAD' in *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope*, p. 352.

Duncia!

‘Oh my Dunciad, on whom I have toiled through the night for twelve years!’¹⁷

Ward estimates that Pope wrote *The Dunciad* between 1720 and 1727.¹⁸

The second source is an essay included in the poems’ prolegomena, entitled ‘Martinus Scriblerus Of the Poem’ (added in 1729). ‘Martinus Scriblerus’ was a satirical pseudonym and figurehead used by Pope, Swift, and other members of the Scriblerus Club for their criticisms of society.¹⁹ ‘Martinus Scriblerus Of the Poem’, like the ‘Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus’, are likely to have been written by many if not all of the club’s members;²⁰ Ward agrees on this point.²¹ Nevertheless, at its close the essay is initialled ‘P’. Whichever the case, it is honest in its preparatory description of the ‘Machinery’ of the mock-epic, while in its praise and admiration it is ironically hyperbolic in its identification of the poem as a Classical epic:

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 352. This translation is by the present author. Statius’ original text reads:

Durabisne procul dominoque legere superstes,
o mihi bisseos multum vigilata per annos
Thebai?

(XII.810-812)

‘My Thebaid, on whom I have spent twelve wakeful years, will you long endure and be read when your master is gone?’

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 349.

¹⁹ Hight, Gilbert. ‘The Dunciad’ in *The Modern Language Review*, p. 330.

²⁰ Cooke, Alice L. ‘The Shadow of Martinus Scriblerus in Hawthorne’s “The Prophetic Pictures” in *The New England Quarterly*, p. 598.

²¹ Pope, Alexander, ed. Ward, Sir Adolphus William. ‘The Dunciad [an essay]’ in *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope*, p. 349-350.

This poem, as it celebrateth the most grave and ancient of things,
Chaos, Night, and Dulness; so is it of the most grave and ancient kind.²²

I have reflected this notion of preparation through prolegomena in my piece's structure, whereby the subject matter and situation is described in text taken from the Preface and the words of Martinus Scriblerus, before the main body of text from Book IV of *The Dunciad* appears.

Pope's mock-epic form of ironic caricature, as in the above quotation, suggests that he both wants the reader to believe him and at the same not to believe. Yet, throughout the poem Pope presents real people and situations, intended to give the poem plausibility and enhance his satire of society. Incompetent writers are depicted as servants to the goddess Dulness; the anti-hero King Dunce Cibber is named after the contemporary Poet Laureate, Colley Cibber (one of many against whom Pope held a grudge); 'Giant Handel' is banished 'to th' Hibernian shore' for his heroism of composing long and noisy operas ('[t]o stir, to rouse, to shake the Soul he comes', IV.65-70).²³ Deborah J. Knuth observes this scene as a 'bold historical obtrusion in the allegorical speech', noting that after the reported failures of *Saul and Israel in Egypt* in London, 1739, Handel 'merely went to Dublin.'²⁴

This play between reality and virtuality influenced the second theme of '*Oh mihi, Duncia!*': to re-imagine the text in my contemporary society. This task was made horrifically pertinent with the onset of the August Riots across England in 2011. The images of grossly immoral violence, hooliganism, and disrespect for human lives that were exhibited in the national media, including iconic or familiar objects in states of chaotic decay (such as a

²² Ibid., p. 360.

²³ Ibid., p. 406.

²⁴ Knuth, Deborah J. 'Pope, Handel, and the "Dunciad"' in *Modern Language Studies*, pp. 22-27.

London bus on fire, landmark buildings destroyed, the irony of a smashed 'self-service' sign), seemed remarkably similar to Pope's words of how '*Morality expires*' (IV.650):

For *public* Flame, nor *private*, dares to shine;

Nor *human* Spark is left, nor Glimpse *divine*!

Lo! thy dread Empire, CHAOS! is restor'd;

Light dies before thy uncreating word;

Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;

And universal Darkness buries All.²⁵

(IV.651-656)

The alternate title of 'a Mob of Metaphors', a quotation from *The Dunciad*, (I.67),²⁶ is intended to reference the mobs and gangs that were seen vandalising and looting in the August Riots, as well as recognising the many mocking and self-reflexive metaphors and ironies in the prolegomena, as translated into '*Oh mihi, Duncia!*'.

Selecting text from outside the body of the poem was appropriate both to introduce and provide the context for the poem, and for the comparison of the poem with contemporary issues. The use of musical quotation was also relevant, as a means of combining the unfamiliar (my musical idiom, the new) with the familiar (the old, other pieces of music and

²⁵ Pope, Alexander, ed. Ward, Sir Adolphus William. 'THE DUNCIAD' in *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope*, p. 367.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 367. 'She [goddess Dulness] sees a Mob of Metaphors advance'.

musical styles). This technique was taken from the analysis by Alvin B. Kernan of satire in the poem. Kernan observes that:

Pope has so arranged his poem that this ultimate expansion is at once a contraction. At the very moment that dulness [sic] becomes everything, everything becomes nothing, for dulness is finally nothingness, vacuity, matter without form or idea.²⁷

This 'expanding-contraction' is aptly represented in Pope's image of Dulness' 'Vortex':

The gath'ring number, as it moves along,
Involves a vast involuntary throng,
Who gently drawn, and struggling less and less,
Roll in her Vortex, and her pow'r confess.²⁸

(IV.81-84)

I intended to reflect this 'Vortex' in the juxtaposition of familiar, popular musical styles with a modernist idiom, which conflict and escalate tension, until the piece ends with a collage-like potpourri of pastiche, quotation and original material. This musical vortex of styles can be

²⁷ Kernan, Alvin B. 'The Dunciad and the Plot of Satire' in *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, p. 262.

²⁸ Pope, Alexander, ed. Ward, Sir Adolphus William. 'THE DUNCIAD' in *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope*, p. 407.

seen in Figure 1, where the shift from the unfamiliar modernist to the familiar is shown to relate directly to the structures and texts of the piece.

This technique is seen further in the scoring for Officiant, Barbershop Quartet and Female Chorus. The Female Chorus mimics the ever present chorus of Greek tragedy, (to which Pope refers frequently), commenting on the main action between two protagonists:

<u>STRUCTURES</u>			<u>TEXT</u>			<u>MUSIC</u>			
<i>The Dunciad</i>	Book IV	Matins	Preface	Martinus Scriblerus	<i>The Dunciad (Book IV)</i>	pastiche	quotation	modernist idiom	speech
Preface		Introit				plainchant intonation			
Martinus Scriblerus		Responses					rhythm of 'oh mihi...'		
						jazz 'scat'			
	ARGUMENT								
I	IV	Venite							
II		Psalm				psalmody			
III		Lesson					MEDEA redrawn		
							rhythm of 'oh mihi...'		
IV		Jubilate				Barbershop			
	epilogue	HYMN				Barbershop	Elgar/Mahler		

Figure 1: the structures, texts and musical styles of 'Oh mihi, Duncia!'

Officiant Martinus Scriblerus and the Barbershop Quartet. As a dual role for a solo speaker/tenor or baritone, the Officiant represents mock-epic allusions in *The Dunciad* to the divine and religious (both of its subject matter and its subject), reflecting the quasi-religious structure of the piece by announcing the order of the service. Martinus Scriblerus appears as a reflection of the literary structure, and narrates the intentions of both *The Dunciad* and ‘*Oh mihi, Duncia!*’ as if summarising the prolegomena (bars 10-19). Martinus Scriblerus steps aside in bar 27 to reveal the true ‘Hero of the Poem’: a typical male Barbershop Quartet of tenor, lead, baritone and bass voices. This ‘hero’ is four men (rather than one man) in similar fashion to the grandiloquent, hyperbolic style of *The Dunciad*.

In this way, the registers of male and female voices (which are four pairs of two parts which may be sung by more than one to a part) are balanced, since their musical material relates to their character roles, which are in dialogue. The Officiant Martinus Scriblerus intones plainchant melodies, narrates the ‘ARGUMENT’ (an extended narration designed to sound boring and to bore; bar 18), and occasionally joins in with the Barbershop Quartet; the Barbershop Quartet replies by introducing its own pastiche material. While both these characters share the poetic text, the Female Chorus bustle and chirp with commentary (‘In like manner our author hath drawn into this single the whole history of Dulness and her children’, bars 19-20 and 28-39), and echoes of the poem as the ‘history’ is told by the Quartet.

Barbershop music was chosen as an opposite music to my contemporary idiom as it is a style in which I have much experience of rehearsing, performing, and arranging. The ‘bounce’ of Barbershop songs complements the satisfactory yet incessant rhythmic drive of the rhyming couplets in Pope’s pentameter; lines bounce superficially and reductively, and froth with humour despite their serious, quasi-graphic depictions of violence, ‘Night and Chaos’.

The Barbershop music of the Jubilate (letter H, bar 108) is predicted by a series of jazzier moments beforehand, the intention of which was to suggest the evolution of an infernal Barbershop sound world. At letter B (bar 13), there is a five bar jazz ‘scat’ singing riff with finger-clicking, of otherwise unrelated material. Elsewhere, diminished seventh and dominant seventh chords (though it would be incorrect to analyse them as such in their contexts and which are staple chords of the Barbershop sound world), are distorted with chromatic alterations, such as the inclusion of flattened ‘blue’ notes.

The expanding ‘Vortex’ of Dulness is represented by three increasingly lengthened moments where these distortions are overcome to resolve onto a standard triad, in a musical tricolonic climax (see Figure 2 overleaf).²⁹ This theme uses a chromatically rising sequence of tetrachords to alternate diminished and dominant sevenths (bars 65-69). On the third occurrence (bars 156-172), multiple rising dyads are combined, syncopated both within and between the Barbershop Quartet and the Female Chorus, to intensify the dissonant harmony.

While I treated the macrostructure of harmonic movement freely, so that there is no gravitational pull of tonality across the entire piece, I kept close harmonic control over the microstructure through the tension of semitonal movement between suspended dissonance and resolution. The tonality reached at the end of these rising sequences were chosen so as to be within a comfortable range for the singers, but as high as possible. On the second occurrence (bars 111-117), E major was chosen since it is a common key in Barbershop music for the voicing of the chords which the Barbershop Quartet sing in the Jubilate (letter H, bar 120). This close harmonic control allowed the playful juxtaposition of triadic tonality

²⁹ The couplet ‘Nor *public* Flame, nor *private*, dares to shine; / Nor *human* Spark is left, nor Glimpse *divine*!’ (IV.650-651) is a paradoxical dual tricolonic climax of simultaneous expansion and contraction. As one divine light fades literally and metaphorically, ‘Flame’ to ‘Spark’ to ‘Glimpse’, it is replaced by another, rising from ‘*public*’ to ‘*human*’ to ‘*divine*’: ‘universal Darkness’.

molto accel. molto rit. ♩ = 132 subito

p < *mp* > poco a poco cresc. *ff*

TENOR LEAD

65 and Cha os

BARTONE BASS

and Cha os old!

p < *mp* > poco a poco cresc.

Figure 2.a – ‘Oh mihi, Duncia!’ bars 65-69, Barbershop Quartet

♩ = 100 Anticipatory but menacing

molto accel.

111 subito *pp* cresc.

Thus at her felt ap - proach, and se - cret might,

[Tutti]

114 *f* *mf* *f*

Art af - ter Art goes out, and all is Night.

and all is Night.

[Barbershop Quartet]

Figure 2.b – ‘Oh mihi, Duncia!’ bars 111-117 (reduction)

157

Soprano 1

Alto 2

Soprano 2

Tenor/Lead

Alto 1

Bass/Baritone

164

169

Quartet and Martinus Scriblerus

Figure 2.c – ‘Oh mihi, Duncia!’ bars 156-173 (harmonic reduction)

with densely chromatic chords in a pan-tonal environment, where both retain a communicative voice without becoming incoherent.

Similarly, for the setting of words that appear in the Psalm (letter F, bar 75-93), the composition of pastiche psalmody was necessary. The Female Chorus takes the role of the church organ in sounding the chord and moving to each consecutive chord slightly earlier than the Barbershop Quartet, which sings the words as a church choir would, arriving to each

slightly later than the organ. Accordingly, the two groups of singers are directed to be out of time with each other to replicate the delay of sound travelling in the acoustics of a large church or cathedral. The notation reflects this event with displaced barlines, whilst the text is temporarily formatted like a psalm. When the Female Chorus abandons their role in bar 83, the Officiant intones a pretend cantus firmus to remind them of it.

The first direct musical quotation occurs in bars 93-5. The bass and baritone sing a motif opening a music theatre piece of mine from November 2010, *MEDEA redrawn*, to reintroduce the chord sequence heard in the Venite (letter E, bar 47) with the words, ‘As one by one, at dread Medea’s strain’. This quotation of the composer’s own work resembles one of the ‘sick’ning stars [which] fade off th’ethereal plain’ (IV.636).³⁰

More familiar musical referencing was needed at the piece’s climax. With the image of a London bus aflame in mind, I chose to set the last four lines of the poem by quoting melodies from Elgar’s Pomp and Circumstance Marches Op. 39, No. 1 in D major (bars 160-163) along with the chorale from the fifth movement of Mahler’s Symphony No. 2 “Resurrection” (bars 164-171), culminating in a Barbershop-style whole tone rising triad (bars 173-176) which, except for the extreme outer compound third parts, are distorted chromatically, unidentifiably, until the last chord of the piece blazes in ironic F major.

The context for the prospective performance of the piece inspired the third theme: religion. Through religion, the piece could explore psychological, as well as physical, decay. The piece was commissioned by The 24 choir of the University of York, for a concert entitled, ‘*Vox populi... vox dei*’, in which it would be paired with a piece composed before 1650. One piece in the pair was to assume ‘*vox populi*’, the other, ‘*vox dei*’, so that interplay between sacred and secular texts would be established. My decision was to pair my piece

³⁰ Ibid., p. 367.

with Carlo Gesualdo's 'O vos omnes' from *Sacrae Cantiones I* (1603), which sets one verse from the Book of Lamentations (1:12):

O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte:

Si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus.

'O all you who pass by in the road, attend here and see:

If there is another's sorrow like my sorrow.'³¹

The title '*Oh mihi, Duncia!*' corresponds to 'O vos omnes'. While Gesualdo's motet is a lament for the destruction of Jerusalem, its juxtaposition with '*Oh mihi, Duncia!*' intended it to represent a lament for the destructive spread of Dulness. To emphasise the destructive characteristics of Dulness and the contemporary relevance of the poem, the performance of '*Oh mihi, Duncia!*' was accompanied by an overhead projection displaying images of the August Riots (these can be seen in the accompanying video of the performance).

The audience was presented with an increase in tension from the destruction of a city to the destruction of a country; physical destruction of the city leads to the psychological destruction of the mind, through immorality. There is also a satiric inversion between the texts, from a holy, conquered God to an unholy, conquering goddess, 'Dulness'. This inversion, as Teona Tone Gneiting notes (similarly to Kernan's 'expanding-contraction'), is a

³¹ Gesualdo, Carlo, principe di Venosa. 'O vos omnes' in *Sacrae Cantiones I für fünf stimmen, Band VIII.*, p.40. The translation here is by the present author.

technique found in *The Dunciad*.³² And indeed, though clearly a secular poem, the poem masquerades as quasi-religious and assumes a sacred significance as both a history and, conversely, a prophecy.

The third part of the title indicates that the piece is ‘a service’. I chose to replicate the structure of an Anglican Matins service because of the absurdity of holding a religious service for a secular *coup d'état*. Similarly absurd and ironic is this all-conquering dawn on England and the mind, in fact the return of ‘CHAOS’ and ‘Darkness’. This is one half of a bipartite structure of superimposed elements, with the second half being the structure of *The Dunciad* itself (see Figure 1, page 21); the selected elements of a Matins service correspond to the structure of *The Dunciad*, and to Book IV of *The Dunciad*. These structures shaped the proportions of text set in each section, and the musical material.

Text from the Preface, from ‘Martinus Scriblerus Of the Poem’, and lines 627-656 of Book IV, all appear sequentially, with the opening Latin chant reappearing in bars 93-6. This chant, acting as a ‘Sentence of Scripture’, is a rhythmic analysis of Pope’s hexameter borrowed from Statius (see Figure 3 overleaf). The one adjustment to this rhythm is the change of ‘Duncia’ from a dactyl to a trochaic dotted rhythm, allowing for a more natural and easily identifiable delivery of the word, as in bars 3 and 5. When ‘Duncia’ is sung, it interrupts the heavy monotony of the hexameter, which is instantly forgotten, with the bounce of a dotted rhythm coupled with a pentatonic blues inflection (tracing a hypothetical tonic, flattened seventh and dominant).

Similarly, rhythms given to the Female Chorus at bars 19-20 and 28-39 use two conflicting analyses of prose text (see Figure 4 on page 33). In order to have this text

³² Gneiting, Teona Tone. ‘Pictorial Imagery and Satiric Inversion in Pope’s *Dunciad*’ in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, pp.420-430.

— ◡ ◡ | — ◡ ◡ | — — | — — | — ◡ ◡ | — —

oh mihi bisse nos multum vigilata per annos,

— ◡ ◡

Duncia!

Oh mi - hi bis - se - nos mul - tum vi - gi - la - ta per an - nos, Dun - ci - a!

Figure 3: rhythmic analysis of Statius, and its transposition into musical notation

sung at the same time as Martinus Scriblerus narrates a different part of the prolegomena, it was necessary to analyse this line as if it was also dactylic hexameter. However, the fourteen syllables can only conform correctly to Classic convention (with the last two feet being a dactyl and a spondee, as sung by the altos) by having an unnatural emphasis on ‘ness’. A more natural sounding rhythm (sung by the sopranos) is achieved by changing the first three feet to two dactyls, and lengthening the penultimate foot to a tetrasyllable, resulting in a distorted pentameter. By setting this text so rigidly, rhythmically, these passages convey the mock formalism of Pope’s text. The sopranos and altos start in rhythmic unison, but suddenly enter a jarring rhythmic conflict that lessens the intelligibility of the words. Then, ironically, and despite singing the more correct line, the altos get cut off abruptly in bar 39.

Throughout the composition of ‘*Oh mihi, Duncia!*’, literary analysis informed my compositional choices. As an *a cappella* work, my focus was on the construction of aural material, voice leading, and the conveyance of a narrative presenting multiple texts. To these

— — | — ˘ ˘ | — — | — — | — ˘ ˘ | — —

In like manner our author hath drawn into this single (sopranos and altos)

— ˘ ˘ | — ˘ ˘ | — — | — — ˘ ˘ | — —

Action the whole history of Dulness and her children. (sopranos)

— — | — — | — ˘ ˘ | — — | — ˘ ˘ | — —

Action the whole history of Dulness and her children. (altos)

Figure 4.a: rhythmic analysis of Martinus Scriblerus

The figure displays musical notation for two vocal parts: Sopranos and Altos. The lyrics are: "In like manner our author hath drawn into this single Action the whole history of Dulness and her children." The notation includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *sf*. The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes.

Figure 4.b: transposition of Martinus Scriblerus into musical notation

concerns, visual and theatrical material were secondary and illustrative. The Officiant Martinus Scriblerus is self-mockingly required to wear a dunce's hat; in bar 27, he gestures to the Barbershop Quartet, which moves downstage on 'Hero of the Poem' so that the spectator recognises them as such. In performance, no explanation was given for the projected images of the August Riots, as I felt none was needed, given the closeness of the event. I have detailed this fact in the score, so that future performers are free to interpret this context in any way (including ignoring it, or finding another relevant context). Although the contexts of 'um' and other pieces have similarly informed my compositional choices, with these my first compositional concern was the theatre.

2. The Theatre of Musical Performance: ‘um’

i. The Music Theatre Dualism

Ever since I have heard music I have been aware of seeing it. In *Silence*, John Cage asked, ‘[i]f I can see it, do I have to hear it too?’³³ Peter Brook opened his book *The Empty Space* saying: ‘I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged.’³⁴

By extension, any musical performance is inherently a piece of theatre, just as when musicians enter the stage before performance, and leave after it. Marvin Carlson has defined ‘performance’ more carefully, as ‘consciously produced human action in order to have an effect on another watching human being... you are intending to perform; I am intending to interpret it as a performance.’ This idea has defined my compositional concerns with words and physical movements, which could be classed as theatre alongside musical aural material.

An accepted term for such pieces is ‘music theatre’, some composers preferring to use the term ‘theatre piece.’ Stockhausen’s ‘High and Low’ from *Aus den sieben Tagen* is one example of a piece which has been given this label.³⁵ While the label could indicate Stockhausen’s own view of the work, at the least it requires its performers to acknowledge that the work is intended to have a more visually significant aspect to it than the other meditative improvisations in the collection. However, while a performance of any of the other pieces in the collection may not demonstrate their process or directions quite so manifestly as ‘High and Low’, (in which a Man and a Woman improvise ‘words and gestures’ of opposite qualities with two musicians each, while a Child sat between them repeats ‘words that it

³³ Cage, John. ‘Composition as Process, III: Communication’ in *Silence: lectures and writings*, p.41.

³⁴ ‘Marvin Carlson – Interview’ on *YouTube*.

³⁵ Stockhausen, Karlheinz. *nr. 26 Aus den sieben Tagen*, p. 17

hears'), in performance it is inescapable that each is no less theatrical to a spectator. The difference, instead, is the level of self-awareness of the performers, and the degree to which their actions, all of which are performative to a spectator 'intending to interpret it as a performance,' are consciously chosen or not.

I do not wish to dispute the terms 'music theatre' or 'theatre piece' here, since what is necessary is that there is a distinction to the composer about what it is they are creating, and whether or not there is, to their mind, a significantly theatrical component (the sight) that they consider to be external or separate to the music (the sound) of a piece.

Yet, an awareness of the theatre inherent in any performance situation would imply a contradiction in the perception of such a dualism between music and theatre. What is a composer doing when he or she employs 'theatre' with, or in addition to, 'music'? My intention with the short chamber piece, 'um' (October 2011), was to put this dualism into an antagonistic, provocative performance context, in which the subject of the piece is the awareness of performers and spectators alike to the work's inherent theatre. For if an actor should be aware of the entire text and of his entire body as he delivers it, a musician delivering the musical score need not be aware of his whole body, except for those parts of it which he uses to produce sound.

ii. Gesture and the Interactivity of Performance

An acceptance that a musical performance is as much a visual act as it is an aural one is also an acknowledgement that there are performative physical gestures within a musical performance which are made either consciously or subconsciously. If an action is a perceptible movement then it is a vessel for gesture, which instils the action with a degree of communication. A gesture is a communicative action, whether or not intended.

These definitions are corroborated by Rolf Inge Godøy and Mark Leman, who have divided musical gesture into four categories: sound-facilitating, sound-producing, sound-accompanying and communicative.³⁶ While there are gestures which the musician knows they must perform, there are others which they carry out automatically.

The idea that we are not always aware of what our bodies are doing determined the text in 'um', which I wrote (and refined) before the music. The text invites the spectator to reconsider what it is they are doing (watching or listening or both), pointing out the fact that musical performance is a dual sensory process. However, the performance serves to disrupt this realisation by stressing both senses competitively. The speaker is directed to make an entrance and start speaking before the ensemble start playing (unexpectedly). Musical material is dense, with any sense of a tonality thwarted by thunderous thumps on the piano and the total chromatic lines that pass between instruments. The speaker must work breathlessly to project the text over the racket and fit it into the strict duration of one minute.

The disruption is raised to a satirical, nonsensical level by the inclusion of balloons, an ideal and colourful device to represent the clash of the aural with the visual. When deflated in a controlled way, balloons can make a sound similar to radio static which also imitates rapid flutter-tonguing, so could be mistaken, potentially, for another contemporary extended

³⁶ ed. Godøy, Rolf Inge, and Leman, Mark. *Musical Gestures: Sound, Movement, and Meaning*, pp.23-28.

technique. The spectator is faced with the ironic contrast between ‘party’ associations and a hard-edged sound-world which is parodied simultaneously.

It is also to be expected that the balloons will sound simply like balloons, and somewhat childish or paltry against the aggression of the opening music. This hard/soft, densely serious/playful juxtaposition is revisited in dramatic instrumental pieces such as ‘Brainbow mouse’ and ‘Cornucopian cloud’, and in the explicitly theatrical ‘geneRic speCtator’. For while some musical techniques display their potential meaning immediately through perceptible gesture (such as a *sforzando* marcato down bow on a string instrument, which indicates a degree of force both in its sound and physical movement), others do not, and require an interpretation of their context (by both performer and spectator).

While ‘um’ is a short chamber work debatably closer to a comedy sketch than an eloquent epigram, I would suggest that satire, hyperbolic nonsense and a disdain for seriousness in the way such a piece conveys its subject matter, often conceal a deeper, graver irony.

The joke of ‘um’ is that it is knowingly a joke, yet it is concerned with the composer’s and performer’s anxiety that they are not being taken seriously, or even listened to or watched; or, what is worse, that their performance is only being regarded through the distracted faculties of one sense. As the speaker proclaims: ‘are you even listening to me at all?’³⁷

Such anxieties could become irrelevant if recent art criticism considering the interactivity of performance is taken into account. The art critic and curator Nicholas Bourriaud has identified a new trend in the visual arts which he terms ‘Relational Aesthetics’.

³⁷ This line is an unconscious, indirect quotation from Samuel Beckett’s ‘Play’: ‘Are you listening to me? Is anyone listening to me? Is anyone looking at me? Is anyone bothering about me at all? Beckett, Samuel. ‘Play’ in *The Complete Dramatic Works*, p. 314.

Whilst discussing the relationships potentially active in performance, he states that, 'art is a state of encounter,' agreeing with Carlson's definition of performance.³⁸ He describes how the reception of art is a situation not only of a meeting of bodies, but of a dialogue between participants: the artwork and/or artist, and the spectators. For Bourriaud,

inter-subjectivity...becomes the quintessence of artistic practice...

Producing a form is to invent possible encounters; receiving a form is to create the conditions for an exchange.³⁹

While 'um' does not attempt any direct interactivity between performer and spectator, this interactivity is implied through the role of the speaker, whose monologue is written so as to imply more than one voice speaking the text in dialogue (this dialogue could be regarded as an implicit dialogue, such as the differing thoughts of one man, or of two men in explicit discussion). The speaker also proceeds to question the spectator, who becomes a third party to the discussion.

However, given that in any performance the audience is not normally expected or required to reply to the performers, (except in the case, perhaps, of pantomime), the implied dialogue with the spectator is, of course, false and ironic, as shown by the last line of text: 'any questions?' In this challenge, 'um' represents an assertion of self by seeking to make both performers and spectators aware of the 'intrinsically and unavoidably juxtaposed' theatre of musical performance.

³⁸ Bourriaud, Nicholas. *Relational Aesthetics*, p.18.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

3. Text out of Context: *ahamkara*

i. The Assimilation and Recontextualisation of Texts

The assertion of a ‘self’ is the fundamental concern of *ahamkara* for three voices (December 2011 – July 2012). The title is a word I came across by chance in the Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy:

ahamkara (Sanskrit, ‘I-maker’) In Hindu philosophy, the faculty responsible for the unfolding or manifestation of a ‘self’.⁴⁰

‘Ahamkara’ is a metaphor for any piece of music which has its identity fixed in the score, but which has many other identities in performance. In this way our understanding of a piece can develop with it each time we experience it. In contrast to ‘*Oh mihi, Duncia!*’ the word ‘ahamkara’ became a title that conditioned the process of assimilation I adopted to generate the abstracted texts appearing in the score.

Given the word’s origins in Hinduism, and the choice of a trio ensemble, a second point of reference was the Hindu god Brahma, who is depicted as a figure with four heads, four faces and four arms, each symbolising a particular trait of his and pointing in one of the four cardinal directions (north, south, east and west). These heads and faces are joined together as the four sides of one body, so that from whichever perspective they are viewed, only three heads and faces can be seen at once. Yet, the fourth is present, and known to be present. A spectator’s view of an image of Brahma is therefore a static picture of the process of Brahma’s manifestation to them.

⁴⁰Blackburn, Simon. *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 9.

This 'self' is in a state of flux and thus not definable in a linear sense, but is simultaneously complete and incomplete. There seemed to me to be a metaphor in the choice of three-part vocal ensemble, since *a cappella* singers will often aim to sound like one voice: a homogenous, multi-faceted, "blended" sound that denies the individuality of its constituents, who collaborate to create one unconscious sonic entity.

In exploring this musical practice, the piece is also concerned with 'the unconscious reality in the personality of the group'. This statement is how Surrealist artist and theorist Nicolas Calas described an automatic writing game of André Breton and the Surrealist poets in the 1920s, which they called *Le cadavre exquis* (one of their favourite phrases from the first game: '*Le cadavre exquis boira le vin nouveau*'). Like the drawing game 'Consequences', players take turns to write words in a sequence of noun–adjective–verb–noun–adjective, thereby creating nonsensical juxtapositions of ideas and images. The game was designed to remove the artist himself from the creation of self, of an 'other', the artwork.

Likewise, my open form score is modelled on a flowchart to present a meditation around related texts explored through the relationship between chamber musicians, which, as an organic part of the piece, moves between the conscious and the unconscious.⁴¹ This relationship is the anoetic 'other' of music-making: that 'unconscious reality in the personality of the group'. The assimilated found and composed texts all reflect this thought metaphorically, allowing for their recontextualisation here. The found texts are extracts of Samuel Beckett, André Breton and Andrey Tarkovsky, but to allow the words themselves to speak to the performers (and the spectator), they are abstracted: the authors are not identified directly on the score (though the Beckett and Breton may be recognisable). To clarify, the extracts are as follows:

⁴¹ 'anoetic (Greek, not perceived, not conscious) Preconscious or subliminal states of mind.' Blackburn, Simon. *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, p. 16.

I can't go on, you must go on, I'll go on (Samuel Beckett)⁴²

Le cadavre exquis boira le vin nouveau. (André Breton)

[H]e is absent from view, but what he thinks, how he thinks, and what he thinks about build up a graphic and clearly-defined picture of him.

(Andrey Tarkovsky)⁴³

Central to the score is 'ahamkara' itself, divided into syllables, with the 'm' separated to confuse (intentionally) between that sound and a hum.

I chose to compose the other texts to ensure a range of vocalisations that could imitate the forming of words and thoughts; from a whole intelligible poem, through phrases to single words and deconstructed syllables or sounds. There is a continuum from coherence to incoherence here, portraying the internalised language of thought processes. Individual syllables and words can be abstracted (such as in the 'stutter' and 'choose from each column freely' boxes) while there is also the possibility that the performer will look to form tangible phrases and sentences from the materials. The 'stutter' text was composed in this way, as a deconstruction of three sentences: 'I am gone', 'we are one', and 'I am going to tell you'. Similarly, the 'did I say that out loud? Did I really' text is an example of a complete vocalised

⁴² Beckett, Samuel. *Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnameable*, p.418. This is not the final phrase of the novel, but rather one some 87 words beforehand.

⁴³ Tarkovsky, Andrey. *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*, p.29.

thought, which is explored through phonetic play between ‘choice’, ‘choose’, and ‘juice’ in the ‘be in two minds’ box.⁴⁴

The texts thus become metaphors of the process performers go through in the creation of performance. To chart the coherence-incoherence continuum through sound as well as text, I selected four ways that text can be uttered: hummed (the least intelligible), whispered, sung and spoken (the most intelligible). These are arranged spatially down the score for clarity, and labelled on either side to direct either the performer’s activity or their passive reception of the activity.

Additionally, in two boxes, the context-specific, ensemble-specific and personnel-specific nature of improvisation, and of this piece, is translated into actual, textual (therefore musical) material. In one box, the performers can play the Surrealist *Le cadavre exquis* game (in English or French), vocalising any vocabulary that comes to mind immediately in performance. In another, performers can insert any other text (found or composed by them) which seems to them thematically relevant to the piece, choosing also to treat the text however they like.

The performers are therefore able to contribute to the process of assimilation, so that the piece is never static, rather, it relies on the collaboration between its performers (with or without the composer) to gain life.⁴⁵ While such collaboration is true of all music-making, by requiring its performers to not only improvise but partly compose the piece, (through their consideration of the concept and the eventual inclusion of a thematically relevant text), the piece both presents and represents not only literal and metaphorical meaning, but also

⁴⁴ The piece was written for and workshopped by Juice Vocal Ensemble in December 2011 and June 2012 at the University of York. ‘Juice’ appears phonetically in the score as a trace of this first performance context, which future performers would be re-enacting.

⁴⁵ As a logical extension of the inclusion of ‘juice’ in the score, the ambiguity of the instruction ‘insert any text relevant to the piece’ could lead to performers choosing to insert all texts that had previously been inserted in that box in prior performances of the piece. *Ahamkara* therefore has limitless potential, for its self is in a state of permanent manifestation.

contextual meaning. These meanings, which are potentially communicative to the spectator, are explored further through the use of theatre.

ii. Embodiment and Communication of Concept

In *ahamkara*, the process of assimilation is the continuing creation of a context of conceptually or thematically associated textual references. Such a process avoids the typical outcomes of fixing the extramusical and conceptual ideas, and, furthermore, of defining the range of possible interpretations for the spectator. From the conception of the piece, it was my intention to give *ahamkara* specific but flexible vocal and theatrical directions, which could complement the texts' potential meanings and interpretations, whilst allowing devised, improvisatory theatrical and visual movements to enhance and colour them.

Both the score and the staging of *ahamkara* present the unity of the performers' actions with reference to the source concept of the piece. While the score is broadly symmetrical, with 'ahamkara' at its centre, the performers stand as close together as possible as if they are one body, facing outwards at right angles, in the way that Brahma is portrayed. From this position, performers can make movements at any time with their heads, upper bodies, arms, and hands, which they should devise and improvise with in rehearsal to achieve a strong referential character reminiscent of Indian dance and Greek Classical art.

By having the performers face right angles away in this way, they must rely on listening at all times. Visually, they will only be aware of each other's movements at certain moments. The instruction to 'lean torso right/left/forwards' requires the adjoining performer to move in response to that action. Similar to the musical preparation required, through

practising these improvised movements the sense of unity and of one body is maintained, communicating the idea that individual actions will affect those of other individuals.

At two points in the score the visual and aural are coincide to communicate the same meaning from the same source, simultaneously. The first depends on coincidence: when 'ahamkara' is sung and the standard movements have a distinctly Indian style. Conversely, the second is fixed: specific character movements are to be accompanied by spoken imperatives, 'spin', 'measure', 'cut'. These are taken from Greek mythology of the Three Fates, Clothos, Lachemis and Atropos, who in turn spin, measure, and cut the thread of life. Each performer must devise a physical movement presenting their character, though the characters are not able to interact. The potential for these cyclical mythological actions to appear unevenly and out of sequence in performance follows the score in representing a free sense of time and self unfolding. At all other times, save one, the visual and the aural co-exist as communicative, juxtaposed elements. In this way, the aural and visual sides of the piece are reflected in each other, yet both remain equally communicative, rather than one becoming subservient to the other.

Vocally, the performers must become a multitude of abstract characters, based on the texts in the score. At the highest structural level, performers choose either to be active in selecting an independent route starting from the left hand side of the page (labelled 'VOICE'), or to be passive in allowing what they hear to determine which text they vocalise, and how, from the options on the right hand side ('LISTEN'). As they move through the score these two choices become interlinked, so that paths develop away from and back to the performer's initial activity or passivity. From action to action, performers are faced with this same choice, as timbral, dynamic and material parameters become available to them. For example, they may react to the spoken phrase 'I can't go on' by either speaking its following

phrase, 'you must go on', or, ironically, by carrying on, but changing their dynamic to any other.

Pitch is free throughout the piece, except in one circumstance. Clothos, Lachemis and Atropos are each assigned an interval (respectively a fifth, a major and minor third, and a semitone) which they must sing either above or below the pitch of any other singing performer, if there is one. However, the control over pitch sets that results is marginalised by the chances prescribed by the score and the performers' free decisions. Yet, the limitation exists to reflect the controlled visual actions of the characters, and to reflect the coherence-incoherence continuum, from that fixed texture and derivation of material, to the freely pitched humming and solo singing. Just as the syllables of 'ahamkara' manifest its identity, so do the pitches that are used to sing them.

Literally and metaphorically, the performers journey towards 'ahamkara', though the indeterminacy of the circumstances, and their own free will to move from any 'be silent' ellipse to another, subverts this linearity. But linearity is not removed, so that the piece can take on any form, since complete linearity through to complete cyclicism are equally possible, giving a full performance the quality of an improvisation through a mind-map of possibilities.

Subsequent musical decisions are indeterminate, but are to be informed; the performer must rely on their awareness of the ensemble's improvisation to motivate their next actions, and the way in which they perform them. This self-awareness applies to both the performer acting independently and acting passively. While there are expressive vocal directions for each piece of text, the particular character or persona of the text is to be determined by the performer, using every parametric quality of their voice: speed, rhythm and emphasis, dynamics, articulation, and regional accent. In the midst of rehearsal, improvisation, and

performance, the traits of these personae should be extracted and considered, so that performers can shift smoothly between individual, communicative characters.

The overall effect of a performance should be one of similar and dissimilar objects in the manner of a collage, some of which are coherent, and some of which, though seemingly incoherent to the spectator, are no less meaningful or less intended as coherent images by the performer. Silence is also an object: a fair amount of it is to be expected whilst performers wait on any 'be silent' ellipse, make their choice, or, having chosen to wait until they hear a particular vocalisation, wait longer to hear it. This space facilitates an increased focus on listening for performer and spectator alike. It can also allow a greater degree of dialogue between aural and visual actions, since the latter can be performed at any time while the aural cannot. Unlike 'um', the intention was not to confuse, disrupt or bombard with images, as many as there may be in a performance of *ahamkara*, rather, thoughtfulness is explored thoughtfully.

The piece can last any duration, but the performers are reminded that if a specific duration is decided on beforehand, that 'there is only individual choice and collective listening'. This instruction aims to avoid any self-conscious compulsion to fill time that a fixed deadline could create. It is expected that *ahamkara* will always end in silence, but it would be contradictory to impose such a limit on a piece whose subject and self is the process of its own manifestation.

Both performer and spectator are required to interpret these texts for themselves, in the context of the piece and the context of performances, but the spectator must rely on the reliability and specificity of performers' actions, in order to interpret the texts and physical movements with certainty. What matters here is not the performer's intention to perform, nor that 'consciously produced human action' is witnessed knowingly and interpreted by the 'as a

performance' (as Carlson puts it) since these are prerequisites of performance.⁴⁶ Rather, the vocal and theatrical directions were designed to focus the activities of both performer and spectator towards the intention behind the production of the conscious human action.

The communication of such a focus to performers has become the subject of my subsequent instrumental pieces. Before discussing these, the notion of implicit and explicit theatre in my music will be considered in the context of the influence of the music of Harrison Birtwistle.

⁴⁶'Marvin Carlson – Interview' on *YouTube*.

Part II – Devising Music Theatre

4. Implicit theatre: ‘Brainbow mouse’ and ‘Cornucopian cloud’

i. The Theatre of Harrison Birtwistle

In the period from March to May 2012 I composed two works that focused on the implicit theatre of music. The notion of a musical drama is a familiar concept found in symphonic and programmatic works by composers from Berlioz to Richard Strauss. In works such as *Harold in Italy: Symphony in Four Parts with Viola Obligato*, Op. 16, and *Don Quixote*, “Fantastic Variations on a Theme of Knightly Character”, Op. 35, a correlation can be traced between the musical and the narrative structures. However, musical material and gestures conform to the constraints and conventions of the form. To the spectator, nothing can be learned of the drama through an awareness of, let alone an analysis of, the musical macro-structure (the division of each work into movements). Similarly, musical gestures (nuances in melody, harmony, tonality, instrumentation, and rhythm at the micro-structural level), which communicate the subtleties of an emotive narrative, are limited to a fixed vocabulary afforded by each parameter in the context of the piece.

In the same way that Berlioz and Richard Strauss chose musical structures to found their works, Sir Harrison Birtwistle has founded works on dramatic structures, which are most frequently, as Jonathan Cross notes, ‘the formal precepts of Greek tragedy’.⁴⁷ Works are composed from the point of view that its constituents (single instruments or groups) are individuals engaging in a dialogue. This dialogue is of a literal, theatrical and physical sort, into which Birtwistle can place rhetorical devices associated with Classic oratory (such as

⁴⁷ Cross, Jonathan. *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music*, p. 75, see also pp.71-78.

peripeteia and *anagnorisis*) so that the dramatic structure motivates, but does not control, the musical material and gestures of the dialogue. Unlike Berlioz and Strauss, therefore, the form does not condition the material statically. Instead, as in *Tragoedia* (1965), the tension caused by an incomplete symmetry in the sequence of movements ‘compels the music forward’.⁴⁸ Each of Birtwistle’s musical structures and gestures therefore present a fluid, active drama.

More recent pieces such as *Cortege* (2007) and *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* (2011) present an episodic, abstract structure which can focus on the drama of dialogue between the instrumental constituents. As individuals or groups, musicians take active dramatic roles through their physical and musical material. While there is a similarity between Birtwistle’s use in these two works of Greek tragedy’s protagonist and chorus, and the concerto soloists depicting the eponymous heroes in *Harold in Italy* and *Don Quixote* against the orchestra, Birtwistle’s approach enables him to apply the technique to any constituent of any ensemble, not just concerto works.

For Birtwistle, single instruments take on roles which are assigned to them as much for their individual, idiosyncratic aural and physical qualities, as for the qualities attributed to them by the context of an ensemble. In *Tragoedia* for wind quintet (doubling claves), string quartet and harp, the harp is a diplomatic voice that shares material of, and sits logically between, the two opposing ensembles, grouped by timbre. This metaphor of difference and similarity is continued through the material and role given to the horn and cello, both the odd ones out in their groups, as the physicality of holding either instrument is different to their companions. With this common contextual quality, they also share material.

Cross distinguishes the quality of this ‘abstract drama’ correctly, writing that is it: ‘not the story that is of primary importance...rather, it is the way in which it is told, the ordering of

⁴⁸ Programme note for Harrison Birtwistle’s *Tragoedia*, cited in Hall, Michael. *Harrison Birtwistle*, p. 174.

the incidents...its ritual formality.’ It is this notion of a drama ‘*with* action but *without* character’ that I have sought to develop in ‘Brainbow mouse’ and ‘Cornucopian cloud’.⁴⁹

However, the term ‘abstract’ is useful only in relation to ‘drama’, which is otherwise concerned in theatre very much with ‘character’; yet, theatre is, as I have argued, an intrinsic quality of musical performance. When applied to music, the term ‘abstract demands an opposite which music cannot afford. I would argue instead that the terms implicit and explicit theatre can demonstrate the intrinsic qualities of a performance context, as well as the choices made by the composer in relation to these. In musical performance, implicit theatre is that which is intrinsic to the context, either conscious or unconscious for the composer and, in either case, left untouched (and not purposefully engaged with) by him. Explicit theatre is the active choice of making physical and visual the implicit theatre at work in this context; the communication of a work lies in its visual and physical, as much as in its aural, qualities.

These are terms that apply directly to Birtwistle, who, in an interview at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, during a concert of his works on 24th May 2012 by the London Sinfonietta, analogised *Five Distances for Five Instruments* (1992), for wind quintet, to an arguing (wind) family. Here, as in *Tragoedia*, the chosen metaphor is explored without any physical movement required around the stage, relying instead on the metaphor of the theatre present in the performance of the piece: that of the wind quintet ensemble. *Five Distances* draws material from the implicit theatre of the wind quintet ensemble and genre, and sets out to portray a characterisation of it explicitly through music (the horn is again seen as an odd man out among the more argumentative woodwind instruments).⁵⁰

Certainly in late works such as *Cortege* (2007, originally *Ritual Fragment*, 1990), *Secret Theatre* (1995) and *In Broken Images* (2011) Birtwistle has developed a ‘visual theatre

⁴⁹ Cross, Jonathan. *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music*, p. 72-3.

⁵⁰ This characterisation was made by Sir Harrison Birtwistle in an interview with Tom Service during the aforementioned concert, which I was present at.

[that] now mirrors the processes at work inside the music'.⁵¹ In these cases, the theatre implicit to the composer's musical design is made explicit in the staging of the piece, something which *Five Distances* does not require.⁵² Staging, or spatialisation, is something that many composers throughout the twentieth century have adopted for acoustic as well as theatrical reasons, or both combined.⁵³ In *Cortege*, Birtwistle uses stage directions to move ten players, from the semi-circle of fourteen, who must 'STAND', 'move to solo position', and return to a different seated position to where they started.⁵⁴

Similarly, *In Broken Images*, premiered in the UK also on 24th May 2012 by the London Sinfonietta, sees its ensemble arranged into four timbral blocks, in a way perhaps reminiscent of Brown: strings are placed on stage right, woodwind stage left, brass upstage and central, with the percussion raised behind them along the back. In this staging, Birtwistle verges on the explicit to support his construction of sonic layers based on the 'timbre family principle' and 'the principle of rhythmical imitation'.⁵⁵ Yet, these musical qualities are implicit in the work, and complex enough to not need further visual aids for the spectator. Indeed, as the title suggests, there is a disparity between the theatrical presentation of the piece, and the aural experience of these 'images', which serves to enrich the experience through the clue to a way of listening that the staging implies.

⁵¹ Cross, Jonathan. *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music*, p. 85.

⁵² Although, the performance of London Sinfonietta players on 24th May 2012 complemented the implicit theatre explicitly by spacing the five instruments out almost as far away from each other as possible, in a typical semi-circle, and in the typical sequence (flute – oboe – horn – bassoon – clarinet). In a work such as this where there are no other specific theatrical directions, the explicit theatre serves the implicit well; the communication and 'argument' between the players was obvious, but not unnatural.

⁵³ Examples range from multiple orchestra works (Stockhausen's *Gruppen*; Brown's *Modules*) to works for mixed vocal and orchestral forces (Ives' 'Symphony No. 4' and 'Thanksgiving (Forefather's) Day from Holiday Symphony; Berio's *Coro*), to vocal pieces and chamber works (John Cage's *ear for EAR (Antiphonies)*; Kagel's *Pas de cinq*; Thomas Adès' *Catch*).

⁵⁴ Birtwistle, Harrison. *Cortege*, pp. 7-11. See bars 11, 13 and 32 for the first example of these movements by Violin 1.

⁵⁵ Programme for the London Sinfonietta concert on 24th May 2012.

Birtwistle has even gone as far as to remove explicit theatre altogether. An article on Boosey and Hawkes' website on Birtwistle's *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra* quotes the composer as follows, on the composition of the work's implicit theatre:

So, I avoided the classical models with separate movements and a cadenza. My starting point instead was the idea of dialogue. The soloist is in conversation with the orchestra in a number of guises. It is not an argument like in some concertos – the interchange is never angry. However it is rhythmic and there is a lot of to and fro, and immediate changes of mood rather like when the topic changes and the conversation heads off in a different direction. The orchestra acts like a chorus – it can be a composite voice or individual utterances can come to the fore. Five instruments emerge for duets with the violin: flute, piccolo, cello, oboe and bassoon.⁵⁶

The structure and concept of the piece are made clear to the spectator without the need for explicit theatrical enhancement by way of supporting directions for physical movements. Even so, as shown in this quotation, it is true to say that this piece has been composed conscious of the implicit theatre of an orchestra. Therefore, it is also true that implicit theatre has been composed.

⁵⁶ 'Harrison Birtwistle: new violin concerto for Christian Tetzlaff' (December 2010) article on Boosey & Hawkes' website.

ii. Directing the Role of the Performer

‘Brainbow mouse’ and ‘Cornucopian cloud’ take similar approaches to the composition of implicit theatre, but with opposing intentions for their narratives, which place differing demands on the performer. For the composition of both pieces, (as with ‘*Oh mihi, Duncia!*’, ‘um’ and *ahamkara*), I knew the instrumentation beforehand, and the particular players I was writing for.⁵⁷ One difference between these two, however, is the use of text in the compositional process; there was none in ‘Brainbow mouse’, while ‘Cornucopian cloud’ had two sources (the words ‘cornucopia’ and ‘Cornucopian’) that resulted in my finding three quotations to develop the work’s concept.

It would be correct to assume that ‘Brainbow mouse’ (March-April 2012) had no extramusical concept as such, uniquely in this portfolio. Its concerns were the composition of implicit theatre and the communication of a dialogue for ensemble, in the manner of Birtwistle, using the instrumentation to inform the theatre. Although it follows *ahamkara* as an exploration of chamber music, there is no explicit theatre in the work, and no directions for physical movement.

Instead, I took the available ensemble, of flute (doubling piccolo), clarinet (doubling bass clarinet), piano, violin, viola and cello, and sought to explore various subdivisions of it, based on logical groupings of timbre and register: a woodwind duo, a string trio, a solo piano; piano paired with either the duo or trio; duos of violin and flute, clarinet and cello, with viola and piano soloists. The ensemble is arranged on stage to reflect the pairings by register: violin and flute sit opposite the cello and clarinet, with the viola in between flute and clarinet; the piano, encompassing all of these, is placed behind them. The relationships between these

⁵⁷ ‘Brainbow mouse’ was composed for the Dresden-based contemporary music ensemble El Perro Andaluz, as part of a competition run by them in collaboration with the York Spring Festival of New Music 2012. The brief was to compose a new work for up to six instruments, with or without conductor, lasting no more than 10 minutes.

‘Cornucopian cloud’ was written for the York Cello Ensemble, a self-run student group that varies in size.

groups and the musical material (shared or not) provide the narrative and structure of the work.

‘Brainbow mouse’ is thus an example of implicit and also static theatre; as a piece of chamber music it is to be replicated exactly each time in performance, with a fixed instrumentation, fixed musical material, fixed duration and a fixed staging. As such, the piece is more about the invented musical characters as lived through the performers.

Therefore, the musical expressions and directions that I have used to engage the performers with this drama are as detailed, as varied and as nuanced as possible, so as to imply that their interpretation of the work must be similarly nuanced. Verbal detail is vital if the composer wishes to communicate specific ideas to the spectator through the performers, whose preparatory process is not devised, but a conventional situation of rehearsing a piece. From the rehearsal process, an ensemble gradually becomes the vehicle able to communicate the score, which directs all the drama absolutely. Implicit theatre can be composed, but it relies on the performers’ awareness, absorption, and interpretation of it. The success or failure of the implicit theatre is dependent on the performer.⁵⁸

Despite the stasis of implicit theatre, ‘Brainbow mouse’ aims to sound improvisatory, free and conversational. It is episodic, featuring recurrent gestures which are similar but changed with each reoccurrence. The title was a chance discovery, whose definition seemed appropriate to the ambiguity of gestural identity the work suggests.

Brainbow mice are a genetically modified species so that under particular light rays certain of their proteins glow certain colours. The variety of rainbow-coloured images which scientists could collate as a result has helped to better accomplish analysis of the proteins in mice’s brains. None of this science has any relation to the piece, save the fanciful idea of looking into a Brainbow mouse’s brain, into his thoughts, and wondering what would be

⁵⁸ This role and responsibility of the performer is discussed further in Chapter 5 section iv (page 62) regarding ‘nothing new’ for bass clarinet, which explores the solo performer’s interpretative process.

found. The freedom with which I treated the gestures and material found an analogy in the Brainbow mice.

The opposite is true of 'Cornucopian cloud' (May 2012). Its specification 'for as many celli as possible' is a direct transfer of the metaphor of the cornucopia, a Greek mythological symbol meaning 'horn of plenty'. While researching this word I came across the Cornucopian ecological philosophy:

The environmentalists believe that as humans become wealthier and more numerous we will run out of environmental space, unless we tighten our belts. The cornucopians maintain that technology and economics will, inevitably, find solutions to these problems: as we dig deeper down into nature's horn of plenty we learn how to get more from less.⁵⁹

I chose to take the concept of the 'cloud' storage system that has recently been pioneered by technological corporations as a contemporary example of a cornucopian product. Consequently, the following three quotations were found, fitting a cynical questioning view of this philosophy, of such apparently ceaseless digital self-storage:

Q. Why would I want to join an inexplicable mob?

A. Tons of other people are doing it. (Bill Wasik, 'My crowd: Or, phase 5')⁶⁰

'Behind every cloud is another cloud.' (Judy Garland)⁶¹

⁵⁹ Fairlie, Simon. 'The Prospect of Cornucopia' in *Irish Pages*, Vol. 1, No. 2, The Justice Issue (Autumn - Winter, 2002/2003), p.224.

⁶⁰ Wasik, Bill. 'My crowd: Or, phase 5' in *Harpers Magazine*, p.56.

What is it? It's complete gibberish. It's insane. When is this idiocy going to stop? (Larry Ellison, founder of IT giant Oracle Corp, on cloud computing)⁶²

My intention in finding and choosing to include these quotations in the score was to provide myself with a contemporary social context possibility which I could then communicate to the performers and the spectator: a sceptical view of too much being good for you, of infinite resources offering infinite possibilities.

My awareness of my title informed the style of material, and my approach to notation and structure. Musical material was chosen to imitate sounds that the quotations inspired; electrical signals, radio static, white noise; dense clouds of collective blurred, indistinguishable and repeating gestures, and mob-like 'gibberish' relying on individual choice. Inspired by a single-instrument York Cello Ensemble of varying size, and the notion of the erosion of the individual by the collective (referred to by Wasik as 'deindividuation'),⁶³ I chose to explore the effects on a semi-improvisatory dialogue between two parts, when those two parts are multiplied by the number of pairs of performers, to create an indeterminate, single timbre density.

This single timbre density gives the illusion of stasis, when it is actually the product of individual interactions and freedoms. Cellists work in pairs of individual dialogues (they are labelled '0' and '1' after binary coding) that are juxtaposed as a total sonic event. Moments of collective unison are cued by a leader pair, whereby individuals are aware of a collective

⁶¹ This quotation is widely accepted as Garland's.

⁶² Larry Ellison, cited by Farber, Dan. 'Oracle's Ellison nails cloud computing' on *CNET*.

This quotation is a widely reported summary of a speech Ellison made at a dinner in September 2008. A recording of the speech is as follows: 'It's really just complete gibberish... what is it? What is it? ... then there's a definition, what's cloud computing, "it's used in a computer that's out there". These people who are writing this crap are "out there", they're insane... When is this idiocy going to stop?' 'Larry Ellison – What the Hell is Cloud Computing?' on *YouTube*.

⁶³ Wasik, Bill. 'My crowd: Or, phase 5' in *Harpers Magazine*, pp.56-63.

event. In the middle system of the collective chord glissandi, the ensemble is twice cued from a pitch-specific dyad to any note on the C string. This is the first moment of complete unity, but despite specific notational detail, the sound is at its most indeterminate: the timbre is wildly unstable and rough (as high as possible on the C string with *molto vibrato*); pitch is entirely free; both the speed of vibrato and the volume of *forte* and *fortissimo* can differ between individual abilities; the long pause can last any duration.

As well as always being aware of the two leaders, pairs must watch each other's cues, signalling physically and aurally when they play certain sounds to trigger their partner's material. The staging of the piece should be as disruptive to this process as possible, the only stipulations ensuring that the process is not obvious from the visual stage layout, except for the two leaders, who may be placed downstage in view of all players. Since pairs should not be placed next to each other, and may not be able to hear each other's material, given the dense texture, the piece explores through explicit as well as implicit theatre the human, performative character of chamber music playing, by relying on the essential visual as well as aural communication between individuals.

By specifying any number of performers comprising only two individual parts, the superimposed dialogues produce a blending series of textures varying in density and of indeterminate length. The durational control of separate events fluctuates between the individual choices of performers, the interactions between pairs, and the collective interaction of the ensemble which as judged by the leaders to time their cues satisfactorily. It is, however, the performers' responsibility to determine 'the duration of this piece'. Aside from its practicality (regarding concert programming), this instruction frames the indeterminate duration of each texture so that, contrary to *ahamkara*, the indeterminacy is given a progressive momentum whilst the improvisatory, devised identity of the work is preserved.

5. Explicit Theatre: Devising, Performing, Notating

i. Defining Interactive Theatre

I have explored explicit theatre further by devising and performing in two works informed by twentieth century performance art and interactive theatre practices: 'geneRic speCtator' (April-May 2012) and 'five tableaux' (April-June 2012). These works allowed me to develop a practical knowledge of devising theatre for individual performers (through working in a duo for 'geneRic speCtator'), and through direction of an ensemble ('five tableaux').

With these pieces, my interpretation of 'interactivity' has been to establish an active, continuous relationship between the performers negotiating the contextualisation of the work, the theatre, and the spectator. Performers play a necessary part in continuing the compositional process with each new performance context. The score takes on a form of instructions and suggestions to initiate devising (or re-devising) as a group compositional, collaborative activity, accommodating the exploration of extramusical materials and improvisation.

The scores for these two works were produced after their initial performances took place. Since then, I have been able to distinguish conceptual decisions, which were developed before and during rehearsal (so should be kept intact for any future performances), from contextual decisions, which were necessary and practical for the initial performance. I have aimed to ensure that each score gives subsequent performers flexible and purposeful instructions, so that with each performance the theatre can remain sensitive to the context. Both 'geneRic speCtator' and 'five tableaux' are seen as individual works which could be performed simultaneously with other works (including each other, though they are unrelated).

Similar to *ahamkara*, the 'self' of these pieces is in flux, as the scores are tools for collaboration between performers. Instructions are not just to be carried out; rather, their identities are shaped by context, by the performance venue and the performers' decisions and preferences. Interactivity is part of the devising process, but it is also featured as a material theme in these works. In 'geneRic speCtator', the performers must devise their 17 actions referring to the pieces performed adjacently or during it, when there are any (they must also physically turn to look to other performers on stage), otherwise referring to and interacting with the performance context. One of the 'five tableaux' is an improvisation game which sees the five musicians standing in a line close and in front of the audience, looking and smiling at the audience in order to play them and make clear that they are interacting with them.

Practicality is often the limiting force on the parameters at a composer's disposal: the performers one writes for (their strengths, experiences and preferences); commissioned requests concerning duration, forces, or structure; the performance venue (its location, size and technical facilities); the hypothetical and real spectatorship. Equally, these variables can determine the parameters of a devised work, whose object is its performance, and is composed collaboratively in rehearsals by multiple personnel. This methodology can be applied to new works as well as to old, which are recontextualised in each subsequent performance. Most simply, this sensibility could entail the redesigning of staging, changing the location and movements of performers; it could also entail a detailed conceptual adaptation of the piece.

ii. Action! 'geneRic speCtator'

Devised in collaboration with American pianist Kate Boyd, who played a piano prepared for an earlier performance of Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes*, 'geneRic speCtator' was performed in a concert hall where lighting and the ability to enter and exit the stage could be used to indicate the beginning and end of groups of actions. The context was to create a work for performance in a concert of new student works inspired by the techniques and ideas of John Cage. In collaboration with the Conference Weekend Manager of the York Spring Festival of New Music 2012, who approached me about creating a work which could unite all the programmed works, I suggested devising a work of multiple actions which could be performed in between all the other pieces in the concert programme, using texts as the primary stimuli for the actions. The texts would be one of Cage, of my choosing, and all the programmed pieces.

These contextual decisions defined the concept of the piece, represented by the play in the title on the use of textual sources. 'geneRic speCtator' is in anagram of 'Cage in Retrospect', after Cage's *Composition in Retrospect* from which I selected the seventeen words, each 'an aspect of my [Cage's] composition', which Cage used as to construct his mesostics.⁶⁴ Each action is devised to communicate one word, which must each be vocalised at least once during its performance.

For the performance in May, I decided that the actions and words should appear sequentially as in the source text, but could be performed in any number of groups, dependent on the concert programme. They should also take into account the programmed pieces on either side of the group of actions it resides in. I have since revised this conceptual decision, detailing multiple performance options that allow 'geneRic speCtator' to be performed either

⁶⁴ Cage, John. *Composition in Retrospect*, p.3.

in between or during other performances, or both within the same performance, or for it to be an independent performance or installation. This last option can still take place at the same time as other performances, the difference being that the contextual decisions which the performers would make when devising actions would be either based on the simultaneous performances or not. In short, the separate, juxtaposed pieces will either interact, or not.

In this way, the actions are composites of strands of juxtaposed material, rather than independently performed events. This was intentional so as to create unpredictable, surreal juxtapositions of events within the course of representing a single word.

The devising process for the actions is thus a consideration of these words, these 'aspects'; what they meant to Cage; what they mean to the performers (how they seemed to us to relate to the performance context or other programmed pieces). This was the case for our performance, as we read and analysed the scores of the other pieces, to focus on particular sonic, notated, thematic, or conceptual elements, which could be incorporated into or could determine our actions to some extent. We then listened to the pieces in rehearsal on the day of performance before discussing them further to refine our decisions.

In this way, actions become devised improvisations, some of which can be devised in detail, while for others only general events are needed. We approached the words variously as more physical or more aural actions. I decided not to prepare my cello, but to focus on exaggerating the physicality of the instrument through my physical shape sitting at the instrument, the parts of the instrument I chose to play (exaggerating these), and a caricatured way of delivering the text. These were reflected in Kate's playing of the piano.⁶⁵ The instructions in the score detail a process as opposed to specific thematic routes to take, since the words communicate enough on their own as the stimuli for creative activity: the

⁶⁵ The notes which Kate Boyd and I collated through our conversations and rehearsals, and which were used as our score in performance, can be seen in Appendix 2.

performers are free to make of them and their context what they will. This ambiguous freedom invites performers to create personal and meaningful music theatre, guided solely by the words, and furthermore invites the spectator to consider both this interpretation of the text as well as the text itself.

iii. Sculpting Aural and Physical Improvisation: ‘five tableaux’

The score for ‘five tableaux’ differs from ‘geneRic speCtator’ by being far more precise in its use of verbal notation, yet the score retains ambiguity, and requires the same responsibility of the performer, who can determine the context of the piece in performance. Although it is not interactive to the same extent with personnel outside of its performers, ‘five tableaux’ evolved through several experimental, theatrical improvisation games which I devised for five instrumentalists, including myself, to play. From these I developed specific ideas to create a theatre piece which could be devised collaboratively by musicians, and that explored and exploited the particular physical and aural characteristics of their instruments.

The games thus became physical moments, or tableaux, since they are largely static in nature. I acted as performer-director of the ensemble on cello, with the other instrumentalists being accordion, flute, guitar and viola. My aim as performer-director (and thereafter as composer) was for each member of the ensemble to develop a character that seemed specific to them, given the physical movements and journeys that were to be required by a rigid staging structure, that is to say, by the five tableaux.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ For example, the first tableau saw the ensemble starting on chairs in a horizontal line along the back of the stage, all players facing the audience. The second tableau was for all players to be on the floor in front of their chairs. The transitions were as vital as the tableaux in continuing the flow of sounds and sights. It was for each

These tableaux can be arranged in any order, though I decided early on which order I wanted for the scheduled performance.⁶⁷ The subtitles for the tableau are words which were attached to each game as it was devised and played in rehearsal. These occurred without prior consideration, save for the fifth game, 'play the audience', which was a particular event that I wanted in the piece. The accordionist had the idea of playing our instruments 'as close together as possible'.

After the initial game-playing, I developed the structure of the tableaux to trace a linear movement towards the audience from upstage to downstage. The idea of five tableaux presented itself as a way of constructing one fluid performance with five static stages. Moments in between these I termed transitions, as they facilitate the progress of aural and physical characters, though in reality they are neither intermediary nor of less importance than the tableaux. The tableaux are moments of collective stasis; transitions 'are moments of individual transformation' between these. It was my decision for the ensemble to explore ways in which the characters could develop linearly throughout this sequence, so that at the piece's end each performer is completely 'in character'.

Through this process I hoped to produce an explicit theatre, where the focus was strongly on the physical and the visual, relying on that to convey an abstract narrative. Such abstraction resulted in the aural improvisation being more difficult to focus. As there was no relationship to text of any literal sort, the only text and material were our instruments and their sounds. We had to work to focus the aural material by considering what sounds could be made from any given physical action and position, finding that improvised physical actions reminded us immediately of activities that occur in life, far more than any aural actions.

performer to decide how to progress through the tableaux. Occasionally, my role was to provide support and observations on their actions during rehearsals, which would be better described as workshops for the experimental approach of testing ideas for sounds and sights.

⁶⁷ This occurred on 18th June 2012, by The Assembled ensemble, in the Rymer Auditorium of the University of York; see the Data CD of Video Files.

The score that I have produced since the performance details the kinds of physical activity that can take place (similarly to *ahamkara*), instructing performers to use these as the basis for musical improvisation, for which some suggestions are given. Here, more than in any other devised piece, particular words are important. They are intended for the close consideration of the performer, who must determine a context for them based on the signified meanings of the words. This process is the same as when any expressive marking is read on a musical score, or in a play's script; the performer reads the expression and searches for the signs it refers to, before assessing the optional signified contexts that could be used to condition an aural or physical gesture. Without a predetermined context, without this process, a performance of 'five tableaux' could not make sense to the spectator.

However, the intention is not for the piece to depict process, despite the importance of the devising process to the piece, and the structural emphasis that the title gives to static objects. The score emphasises the idea of fluidity and narrative ('linear or otherwise') through the idea of constant transformation in transitions, while structural lines will be blurred due to the interaction between individual actions and the collective movement. The intention was for the piece to have an abstract narrative which needs contextualising by the performers; hence, the programme note makes clear that 'there are no words spoken here'. This meta-narrative explores the dialogue between fixed and fluid objects, between the individual and the ensemble, between activity and passivity (these are not ordered to be respective of one another).

The piece is a tool for the creation of a narrative for any group of five improvising instrumentalists who must base their narrative on the interpretation of words. These words were precisely chosen, but do not have contextual reference in their abstraction here: any potential definition of any one word is a viable definition, which then progresses to informing other words. This style of verbal notation requires the performer to develop a conscious,

subtle responsibility for his visual and aural actions, so that a narrative of sensitively constructed music and theatre can emerge gradually and naturally. Consequently, the score can be treated instructively as a tool to develop an awareness of the performer's physical and aural self in performance and in improvisation; a theme expressed in 'nothing new'.

iv. **Performing Narrative: 'nothing new'**

As with 'five tableaux' and 'Brainbow mouse', 'nothing new' for solo bass clarinet (June-August 2012) uses expressive directions to engage its performer with a specific narrative of implicit theatre, that must be foremost in the performer's preparation of the piece. In contrast to 'five tableaux', but like 'Brainbow mouse', here the narrative is not invented by the performer. Rather, 'nothing new' derives a narrative from a literary text which is set without using a voice.

The text is the tenth of Samuel Beckett's *Texts for Nothing* (1950-52). My title quotes the first line, '[g]ive up, but it's all given up, it's nothing new, I'm nothing new', although the phrase also opens the earlier novel *Murphy* ('[t]he sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new'), and is also a catchphrase.⁶⁸

'nothing new' explores the creation of a portrayal of narrative through an exact portrayal of the words – or as close as music can get to words. Pitch, timbral, dynamic and rhythmic parameters were manipulated to imitate speech, its rhythms and breathing, colours, and pitch contours. Appropriately, the score is laid out like a vocal score, with the dynamics above the stave and a syllable beneath each note. The soloist plays the words as if speaking

⁶⁸ Beckett, Samuel. *The Complete Short Prose, 1929-1989*, pp.141-143.

them: there are no tempi, no time signatures, but only the suggestion for extensive *rubato* and dashed barlines at the end of sentences to ease score reading. Punctuation is rendered through rhythm, with pauses at the end of sentences, frequent breath marks for commas, and further breaths marked as expressive theatrical instructions, part of the persona of the text. Where there are no breath marks, rests indicate where the performer may take a natural, unnoticeable breath. The contours and rhythms that result are from my imagined, subjective perspective of the persona speaking these words, gained through my method of experimenting with reading the text aloud and silently.

Initially, I composed a piece that used roughly a quarter of the text. This version was workshopped and recorded by Sarah Watts on 26th June 2012.⁶⁹ Following from this workshop I decided to set the remainder of the text, but to add another theme: the role of the interpretative performer. From the workshop I had gained opinions on the notation of words alongside pitch, rhythm and dynamics, and the idea that not all of these are needed. As a result, I developed the idea of parametric disintegration. My first response was to notate the text I had extracted in a variety of ways, so that the performer could choose whether to try a version with all parameters decided by myself, or with any one or two parameters in their control. However, I found this idea to be flawed in exploring the act of interpretation only superficially.

Instead, I decided to connect the ideas of action and nothingness in the text to the notation, whereby the piece begins with all parameters (pitch, rhythm, words, dynamics, expressive directions), and in three subsequent sections loses them. In this way, the score aims to engage the performer with the text as much as with the notation, to bring out the quality of the notation and the text equally, as well as presenting the performer with an interesting improvisatory challenge. The piece presents a disintegration of the composer's

⁶⁹ Please see the accompanying audio CD recording of the second take of the piece from this workshop.

parametric control with the increasing integration of the performer's interpretation of the text. Yet it also represents the disintegration of the text's narrative, of the persona who carries on 'giving up', but does not give up. This irony is expressed in the disintegration of the notation that should not be heard in the sound; this situation is controlled by structure.

There are four sections of decreasing numbers of set sentences, from ten to five, to three, to one, but due to the length of the sentences, the sections remain approximately equal: each one is 'nothing new', except, ironically, in the method of the piece's aural construction, relying on the performer's linear journey from multiple parameters to there being only one: the text. The rhythmic parameter disappears after the first section so that when it returns and pitch is lost for the third section, the performer gains more experience of imitating the rhythms of speech freely, whilst building a wider vocabulary of free pitch material. Pitch is considered as the more perceptible signifier of meaning, so this order of sections is necessary so that the connotations of intervals are eschewed as much as possible, allowing the performer to use pitch as expressively as possible. The fourth and final section is a free contour with no pitches, rhythms, or even dynamics notated. The note-less stems are still beamed together to highlight the structure of commas throughout the one long sentence here.

The expressive directions are as explicit, varied and nuanced as possible to aid in the communication of the character of the text, though Beckett's text itself is not, of course, able to be communicated through instrumental sound in this way. There are no physical and theatrical directions in the piece, as my focus was on creating a situation whereby the performer can develop a considered interpretation of the text and its narrative, its concept and its meanings, through an exploration of the persona that I have provided in the parametric disintegration. Through the implicit theatre of a monologue, the score also allows the performer to explore idiosyncratic characteristics of speech and of the bass clarinet in parametrically controlled improvisation.

6. Concluding Remarks

At the beginning of this commentary 'text' was acknowledged to refer to a literary source; however, a wider definition could impact the discussion of the theatre of musical performance significantly. Indeed, the question of what such a definition would entail is too large to be answered fully here, though progress can be made through the observations of literary critic Colette Conroy, who has examined phenomenology and the concept of the body (and 'a body') as a text:

The contingent and dramatic interdependence between body and role is a key image. It helps us to develop an understanding of acting and performance and to find a way to use mind/body problems in theatre. Many of Beckett's late plays explore this relationship. The physical experience of watching the performer struggle with the restrictions of role and staging is absolutely crucial. The idea of the body as social text is metaphorically engaged here, but there is also a form of *experience* that occurs only in the moment of performance, only in the interaction of dramatic text, actor and audience.⁷⁰

I have considered 'the body as social text' a truism of music theatre and performance, for the musician's body and instrument are, literally and metaphorically, texts which are read by the spectator. When we see a body on a stage, we relate to it as a reflected image of ourselves; we can have strong reactions when we witness that body undergoing comedic, romantic, horrific

⁷⁰ Conroy, Colette. *Theatre & the Body*, p. 52.

or thrilling events. It is this empathetic, reflexive identification of ourselves with an artistic image which can stimulate and move us. The pieces in this portfolio reflect these dialogistic elements of the composer and performer, active in the devising and moment of performance. Simultaneously, they reflect the performative interaction between performer and spectator.

The vocal and instrumental works largely based on a complete textual source ('Oh mihi, Duncia!', 'um', 'Cornucopian cloud', 'Brainbow mouse', and 'nothing new') have shown that the composition of implicit theatre initiates a determinate continuity of expression, from what the composer notates, to what the performer enacts in performance. The performer's awareness of the implicit theatre, and the narrative of a piece, is vital to its fair performance and the communication of this theatre, which the composer intends conceptually to be as significant as the music.

In this awareness, the performer's process of interpretation becomes one of devising. The music cannot just be learnt technically, proficiently, and interpreted at face value, since its context embraces aural, physical and visual materials, derived from the inclusion of an extramusical source: the text. Yet the devising process which is applied to compositions of explicit theatre, which use musical and verbal notation (*ahamkara*, 'geneRic speCtator', 'five tableaux'), has been shown to be the same process required for the works of implicit theatre.

This portfolio therefore demonstrates that when text and theatre are included in a musical composition, a collaborative, devising approach is required of the performer to sculpt its performance. To achieve a meaningful music theatre, both composer and the devising performer must take into account practicalities of musical performance, such as the necessary, conscious physical movements of sound production. There is a need for performers to remain aware of any involuntary, but performative, sound-accompanying or sound-facilitating actions, in order to keep the intention of their theatrical actions from losing focus. In

situations where the composer is unavailable for communication with the performer, the score is the fundamental source for their dialogue. In any case, the use of a precise verbal notation, which is contextually aware of its signification so as to be communicative, is highly valuable to composers wishing to communicate specific meaning.

From the necessity for a devising process established in the score, performers can develop their own intentions for actions, leading to the creation of a contextually meaningful narrative: the intention to walk across the stage distinguishes the performer from the pedestrian. In this way the music theatre score maintains its identity and conveys its concept, guiding performers through the shared activity of music-making, to crystallise in front of the spectator.

Appendices

Appendix 'i': Colour analysis of the programme note for '*Oh mihi, Duncia!*'

The programme note for 'Oh mihi, Duncia!' is here presented as it appeared in concert programmes for the piece's performance by The 24 on 30th November 2011. Endnotes specify the exact sources of text, with comparisons of original with altered versions. The colour coding used is as follows:

Red: exact quotations from *The Dunciad*

Black: original text composed in the style of Martinus Scriblerus

Blue: parody of the 'Preface' to *The Dunciad*

Green: parody of 'Martinus Scriblerus Of the Poem'

'O vos omnes' from *Sacrae Cantiones I* (1603) Carlo Gesualdo di Venosa (1566 – 1613)

O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite et videte:

Si est dolor similis sicut dolor meus.

'Oh mihi, Duncial!' or A Mob of Metaphors: a service

James Whittle (b. 1989)

In vain, in vain, — the all-composing Hour
 Resistless falls: the Muse obeys the Pow'r.
 She comes! she comes! the sable Throne behold
 Of *Night* primæval, and of *Chaos* old!¹

A prophecy is accompanied by a lament for our fate: in the post-apocalyptic world governed once more by Night and Chaos, our religious epic voices an isolated populi stranded in a merciless, nonsensical world. Thus, an heroic epic narrates the precipitative Action that is its restoration, as commanded in the cataclysmic yawn of our goddess Dulness: **“MAKE ONE MIGHTY DUNCIAD OF THE LAND!”**²

[*The Dunciad* (1722, rev. 1729, 1741): a mock-epic satire in three Books by Alexander Pope (1688-1744) depicting the progress of Dulness and her chosen agents as they bring decay, imbecility, and tastelessness to the kingdom of Great Britain. ‘With what apparently sovereign contempt, masterly ease, artistic calm, and judicial gravity, does he set about it!’³ In 1741 a fourth book was ‘found’ to have been written: it imparts the obliteration of sense from Britain.]

Hence also we learn the true title of the piece; which, we may pronounce, could have been, and can be no other than **OH MIHI, DUNCIA!** It is styled *Heroic*, as being *doubly* so; not only with respect to its nature, which, according to the best rules of the ancients, and strictest ideas of the moderns, is critically such; but also with regard to the heroical disposition [and

high courage] of the author [writer], who dared to stir up such a formidable, irritable, and implacable race of mortals.⁴

Thus at her felt approach, and secret might,

Art after Art goes out, and all is Night.⁵

The *Fable* being thus,⁶ the structure of our epic replicates exactly that of the great account of our Doom, in its four PARAGRAPHS that take each for themselves a Book from it, also sharing in direct proportion both the duration and amount of text which each doth convey: in their content do they complement in shape and sense.

Lo! thy dread Empire, CHAOS! is restor'd;⁷

Our epic [This] is branched into *Episodes*, each of which hath its Moral apart, though all conducive to the main end.⁸ These *Episodes* follow a SERVICE: our INTROIT doth include our *Sentence of Scripture*; thereafter we expect our RESPONSES; thereafter our VENITE; our PSALM; our LESSON; our JUBILATE; lastly our HYMN.

Light dies before thy uncreating word;⁹

The *Machinery of our epic* is a continued chain of *Allegories*,¹⁰ as is proper: we are presented first with Martinus Scriblerus, writer of the Prolegomena; he announces the ARGUMENT. Hence, our Hero approaches, unveiling his Chorus filed in close support of him.

Thy hand, great Anarch! lets the curtain fall;¹¹

In a word, the whole piece proveth itself to be the work of our Author, when his faculties were in full vigour and perfection; at that exact time when years have ripened the Judgment, without diminishing the Imagination: which, by good Critics, is held to be punctually at *forty*. [...] With good reason therefore did our composer [author] choose to write his Essay on that subject at twenty, and reserve for his maturer years this great and wonderful work of the *Dunciad*.¹²

And universal Darkness buries All.¹³

¹ *The Dunciad* Book IV, ff.627-630.

² *The Dunciad* Book IV, f.604.

³ Gilfillan, Rev. George. 'The Genius and Poetry of Pope' in *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope, Volume II, with Notes by Rev. George Gilfillan*, p. xx.

⁴ Parody of the Preface, p.354:

Hence also we learn the true title of the poem; which with the same certainty as we call that of Homer the *Iliad*, of Virgil the *Aeneid*, of Camoens the *Lusiad*, we may pronounce, could have been, and can be no other than The DUNCIAD. It is styled *Heroic*, as being *doubly* so; not only with respect to its nature, which, according to the best rules of the ancients, and strictest ideas of the moderns, is critically such; but also with regard to the heroical disposition and high courage of the writer, who dared to stir up such a formidable, irritable, and implacable race of mortals.

⁵ *The Dunciad* Book IV, ff.639-640.

⁶ Parody of Martinus Scriblerus, p. 362:

The *Fable* being thus, according to the best Example, one and entire, as contained in the Proposition; the *Machinery* is a continued chain of Allegories, setting forth the whole Power, Ministry, and Empire of Dulness, extended through her subordinate instruments, in all her various operations.

⁷ *The Dunciad* Book IV, f.653.

⁸ Parody of Martinus Scriblerus, p.362:

This is branched into *Episodes*, each of which hath its Moral apart, though all conducive to the main end.

⁹ *The Dunciad* Book IV, f.654.

¹⁰ Parody of Martinus Scriblerus, p. 362: see endnote 'vi'.

¹¹ *The Dunciad* Book IV, f.655.

¹² Parody of Martinus Scriblerus, p. 363:

In a word, the whole poem proveth itself to be the work of our Author, when his faculties were in full vigour and perfection; at that exact time when years have ripened the Judgment, without diminishing the Imagination: which, by good Critics, is held to be punctually at *forty*. [...] With good reason therefore did our author choose to write his Essay on that subject at twenty, and reserve for his maturer years this great and wonderful work of the *Dunciad*. P.

¹³ *The Dunciad* Book IV, f.656.

Appendix 'ii: Performance notes for 'geneRic speCtator'

These notes were prepared by James Whittle through email conversations and rehearsals with Kate Boyd, to produce an instructive verbal score for the performance of 'geneRic speCtator' on 13th May 2012.

Both players start off stage. Instruments are left on stage, in need of some preparation before they can be played.

Actions begin and end with both performers looking round to where the 'real' concert is: this is a slow deliberate move to turn/bend round and look over at performers about to play, before a lighting fade to their location.

METHOD James enters muttering METHOD constantly, goes to cello, starts readying to play: adjust seat, bow, stand up sit down, tuning, dusting.

STRUCTURE Kate enters muttering STRUCTURE constantly, goes to piano, starts readying to play: open lid, adjust seat, stand up sit down, dusting keyboard lid up and down, inspect strings. The first note played should be the A for James to tune from.

INTENTION When both are sat down, mutter INTENTION, finding body positions at the instrument as if to begin playing: start confidently (play notes), becoming increasingly hesitant (no notes).

-----**Hexagrams (video on screen with audio, stage centre)**

DISCIPLINE Play harshly: James scraped scale up saying DISCIPLINE, Kate scale down. Angular movements, percussive sounds, loud, rigidly.

DISCIPLINE Repeat the previous action, louder.

DISCIPLINE Repeat the previous action, louder.

-----**Konstruktif (solo piano, stage left)**

NOTATION Kate goes off stage, comes back holding up a large symbol and says “NOTATION”.

INDETERMINACY James pauses, says INDETERMINACY. Kate puts symbol on piano.

INTERPRETATION Both say INTERPRETATION and play the symbol. Melodic, lyrical, *cantabile*, with percussive lapses. Meander a bit, lose focus, fade out uncertainly.

-----**For Whom the Fan Displays (voice, pno, perc., 6 instr., stage centre)**

IMITATION James says IMITATION, both play from previous score: Kate follows piano instructions, James takes a melody instrument’s gestures. Both play together in cues.

DEVOTION Kate says DEVOTION, leaves stage respectfully.

CIRCUMSTANCES Both re-enter stage, exclaiming CIRCUMSTANCES, and play many moments very fast: hurried, short bursts of activity with momentary pauses in between. Decrease activity to one bold note at a time, then stop.

-----**For a Number of Strings (4 strings, surrounding audience)**

VARIABLE STRUCTURE Kate plays only inside piano, James not on strings. Quiet contemplative tapping sounds and low notes with occasional high pitches.

NONUNDERSTANDING Interrupting Debate: both alternate in saying NONUNDERSTANDING as if discussing it whilst having difficulty communicating – use any available language.

CONTINGENCY Carry on where you left off with playing before. Fade out lights during action.

-----**In Memoriam (solo cello, stage centre)**

INCONSISTENCY Still carrying on the previous action, whispering INCONSISTENCY.

PERFORMANCE Stopping previous action, both leap up saying ‘PERFORMANCE’ constantly, bowing extravagantly, leaving instruments, basking in praise, all the time moving slowly offstage.

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