

Elder Conservatorium of Music  
Faculty of Arts  
University of Adelaide

**Singing a New Story:  
A Composer's Exploration of  
Textual Synthesis through Composition**

by

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Portfolio of original compositions and exegesis  
submitted in fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

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# VOLUME 1

of 1

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## ABSTRACT:

This submission for the degree of PhD at the Elder Conservatorium of Music, University of Adelaide, is a portfolio of nineteen original compositions supported by an explanatory exegesis. These compositions are grouped into three major works:

1. *Winds and Waters* – a 53-minute song cycle for four singers and orchestra, comprising 13 individual songs, including solos, duets and a central quartet.
2. *Nor the Storms That Pass* – a 16-minute collection of five overlapping works for advanced a capella S.A.T.B vocal ensemble or choir.
3. *Vespers* – a 30-minute large-scale, non-liturgical setting of the Roman-Catholic Vespers mass for symphonic orchestra, chorus and vocal soloists.

This project explores the compositional techniques involved in the development and realisation of original narrative-driven works by synthesising existing textual material from various unrelated sources, authors, historical eras and geographical locations into new and cohesive works with a perceptible storyline that was not necessarily present or implicit in any of the pre-existing works. This is achieved through an examination of the cognitive processes by which humans infer missing information from a partially-defined narrative, and the subsequent exploration and application of compositional techniques and treatments of synthesised texts which exploit this knowledge to most effectively guide a listener's perceptions of textual cohesion. The works in the portfolio serve as a practical example of the application of the techniques being explored. The exegesis aims to provide technical analysis and insight into the applied creative process.

The complete project serves as an educational resource for composers, writers, academics and professionals who have an interest in creating new works from existing materials or in understanding some of the compositional techniques which may be used to progress a narrative, and includes over 100 minutes of musical examples via the portfolio of works. The study also contributes a large body of new vocal and choral works to the repertoire, including thirteen new Australian art-songs, five new Australian choral works and a large-scale work for orchestra and chorus.

## DECLARATION:

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution in my name and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide, and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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