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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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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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

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Most importantly, my friends and long-suffering family for their support, understanding and unwaveringly honest feedback over the past four years!
PART A:  EXEGESIS
1. **INTRODUCTION**

1.1  **Project Summary**

This project serves as an exploration of the compositional techniques involved in the development and realisation of original narrative-driven musical works based upon textual material drawn from various unrelated sources, authors, eras and geographical locations. These textual sources are synthesised into new and cohesive works with a perceptible storyline that was not necessarily present or implicit in any of the pre-existing texts. This is achieved through an examination of the cognitive processes by which humans infer missing information from a partially-defined narrative, and the exploration and application of compositional techniques which exploit this knowledge to most effectively guide a listener’s perceptions of textual cohesion.

The portfolio (Part B) contains nineteen original compositions, grouped into three major works, each of which serves as a practical example of the application of the techniques being explored. This accompanying exegesis provides analysis and insight into the four stages involved in the creation of the works – the *conception* of the work and its parameters, *interpretation* of the textual, musical and stylistic possibilities, *realisation* of the composition and *reflection* upon the successes and failures of the creative process, including any revisions.

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.

1.2  **Scope of the Project**

In the interests of ensuring that the results of the project remains detailed, practical and concise, a number of limitations have been selectively applied to the scope of the content.
1.4.1 Textual Limitations

As discussed, each text selected for use in the project is drawn from a source independent of the other texts, insomuch as the authors consistently differ. For the most part efforts have also been made to draw upon textual sources originally written in different eras and different geographical locations. However the language has been almost exclusively constrained to English, with recognized translations sourced for the selected for international works. The choral cycle is a notable exception to this and is discussed in the detailed examination of this work.

Due to the sheer volume the complete original source material from which selected texts were adapted have not been included in this folio, however they are referred to in the front matter of each score in Part B should the reader wish to examine which portions of text were selected and extracted from their source works in more detail. All source material is public domain and is readily available.

1.4.2 Vocal communication of text

Extensive study has been done on the concept of ‘meaning in music’ and the abstract representation of text or story through instrumental works. This is a broad and controversial field which is beyond the scope of this project and as a result the focus of the study has been restricted to the delivery of the narrative through vocal setting and performance, with one or more singers communicating the textual content in each work.

1.4.3 Creative discipline vs. literary theory

It is most important to note that while due attention and acknowledgement has been given to existing research in the field of literature (discussed in section 2.1) this project does not seek to encompass all aspects of the broad and complex field of literary theory. The focus remains the creative discipline of composition and the related technical and theoretical considerations.

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1.3  Portfolio content

The total portfolio duration is 100 minutes. Contents are as follows:

1.3.1  Winds and Waters

Solo Soprano, Mezzo-Soprano, Tenor and Baritone
Orchestral accompaniment
Duration: 53 minutes

A cycle of 13 songs (solos, duets and a quartet) based on existing poems from various poets. Each song is capable of functioning as stand-alone art-song, but the performance of all songs in succession results in a comprehensible storyline, temporal progression and character development which forms a narrative-driven concert work.

1.3.2  Nor the Storms That Pass

Advanced SATB Choir a cappella
Duration: 16 minutes

Five interwoven unaccompanied pieces for advanced SATB choir. The collected works follow the implied journey of a protagonist, with the primary narrative complimented by ‘Greek Chorus’ style works which further develop the setting and assist in progressing the story.

1.3.3  Vespers

Solo Soprano, Solo Baritone, Solo Child Treble
Orchestral accompaniment
Duration: 31 minutes

A large-scale non-liturgical setting of the Roman Catholic Vespers mass for Orchestra, chorus and vocal soloists in three movements. The work follows the structure of the traditional catholic Vespers mass however traditional lyrics have been replaced by quotations from well-known historical figures of highly contradicting ethos. The work illustrates the changing perceptions and attitudes of the ‘clergy and congregation’ involved in the mass through the development and transformation of thematic material.
2. BACKGROUND RESEARCH AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 Intertextuality

The method of textual synthesis applied throughout this project may be categorised as an application of intertextuality, a well-established concept in literary study and analysis, and while the true focus of the project is upon the process of musical creation and resulting textual synthesis, it is worth discussing the treatment of text from a literary perspective.

Intertextuality is a term coined by Bulgarian-French literary critic Julia Kristeva in 1966 to describe the way in which "meaning [in literary works] is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, 'codes' imparted to the writer and reader by other texts." Since its inception the word has taken on a broader meaning encompassing a variety of related concepts, as critic and philosopher William Irwin lamented in 2004:

The term "Intertextuality" was coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966, and since that time has come to have almost as many meanings as users, from those faithful to Kristeva's original vision to those who simply use it as a stylish way of talking about allusion and influence.\(^3\)

The concept of intertextuality is primarily concerned with the way in which the perception and interpretation of the meaning of a text is shaped by the reader's experience and knowledge of other texts, and the subsequent interdependence of all literary texts, and the creative concept of basing new textual works upon existing literature.\(^4\)

Both Irwin\(^5\) and other literary critics\(^6\) have complained that the somewhat ambiguous term has taken the place of worthier and more definite pre-existing literary terms, but

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\(^4\) In *Desire in Language* Kristeva cites James Joyce's modernist novel *Ulysses* as an example of an intertext: in this case a new literary work based upon a retelling of Homer's *Odyssey*, but set in 1904 Dublin.

\(^5\) William Irwin, 227-242.

despite calls for the term to be "stricken from the lexicon of sincere and intelligent humanists," intertextuality remains a widely-used and well-documented literary concept.\(^7\) Both of these concepts of intertextuality previously mentioned are of some theoretical importance to the project.

Firstly, the idea of creating an intertext as described by Kristeva initially applied to works which were influenced by, or which alluded to a (usually related or well-known) existing work. These new works usually functioned as contemporary retellings of the original story, whether loosely related (such as John Steinbeck’s *East of Eden* and C.S. Lewis’ *Perelandra* - both retellings of the Genesis story in a contemporary and futuristic setting respectively) or more closely related to the original. More recently this approach to the creation of the intertext has involved fashioning new works by directly quoting an existing text in combination with new or other existing material. Naturally, this approach begs the question of who the true author is, when a new writer exerts their personal interpretation upon the words of previous writers. This practice has of course raised issues of plagiarism in some cases.\(^8\)

The approach to textual synthesis in this project is unquestionably intertextual - indeed any such combination of existing texts must be viewed in this way. The notion of combining completely unrelated texts is less commonly documented. Works defined as intertexts most commonly focus upon retelling existing stories or, as in the case of Australian composer Helen Gifford’s 1983 setting of the Faust story,\(^9\) adding complementary material (such as poems or quotations from other authors - in this case Shakespeare) which the composer feels will contribute to the communication of the story. In this way the Shakespeare poem takes on new life and new meaning through its incorporation into the storytelling process as a whole, and becomes integral to the author’s/composer’s interpretation of the story and their creative vision. The works in the song cycle and choral cycle seek to go one step further: to create entirely new stories from unrelated existing poems, none of which necessarily contain any evidence of the new story in their own right. While still unquestionably an example of intertextuality, this is a less common approach to the

\(^7\)William Irwin, 227-242.
creation of intertext, as is the decision to under-emphasise the finer details of the newly-created plot.

Regarding the creation of plot, it is important to note the relevance of the decision to avoid delivering a complete and committed plot in any of the new works. It may be argued that by providing only an abstract or incomplete storyline, the audience is forced to draw upon their own literary and musical backgrounds and experiences in order to apply their own interpretation to the story. It is, as French literary theorist Roland Barthes describes, a so-called 'death of the author' scenario - in this case an audience re-interpreting a composer's re-interpretation of many poetic works, such that the work is not a closed system with a fixed meaning but relies on the experiences and interpretations of the receiver. ¹⁰ Though Barthes goes to great lengths to point out that all texts, whatever the creator's original intention, may only have meaning as perceived by the audience of the time, such an interpretation is exactly the intended outcome for the purposes of this project and this concept is encouraged in respect to 'audiences' viewing the completed portfolio or hearing the works performed.

When analysing music, intertextuality is often used to refer to the way in which we interpret the inherent meaning of different sounds based upon our previous musical experiences and education e.g. dissonance vs. consonance, tonal vs. atonal. ¹¹ As Jung was happy to point out, musical associations can be, in many ways, a more powerful means of communication than any other media, and the amalgamation of the proposed intertexts with music (which will be almost unavoidably 'intertextual' to some extent) has the potential to be a powerful and dynamic concept.

2.2 Song Cycles, Concept Albums and the Jukebox Musical

As the study of intertextuality demonstrates, the practice of combining pre-existing material into new works is not a new concept. In a musical context there are a number of established genres which are built around the co-integration of material, both textual and musical, with other material old and new. Ultimately though, all of these formats

differ significantly from the processes described in this project, as detailed in the following sections.

2.2.1 The Song Cycle

In *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Susan Youens defines a song cycle as “A group of individually complete songs designed as a unit [...] for solo or ensemble voices with or without instrumental accompaniment.” The contemporary application of the term “song cycle” has come to describe works which fit this definition, but which in other ways may be considerably different. The classical song cycle was often based upon existing collections of text by a single poet or author, some of which contained an inherent narrative such as Schubert’s setting of Müller’s *Die Schöne Müllerin*, others in which the narrative was only implied and never confirmed, often taking the form of an inner monologue such as Schumann’s *Dichterliebe* based on the poems of Heinrich Heine, or Beethoven’s *An die ferne Geliebte* from the poems of Aloys Jeittelles, Mahler’s *Kindertotenlieder* on Rückert’s text or more recently Vaughan William’s *Songs of Travel* from the poems of R.L. Stevenson. Other song cycles draw upon text from multiple authors, such as Schumann’s *Myrthen* or Barber’s *Hermit Songs* but do not attempt to organise these works into a complete original narrative, instead grouping them by theme or mood. Contemporary music theatre song cycles tend to again group songs by theme, and the lyrics for these works are usually either written by the composer, such as Jason Robert Brown’s *Songs for a New World* or William Finn’s *Elegies*, or commissioned specifically for the purposes of the song cycle, such as Janet Hood’s *Elegies* with lyrics by Bill Russell.

2.2.2 Concept Albums

Considered to be a contemporary integration of the song cycle into popular culture, the concept album presents a narrative-driven collection of songs without the need for explanatory connective dialogue. As Gingerich states, the concept album “possesses all [of] the defining characteristics of a song cycle but expresses them in more modern language: three or more defined sections that use text painting and a logical sequence

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of tonicities to express a single poetic theme." While the lyrics of a concept album may be sourced from more than one contributor, these lyrics are usually written specifically for the creation of the album (such as Zappa’s *Freak Out!* or drawn from closely related sources and heavily modified to suit the style and era of the album’s music (such as Tim Rice’s adaptation of the various books of the New Testament for *Jesus Christ Superstar.*)

While this project is specifically designed for live performance, the concept album is considered a finite work in itself, specifically designed as an auditory experience alone, and it is rare that the concept album is presented in live performance. (Notable exceptions include Lloyd Webber’s *Jesus Christ Superstar* and Green Day’s *American Idiot*, both concept albums which were later adapted into stage-musicals – the former with no significant changes to the material, the latter with the addition of connective ‘recitative’ to better develop the story while remaining through-sung.) As such, the construction of the concept album, like the song cycle, differs considerably from that of the works provided in the project portfolio.

### 2.2.3 The Jukebox Musical

The Jukebox Musical is an increasingly popular format of production which is accepted to be a stage production or film comprised of an original story, but with a score built on existing (popular-music) songs which are contextualised into the dramatic plot. The songs selected for the score are usually related either by era (such as *Forever Plaid, Boogie Nights and Disco Inferno,* all of which use a combination of popular music from the 1950s and 1960s) or by artist (such as *Mamma Mia,* based on the music of ABBA, or more recently *Moonshadow,* based on the music of Cat Stevens.) The accepted definition of the Jukebox Musical is currently disputed as some prominent industry professionals are of the opinion that a productions detailing the story of an artist’s life cannot be considered unrelated to that artist’s music, and therefore biographical musicals (such as *Jersey Boys, The Boy from Oz or Lennon*) which use an artist’s music

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14 Despite its contemporary setting, lyrics and music, the underlying narrative and structure of *American Idiot* is startlingly similar to that of Schubert’s *Die Schöne Mullerin:* a young man dissatisfied with his existence goes in search of a better life; he glimpses and falls for an unattainable woman whom he eventually meets; he finds the courage to pursue her through the perceived support of a fictional character (in *Die Schöne Mullerin,* the brook and in *American Idiot* the protagonists alter-ego St. Jimmy) and he is ultimately rejected by her which leads to his death (literally or symbolically.) This demonstrates the persistence of the song cycle format into even the most contemporary popular music.
to tell that artist’s life-story are not examples of the retrospective contextualisation of songs as found in other productions.\textsuperscript{15}

While related to this project in the assembly of existing material into new and unrelated stories, the content of a Jukebox Musical involves selecting pre-composed music from a limited repertoire, making it virtually impossible to connect the material in an entirely cohesive fashion, even when drawing all of the material from a single artist. Extensive dialogue and direct exposition is required to connect the music together and therefore the musical content does not tell the story, but rather the story exists only to justify the assembly of the musical works.

All of the works presented in the portfolio might be described as cycles, perhaps with the exception of \textit{Vespers} which is a large-scale concert work, however these cycles differ in conception and execution from their historical predecessors in their attempts to draw on the work of multiple authors and to musically interrelate or synthesise these texts into original narratives.

2.3 Apophenia, Cognitive Bias and Creative Cognition

In order to determine the way in which unrelated text may be connected musically, it is first necessary to understand the cognitive processes involved in the formulation of relationships between discrete blocks of information, as the effective purpose of the project is to explore the ways in which compositional techniques may contribute to the formulation of these information-relationships such that the listener will, consciously or subconsciously, infer narrative correlation between the selected texts. An understanding of this process of inferential relationships is explained by the study of Cognitive Sciences and specifically, the study of human \textit{apophenia, cognitive bias} and \textit{creative cognition}.

Apophenia describes the tendency of the human brain to search for meaningful and recognisable patterns in random sets of information.\textsuperscript{16} The principles of apophenia state

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that the individual will search for connective information until a conclusion may be
developed which relates the available information, even if that information is unrelated.
In terms of the development and communication and perception of text as narrative,
apophenia manifests as the human tendency to correlate data provided by the existing
text to draw inferences as to the missing narrative information, associated with insight.
Cognitive science researcher Mark Jung-Beeman illustrates the phenomenon as follows:

Consider what happens when you hear: “Mary bought a big package of white paper,
then headed off to her cabin. A month later, she gave her husband a new novel.”
You probably inferred that Mary wrote the novel. People seem to make inferences
like this effortlessly. But clearly some cognitive – and neural – effort is required.
This is reflected in subtle changes in fMRI signal observed while subjects listen to
stories that […] imply an event – like the passage above. 17

Given this information the majority of readers will infer that it is implicit in the text that
Mary wrote the novel, based on the other information provided. This may or may not
be the case, but the inclusion or omission of select details deliberately leads to a
cognitive bias – a situation in which inferences about the person or situation in question
may be drawn based upon subjective interpretation of information available.

Recent research has empirically demonstrated that when an event or connection can
or must be inferred, the brain attempts to reach a conclusion as to the missing
information through a measurable process of creative cognition associated with the
formulation of insight: specifically, the right Superior Temporal Gyrus is activated,
which examines broad neural correlations with the information provided to draw
potential relationships between discreet blocks of objective information (including
correlations only distantly related to the incoming information, such as obscure word-
associations.) The results of this broad correlative search are then analytically filtered
for relevance by the parallel area of the left hemisphere, before the activation of the
Inferior Frontal Gyrus which appears to be responsible for ‘selecting’ an inference from
the many possibilities. 18

An interesting feature of this cognitive process is that once the
listener has reached a conclusion as to the inferred narrative events which took place,
they will frequently include these inferences in retellings of the narrative at a later point,
indicating that the brain struggles to separate inferred narrative from objective

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17 Mark Jung-Beeman, “Drawing Inferences from Stories” Research, Northwestern University Press,
narrative when processing memories of an event or scenario. This subjective process of memorisation is responsible for additional cognitive bias in future processing of related texts.

Finally, testing demonstrated that an integral part of the Insight process was the activation of alpha-rhythms (electromagnetic brainwaves with a frequency of 8-13 Hz) over the Right Posterior Cortex of the brain, which occurred approximately 1.5 seconds prior to the commencement of the primary neural associative search in the Inferior Frontal Gyrus (IFG). This alpha-activity was shown to be the brain ‘gating’ or attenuating external sensory stimuli to the right brain hemisphere in order to strengthen bilateral communication between brain hemispheres while working on the complex neural computations demanded by the creative cognitive process.

From a practical perspective, it may therefore be entirely plausible that an individual’s perception of a presented text (or collected texts) and the implied narrative, may be guided by the use of compositional techniques which control the provision of objective information while deliberately seeking to invoke perceived correlations between previously unrelated textual material through the deliberate exploitation of human apophenia and subsequent activation of the brain’s innate creative cognitive and inferential processes. It may also be suggested that the use of music and compositional technique in the implementation of such a process is advantageous due to the observed correlation between listening to music and the production of alpha waves in the brain which as previously mentioned is a requirement of optimal transition into the creative cognition state of mind deemed desirable for the perceived interconnectedness of the individual texts. While empirically testing for the successful activation of this phenomenon (through functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging [fMRI] or Electroencephalograph brain-activity monitoring [EEG]) is beyond the scope of this project, an awareness of why and how the brain ‘fills in the blanks’ in a narrative is

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20 Jung-Beeman et al. 2004. p.504
21 Jung-Beeman et al. 2004. p.507
integral to the development of compositional techniques which has the greatest potential of creating new implied narratives from limited and unrelated pre-existing text.
3. WINDS AND WATERS

Winds and Waters is a 53-minute theatrical song cycle for four singers and orchestra. The work comprises 13 individual songs, including solos, duets and a central quartet, which are stylistically, harmonically and thematically related and which share a number of constantly evolving motifs. While designed as a concert work with orchestral forces, the piece was originally conceived as a theatre work with accompanying chamber orchestra. As such, the cycle follows the structural design of the contemporary ‘anti-musical’ in the reduction of the story’s ‘cast’ to a bare minimum of four performers and the removal of larger orchestral forces (such as extensive percussion and brass sections) to facilitate lower production costs and smaller space requirements. While these considerations are no longer entirely pertinent to the final work they provided the defining structural parameters and should be considered.

3.1 Conception

3.1.1 The ‘New School’ theatre composer and the ‘Anti-Musical’

In searching for a means to explore the processes involved in musically formulating a narrative from unrelated works, a practical example was found in the contemporary works of the purported ‘New School’ of American theatre composers. The New School of theatre composers (also ‘New Wave’, ‘New Thinkers’) considers American (Broadway and Off-Broadway) composers from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s who were influenced by such respected writers as Stephen Sondheim and Frank Loesser, but who devised original and iconic methods of presenting their works which depart from the traditional structure of the Broadway musical.23 One of the most recognisable devices of the New School is the anti-musical or chamber-musical format: the rejection of the high-budget ‘spectacle format’ of the traditional Broadway and West-End show, and the resulting demand for bigger-and-better contemporary productions (such as Wicked by Stephen Schwartz) in favour of smaller, more intimate productions with more

sophisticated song-writing techniques and a more modern approaches to harmony.\textsuperscript{24} Key to these small-scale productions is the stripping-down of cast and instrumentation to minimums, and the introduction of more eclectic thematic and narrative content, with a subtler delivery, all of which results in a necessarily immersive and (due to the more abstract approach to story-telling,) participatory audience experience.

Of particular interest were two works by the definitive New School composer Jason Robert Brown. Brown’s musical output is widely recognised for his complex rhythmic and harmonic language, his sophisticated writing style and his unique and unusual approach to story-telling. Having studied composition and orchestration under Samuel Adler and Joseph Schwantner,\textsuperscript{25} he displays a mastery of careful and precise subtler instrumentations and his musicals are often delicately-orchestrated works for small instrumental ensembles and even smaller casts, which emphasise highly-relatable intimately-emotional journeys of modern-day characters.

The first work of interest was Brown’s \textit{Songs for a New World}, his premiere musical to be professionally produced (originally Off-Broadway and later on Broadway as a revival.) Brown describes the work as a ‘theatrical song cycle’ in that it is a collection of songs grouped by theme (and author, as Brown is his own lyricist) but unlike the traditional song cycle it is scored for four stage performers who assume a different persona with each new song to deliver a new thematically-relevant story.\textsuperscript{26} While there is no implied narrative inherent in the production – indeed the temporal setting of the songs ranges from the modern day, to the American civil war (1860s) to the 1492 landing in the Americas of Jewish refugees fleeing the Spanish Inquisition – each individual song in the cycle builds upon the audience’s understanding of the productions underlying themes, such that the back-story and content of each new song is rarely expressed but still intuitively informed by the listeners’ awareness of the previous material. For example, in song 3 “Just One Step” a mother threatens suicide to gain the attention her unfaithful and uncaring husband; in song 4 “I’m Not Afraid of Anything” a young woman comes to terms with her male-partner’s non-committal,

uncertain approach to their relationship; in song 9 “The Steam Train” a young man who has made a career for himself after escaping the ghetto recounts how his absent father appeared one night and burnt down their apartment; likewise in song 10 “The World Was Dancing” a shattered man bitterly recalls the way his irresponsible father lost all of the family money and allowed the family store to be destroyed. In song 12 “Christmas Lullaby”, a teenage girl has just discovered she is pregnant, and while no reference is made to the father at all, it might be unsurprising that the listener is led to assume that the father of the child has abandoned them, based upon the constant re-affirmation of fathers as weak, non-committal and irresponsible throughout the preceding material. This technique of gradually developing the audience’s expectations without explicitly stating them allows for a more subtle and interactive product which asks the listener to draw upon their own understanding and experiences to complete the puzzle of the characters journey, which in turn develops greater attention to- and investment in- the thematic content of the cycle as a whole.

*Songs for a New World* was the first in a string of similar multi-character theatrical song cycles which were produced in subsequent years by numerous artists, notably New School composer Adam Guettel’s *Myths and Hymns* (1998) and William Finn’s *Elegies* (2003) and the theatrical song cycle has become a popular format for new composers, perhaps because it allows them to showcase their musical works free from the responsibility of effectively communicating a large-scale storyline.

The second work of particular interest was Brown’s iconic work *The Last Five Years*, again an anti-musical written for just two performers and a small instrumental ensemble of just six players. *The Last Five Years* is effective in its simplicity, detailing the meeting, marriage and separation of two characters Cathy and Jamie over the five-year course of their relationship. The musical is primarily lauded for its inventive method of storytelling: the narrative is told forward in time from Jamie’s perspective, and backwards in time from Cathy’s, such that the production opens with a despondent, heavy number in which a devastated Cathy is seen packing up her belongings moments after Jamie has moved out; the second number details Jamie meeting Cathy for the very first time, with the two characters only performing together in the pivotal central song.

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which takes place at their wedding. This makes for a particularly powerful and bittersweet method of storytelling, but of even more interest is the decision to again use extremely minimal dialogue (and to layer dialogue over short instrumental breaks in a song when it is used.) The result is that each song becomes a snapshot in time, with the listener required to participate in the story to determine what happened in-between. The constant jumping between past and future only serves to heighten the need for attentiveness, and it is this technique of demanding that the audience make their own contribution to the completion of the story which forces the listener to emotionally invest in the journey of the characters and to ultimately connect with the story.

The main points of interest drawn from these two successful musicals were the practicality of the small-scale multi-character theatrical song cycle as a means of delivering an intimate, immersive and powerful narrative (in an affordable format) and the subtle effectiveness of providing an incomplete narrative in encouraging an audience to mentally and emotionally invest in the work. These techniques provided the key structural parameters in the development of the *Winds and Waters* song cycle.

### 3.1.2 Text Selection

It is important to note that there was no pre-defined concept of a story before the search for lyric material began. The process surrounding the selection of text for the work is of considerable importance as it is this process that determines the narrative of the cycle. For the purposes of emulating the poem-based nature of the majority of historical song cycles, the decision was made to base the work upon existing poetry with a recognisable rhythm and rhyme structure (rather than text from a novel etc.) The process of selecting texts involved the examination of several hundred poems, all of which were in English. The poems were drawn from a range of sources and from a variety of geographical locations. As poetry is a broad field with many styles, it became necessary to apply some guidelines in order to narrow down the textual possibilities:

- All poems should have a similar, inherently song-like structure;
- All poems should share a similarly ‘romantic’, emotionally-evocative style
- All poems should, where possible, be of religious or nationalistic neutrality
- All poems must be in the public domain
By setting out clear parameters for the poetic style and content, it was possible to quickly identify which poems were not suitable for the work, and single out those that were. The ‘romantic’ stylisation of the poetry was favoured in order to allow the text to cohesively blend with the proposed compositional style for the cycle and likewise the absence of religious or nationalistic definition offered greater scope for crafting the individual texts into a cohesive work which could remain accessible to the listener regardless of their affiliations in this regard. As a composer I personally felt a strong affinity for the ethos of this poetic style and its message and also felt that it represented a textual stylistic equivalent to my personal harmonic language. I therefore felt that the use and interpretation of this genre of poetry would provide the greatest scope to explore the lush, evocative and folk-influenced modal language I wished to employ.

3.2 Interpretation
3.2.1 Text Assembly

Some thirty poems were selected, all of which were neutral in era, location, exact meaning and in most cases were also not gender-specific. The process of assembling these into a potentially recognisable narrative structure involved first separating the poems chronologically based upon the events or emotions described. As all of the poems dealt with various personal events the chronology is relative to the course of a lifetime - poems relating to new beginnings, excitement, wonder and optimism were considered the earlier or younger poems, themes of doubt, reflection or change allocated central positions, and poems of resolution, finality or death placed at the end. In this process, the true development of the narrative is strongly dependant on the potential interactivity of the poems, as per the principle demonstrated in Songs for a New World which illustrates that the context of a given poem may be pre-defined by the preceding poems. For example, one central poem “The Hour of Most Desire” details an admission or declaration of love. If preceded by a poem about friendship, the inherited backstory might appear to be one of friends falling in love. If, however, the poem were preceded by a poem about longing for the unobtainable, the contextual impression given may be that the declaration of love is an unrequited one. Eventually 16 poems were selected which contained sufficient potential to define a cohesive story arc, provided that the observer could be encouraged to accept them as a series of
chronologically progressive vignettes and to draw their own conclusions as to what had occurred between songs.

### 3.2.2 Character Development

Poems were allocated to four un-named characters, two male and two female, based upon the content of the poems and their place in the progression of the story. At the same time, it became possible to determine rough age-groups for the characters - for example, a regretful nostalgic poem was allocated to one male, who due to the nature of the poem was henceforth determined to be an older character and was therefore allocated to a baritone voice-type. The second male character was allocated the more romantic poems, and set as a young tenor, which naturally led to the allocation of more romantic poems to a ‘young soprano’ character, and the final female part was determined to be an even younger mezzo-soprano (for harmonisation purposes) who’s poetry is child-like and optimistic. As a point of interest, while the mezzo-soprano voice-type is not typically associated with younger characters in classical works, it is a common association in works of music theatre due to the anticipation of a younger performer with a more limited range in comparison to an older and more trained performer capable of delivering the required ‘classical’ (commonly referred to as ‘legitimate’) technique. As explained in the performance notes for the work, the mezzo-soprano should be lighter and younger in tone than the soprano despite being scored lower.

It should be noted that *Songs for a New World* clearly demonstrates that a song cycle’s works may be divided among multiple ‘characters’ and cycle presented in a theatrical format, and yet still be entirely devoid of clear unifying narrative. It cannot therefore be assumed that character interactions (and even staging) are enough to imply that the work is a single cohesive story. They do however help to facilitate the application of further techniques that collectively create the impression of a connected narrative between songs. *Table 3.1* shows the final assembled format of the cycle.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POEM</th>
<th>AUTHOR (Location, Year)</th>
<th>ALLOCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Explorers</td>
<td>Martin Armstrong (Cambridge UK, c. 1918)</td>
<td>Tenor &amp; Baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wander-Thirst</td>
<td>Gerald Gould (Norwich UK, c.1929)</td>
<td>Baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To Wake With Not A Prayer</td>
<td>Hybrid: “The Call of the Sea” – May Bateman (1895) and “Childhood Calls” – John Freeman (London UK, 1916)</td>
<td>Soprano &amp; Mezzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Memory of the Wind</td>
<td>John Presland – attr. Gladys Bendit (c.1911)</td>
<td>Soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beauty</td>
<td>John Masefield (Oxfordshire UK, 1924)</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Message</td>
<td>Duncan Campbell Scott (Canada, c.1898)</td>
<td>Soprano, Mezzo, Tenor, Baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Wild Swans</td>
<td>W.B. Yeats (Dublin IRELAND, 1919)</td>
<td>Baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Hour of Most Desire</td>
<td>Charles Roberts (New Toronto CANADA, c. 1880)</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Little Dog Angel</td>
<td>Norah M. Holland (Toronto CANADA,1918)</td>
<td>Mezzo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale</td>
<td>Maurice Baring (Cambridge UK, 1911)</td>
<td>Tenor &amp; Soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Master of Shadows</td>
<td>Norah M. Holland (Toronto CANADA,1918)</td>
<td>Soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do Not Stand At My Grave and Weep</td>
<td>Anonymous – attrib. Mary Elizabeth Frye (Baltimore USA, 1932)</td>
<td>Soprano</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2.3 Compositional Stylistic Parameters

Psychoanalyst C.G. Jung observed that music has the ability to bypass our cognitive filters and evoke deep archetypal recognitions within the psyche.\textsuperscript{28} When musically communicating a story this can be both a blessing and a curse, as the stylistic choices made by the composer will unavoidably affect the listener’s perception of the story – once the listener equates the tonal landscape with a particular composer or compositional movement, the entire context of the story may be inadvertently polarised toward a style, era and associated time and place which may be at odds with the intended setting. Because it is virtually impossible to write entirely ‘neutral’ music, it therefore becomes more practical to take an informed post-modern approach to compositional style and select archetypal sound-worlds which will best serve to enhance the intended setting of the story being delivered.

As a result, a number of stylistic decisions were applied in light of the textual material selected. Example 3.1 shows examples of sketching of the thematic material considered for song 9 “The Hour of Most Desire” which demonstrate the many possible directions considered for the main theme of the work, with examples drawing on lieder, such as Schumann (Idea 2) or the raw open fifths of folk-song harmonisation style (Idea 3).

An examination of the textual works as a whole revealed a common theme: the perception of nature as a beautiful, mystical and God-like force. In light of this a British-Isles folk-influenced modality was selected as a stylistic starting-point for the cycle due to its association with rural simplicities and the romance of the pagan relationship to the forces of nature. The flavour of this sound-world’s predominantly Aeolian, Dorian and Mixolydian modalities likewise informed changes in the harmonic progressions used, resulting in the adoption of traditional Irish folk-music chord substitutions: the bVII chord in place of the V, and the (major) IV chord in place of the VI in minor tonalities (as a result of the dorian mode.) However to avoid over-dependence on the style, harmonically chords are voiced with extended harmonies throughout (particularly the added major 7th, 9th and 13th), interspersed with stacked open 5ths and moving parallel 4ths, conjuring up some of the exotic and mysterious sound-worlds of early 20th century French composers (such as Ravel, Debussy) whose ‘Impressionist’ tonal languages are well suited to the word-painting associated with a song cycle.
3.3 Representation

It should be noted that while the various steps in the process of assembling the collective texts into a cohesive musically-driven narrative is represented below in a linear manner, the actual process must be approached as cyclical and holistic as each change in the text leads to changes in tonality, which affects the treatment of motifs, which again affects the meaning of the text. What follows is a summarisation of the inter-related techniques employed in the development of the cycle.

3.3.1 The Absolute and the Abstract Narratives

With the poems assembled and allocated to respective characters, two distinct aspects of the storyline are present: the Absolute narrative is the collective plot points explicitly stated within the lyrics of the poems or other unchangeable factors. Conversely the Abstract storyline exists as a combination of clues in the lyrics, and implications made by the musical treatment of the text and the interaction between poems and characters. The key functional factor of this work is its vignetted presentation and the opportunity for individual audience members to draw their own conclusions as to the Abstract narrative. As such, making only the most pivotal aspects of the narrative Absolute was a key part of the work’s developmental process. A comparative summary of the differing narratives is illustrated in Table 3.2.

The provided Abstract narrative, while still indefinite, is the story most strongly suggested in the cycle, however even this allows plenty of room for speculation (e.g. what was the soprano’s illness? How much time had passed between the start and end of the cycle?) It also leaves room for greater interpretation on subsequent listening once the end-point of the story is known. The combination of these narrative styles allows for a high degree of audience participation in “filling in the gaps” in the story by encouraging the listener to draw on their own experiences, which in turn results in a higher degree of emotional investment in the characters and the outcome.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>ABSOLUTE NARRATIVE</th>
<th>ABSTRACT NARRATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Opening</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Explorers</td>
<td>Introduction of two male characters, both of whom express a shared love of adventure.</td>
<td>The two men are travellers, one older and one younger, possibly father and son. The location is suggested as an expansive woodland area near coastal cliffs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Wander-thirst</td>
<td>The baritone character confirms his love of travel.</td>
<td>The baritone character is constantly plagued by the need to move about as a means of escaping painful past experiences. The location is further defined as on the western coastline of a landmass. Tonal language suggests proximity to the British Isles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. To Wake With Not a Prayer</td>
<td>Introduction of two female characters.</td>
<td>Both women possess an idealised and optimistic view of the world and an admiration of nature. Their similarities of expression suggest that they are sisters or close friends. Further mention of a coastal setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. The Memory of the Wind</td>
<td>The soprano character expresses adoration for the beauty of the forces of nature.</td>
<td>A suggested paganistic spiritual connection to nature – the sense that our ancestors’ memories of the world live within us, and that the memories of our ancestors live on in the natural world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Beauty</td>
<td>The tenor has seen the soprano character and has fallen instantly in love.</td>
<td>The tenor has overheard the soprano’s praising of nature and surmises that lovely and mysterious as it is, she is ‘the loveliest thing of beauty’. Passing reference to God suggests tenor has previously come from a place of organised religion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. The Message</td>
<td>The characters collectively express their desire for something.</td>
<td>Implication that the tenor and soprano have begun a romance. Further evidence that the baritone longs for an unobtainable past. Evidence that the mezzo character is quite young.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The Wild Swans</td>
<td>The baritone is an older character. He laments the passing of time. The season is autumn.</td>
<td>The baritone has been to this place many times in his youth, and returning is both nostalgic and painful for him. Suggestion that he is pondering life and death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. The Hour of Most Desire</td>
<td>The tenor declares his love for the soprano.</td>
<td>The heaviness of the orchestration suggests that the soprano is troubled by an unknown problem, and the tenor’s words</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The Little Dog Angel</td>
<td>No Absolute narrative.</td>
<td>Further evidence that the mezzo is a young character with an optimistic outlook on both life and death. Suggestion that she has experienced the death of a pet for the first time and chosen to find meaning in this – or that she is recalling the meaning she found in a pets death in order to prepare herself for the impending death of another person or animal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Vale</td>
<td>The tenor confirms that he and the soprano are ‘drifting apart’. The soprano expresses her fear of not having the chance to say goodbye.</td>
<td>Implication that the soprano has become terminally ill, that it is doubtful she will be alive the next morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The Master of Shadows</td>
<td>The soprano dies.</td>
<td>Implication that in death she becomes one with nature, as she believed she would at the start. The season is described as winter, associated with cold, stillness and death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Do Not Stand at my Grave and Weep</td>
<td>The soprano returns to explain to the others that she lives on in nature.</td>
<td>Implication that all four characters stories are closely interwoven, and the message that nature's forces are unstoppable yet benevolent. Seasonal references to spring, associated with rebirth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.2 Stylistic Development as Narrative Device

The application of stylistic conventions in various combinations may instantly allow the composer to set a ‘mood’ for the work – indeed the first few bars of each song effectively determine the underlying mood. From the perspective of the audience, as this mood changes (to become lighter or more sombre) so the story may be perceived to progress. Therefore the ongoing development of the harmonic, melodic and rhythmic language is a key factor in communicating the passage of time. Just as the content of the poems moves from the early works of excitement, novelty and innocence towards poems of loss and death, so the timbre of the pieces becomes heavier, the harmonic and melodic language more dissonant, complex and confusing, with the penultimate work “The Master of Shadows” effectively avoiding tonal centre until the final bars, before the ‘release’ back to tonality in the final song. To highlight this device, each song commences with a musical introduction which is carefully crafted in such a way as to both preview the sound-world of the ensuing piece, and to highlight the stylistic changes between the current song and the previous works, drawing attention to the steady transformation of style in response to the progressing narrative. Similarly the cycle begins with works in rhythmically-accessible time-signatures, with an energetic and dance-like underlying pulse, before becoming temporally more obscure as time passes, culminating in the uncertain, overlapped timings of the duet “Vale” (number 11) before becoming simpler once more for the finale.

Another subtle device is employed to enhance the subliminal comprehension of the story: both the shape of melodic lines and the voice-leading of orchestral parts is deliberately polarised toward the intended mood of each song. Upward-moving parts are used to depict optimistic or light-hearted songs or sections of songs (Example 3.2.) Meanwhile downward movement of parts is used to depict heaviness, seriousness (Example 3.3.) Finally, moments of helplessness and indecisiveness are accompanied by relatively still, at times drone-like, orchestrations with little recognisable direction in parts (Example 3.4.) It is worth noting that while other word-painting techniques might have been used to depict these states, in this context negativity is portrayed as stagnation rather than chaos, a decision relating to the underlying ‘nature’ theme of the works and the association with stagnation in nature as undesirable and dynamic and flowing movements as an ideal state.
Ex. 3.2: Song 13 “Do Not Stand at my Grave and Weep” – Upward movement in orchestration

Ex. 3.3: Song 12 “The Master of Shadows” – Downward movement in orchestration
3.3.3 Motivic Development as Narrative Device

The use and transformation of the leitmotif – a short, recurring musical phrase associated with a person, place or idea- as a narrative technique is an established practice, most notably in the operas of Richard Wagner. When attempting to combine unrelated texts, motivic development becomes an indispensable technique. Following the structural example of Brown’s *The Last Five Years*, composition of the music for *Winds and Waters* began with song 9 “The Hour of Most Desire” as this song functions as the central pivot point between the initial, optimistic storyline and latter, more tragic turn of events in the second half. As such, the motivic material is almost entirely drawn from this central song and transformed in various ways throughout the cycle. For example, the main theme of the B section of *The Hour of Most Desire* is shown in Example 3.5. This melodic “romance-theme” can be seen to be foreshadowed in the accompaniment of the earlier song *Beauty* as shown in Example 3.6. It is also reprised to form the basis of the melody for the later work *The Master of Shadows* (Example 3.7.)

Meanwhile the counterpoint in the accompaniment for *The Master of Shadows* is itself
crafted from the primary A-section melody of *The Hour of Most Desire (Example 3.8.*)* Likewise, the melody of the previous song *Beauty* is a modified inversion of this melody (*Example 3.9.*) The accompaniment line seen under the vocal part of *The Hour of Most Desire* in *Example 3.8* makes use of the haunting principal theme of the entire cycle which is found usually in the flute or clarinet parts, winding through every song in the cycle in some form, isolated in *Example 3.10.*
Ex. 3.5: Song 9 “The Hour of Most Desire” – Thematic excerpt

Ex. 3.6: Song 6 “Beauty” – Accompaniment foreshadowing of melodic material

Ex. 3.7: Song 12 “The Master of Shadows” – Reprise of previous melodic material
Ex. 3.8: Song 9 “The Hour of Most Desire” – Main melodic material

Ex. 3.9: Song 6 “Beauty” – Inversion of previous melodic material
3.3.4 Selection of Orchestral Forces

In keeping with the stylistic dictates of the chamber-musical, *Winds and Waters* began as a chamber work with only string quartet and some woodwinds as accompaniment. While an orchestration for smaller orchestral forces will always be more financially attractive when considered for performance, the lack of timbral options resulted in a reduced sound palette and a subsequent limitation in the word-painting and expressive capabilities of the accompaniment – integral functions to the cohesive delivery of the narrative. As such, the orchestration was expanded to include a broader selection of orchestral instruments, which permitted greater expressive flexibility, at the expense of some potential theatrical performance viability. Ultimately the work was re-assigned as a concert piece.

3.3.5 Theatrical Considerations

The abstract and incomplete nature of the work’s narrative might lend itself well to stage interpretation, with plenty of room for directors to make the story their own and to make sets, costumes and lighting as detailed and literal or as abstract and minimalistic as required. While the idea was ultimately abandoned in favour of the simplicity of a concert piece, the future potential remains - though this would require adaptation of the score to allow for scene changes, vamped passages and other theatre conventions.
3.4 Reflection

3.4.1 Revisions

As the song cycle developed, numerous revisions were necessarily made to improve the flow of the work and the cohesiveness of the story. Ultimately these resulted in a change in the planned format of the work.

The work was originally planned as a 120-minute piece in two acts, but in keeping with the principles of the chamber musical, this was reduced to a single act by shortening *The Message* – originally the act I finale - and removing the lengthy entr’acte. The central work *The Hour of Most Desire* was originally scored for baritone, but was later transposed into the tenor key to and allocated to the ‘youthful’ tenor character for narrative purposes. One number, entitled *Only Once Shines the Moon* was originally included for baritone in the second half of the cycle, but was removed as its humorous content was both out of step with the flow of the narrative and contradicted the traits of the baritone character implied prior to that point. The early duet *To Wake With Not a Prayer* (number 4) was originally omitted from the final selection of texts, but was re-introduced at a late stage to provide an expository work for the two female characters. A number of more complex timings (5/4 and 7/8 passages) were removed from earlier numbers in the cycle to allow the progression of temporal complexity in the interests of narrative development. Finally, the theatrical restrictions of the work were abandoned in favour of the stylistic possibility larger orchestral forces and the simplicity of a standard concert performance format. Such revisions do not represent failings in the initial process of text assembly nor failings in the textual synthesis techniques employed, but rather demonstrate the compositional process is a circular one necessitating re-examination of the original text selections in light of the musical decisions made and their effect on the flow of the story presented.

3.4.2 Performance Considerations

From a practical performance perspective, a number of revisions were made to the initial completed product. Lengthy ‘scene-change’ introductions at the start of songs were replaced by shorter introductions conducive to the concert performance format. Importantly, the work was originally scored as a hybrid theatre piece which could potentially be performed by classically trained singers, or be performed by music-
theatre-style vocalists, without the need for any changes in the orchestration. It was hoped that the relative accessibility of the music combined with the hybrid nature and limited range of the vocal parts would broaden the performance possibilities of the song cycle. However it became clear from a workshop concert performance of three of the soprano songs in October 2011 that if the piece were to be performed as an unamplified concert work, only classically trained vocalists would possess the technique necessary to communicate the vocal parts over the orchestral accompaniment (in spite of measures taken in the development of the orchestration.) With the necessitation of classically trained performers came the opportunity to further develop the vocal parts based upon the ranges and abilities of the classical voice, and revisions were made to a number of pieces which effectively broadened the dynamic and dramatic communication of the text. For example, the range of the tenor’s dramatic number Beauty was extended to include the top B-flat (Example 3.11 and 3.12.) Note the augmented use of the principal theme in the accompaniment of the amoroso section. Likewise the soprano solos were revised to incorporate similar range requirements, though the true extent of these technical demands is not revealed until the end of the penultimate work The Master of Shadows (Example 3.13 and 3.14.)
Ex 3.11: Song 6 “Beauty” – Original setting

Ex 3.12: Song 6 “Beauty” – Revised setting

Ex. 3.13: Song 12 “The Master of Shadows” – Original setting
3.4.3 Concert Reception

Discussions with audience members after the concert presentation of the three soprano solos confirmed a number of key points:

- The songs were perceived to be accessible, yet sophisticated and delicately orchestrated.
- The journey of the soprano character’s story could be inferred to a certain extent even from exposure to her three solos alone, providing proof that a developing narrative was communicated by the compositional techniques applied.
- The three solos presented alone were perceived to be ‘too similar’ owing to the constant redevelopment of limited thematic and harmonic structures and the absence of the contrasting intermediary works, demonstrating firstly that the interconnectedness of thematic material across all three songs was perceptible and secondly that the contrast and context of the absent works are integral to maintaining mental engagement with the narrative.
4. NOR THE STORMS THAT PASS

*Nor the Storms That Pass* is a collection of five overlapping works for advanced a capella S.A.T.B vocal ensemble or choir of approximately 16 minutes duration. The work calls for a minimum ensemble of ten performers (S.S.M.A.A.T.T.Bar.B.B) and can suitably be performed by any larger ensemble. The complex nature of the harmonies, as well as the range-requirements of each voice type, makes this work most appropriate for advanced ensembles of a tertiary standard or higher. The work approaches textual synthesis from an entirely text-based perspective, with a complete lack of instrumentation, and provides a study in both the development of a choral textual narrative and the synthesis of multilingual texts into a single unified work.

4.1 Conception

4.1.1 Influences in the Choral Narrative

In order to determine how best to musically set the texts that would be selected for the choral works, a broad study of composers of choral music was conducted. From this, an interesting technique was noted in various baroque operas and oratorios such as Bach’s *Passions*, Handel’s *Messiah* and *Israel in Egypt* and Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*: the chorus performs the hybrid role of both representing large groups (mobs, crowds, demons, fishermen etc.) and of providing a Greek-chorus style of descriptive commentary to accompany the narrative and assist in elaborating both finer details of the plot and unspoken thoughts and feelings of the characters. This proved to be a useful device in the progression of the represented story in all works.

4.1.2 Stylistic Influences

As demonstrated in *Winds and Waters*, the application of recognisable stylistic techniques can greatly influence the listener’s contextual perception of the work, and the stylistic parameters of the work have a direct impact on the successful communication of the text. The contemporary choral works of Eric Whitacre, for example, demonstrate a sound-world which in itself may be ideal for the development of a narrative due to its inherently developmental structure i.e. the use of pan-diatonic tone clusters of gradually increasing density which are themselves built upon relatively simple harmonic progressions, resulting in flexible works which may both subtly imply
direction through recognisable cadence resolution and allow for more direct thematic transformation in the growing complexity of the tone clusters (Example 4.1.) Also, the freedom of multiple time signatures and aleatoric technique allow for a great deal of expressive freedom. Importantly, it is a sound-world which is relatively independent of strongly nationalistic and historical association.

The problem with this writing style, with its temporal flexibility, tonal ambiguity and aleatoric effects, is that its ultimate destination is often the total obscurity of harmony and text, which while stylistically intriguing and effective requires that the listener abandon their preconceived notions of where the voice-leading will progress and simply allow the nondescript sound of the tone clusters to ‘wash by’ – suggesting that the overall effect of the piece is its purpose, and the text exists only to provide a vehicle for the delivery of the composers style. Indeed Whitacre’s choral text selection often makes use of surrealist and existentialist poetic works such as the writings of Octavio Paz which are replete with dream-like imagery but necessarily lacking in structured narrative. While technical devices such as those employed by Whitacre may be stylistically appropriate for surrealist works, this detachment or inattention of audience from text is problematic for delivery of narrative.

More practical models of choral poem settings are found in the works of two contemporary composers. The first is New Zealand’s Clare Maclean, who finds a compositional midpoint between the structured polyphony of the renaissance choral writings and the extended harmonic landscape of more contemporary works, resulting in an invocation of renaissance sensibilities overlaid with an early 20th-century aesthetic of tonal beauty and freedom in an effort to create a sense of the numinous or transcendent. The second is Canadian composer Bill Douglas who has developed numerous accompanied and unaccompanied choral works based on existing poetry. These works make use of recurring techniques, firstly the noticeable rejection of contrapuntal movement in the choral voicings in favour of block harmonies which allow complete clarity in the communication of the poem-based text and secondly in the gradual expansion of the harmonic language from simple triads to diatonic tonal clusters, similar in technique to the writing of Whitacre but avoiding allowing this to

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progress to the point of degradation of the text’s communication. It might be noted that while these two lesser-known composers were highly influential in the development of a personal choral-writing style, there are countless other examples of choral writing to consider, many of which contributed in some way. Ravel’s *Daphnis and Chloe* provides an example of the use of the choir in an entirely instrumental capacity – a device influencing the still and vowel-based accompanimental use of the ensemble behind solo lines (and also important in the third major work *Vespers.*) An examination of Ligeti’s iconic acapella choral works such as *Lux Aeterna* revealed great sensitivity to - and the effectiveness of - vowel matching across parts.

*Ex. 4.1: Tone clusters in Eric Whitacre’s “Waternight”*

4.2 Interpretation

Narrative flow in *Nor the Storms That Pass* is demonstrated not through the unification of a string of discrete works but rather through the augmentation of primary ‘directly narrated’ works with ‘indirectly narrated’ responsive works and ‘supplementary’ texts functioning as Greek-Chorus commentary to add content to the implied narrative. The selected texts are arranged as shown in Table 4.1.

While there is considerable layering and interweaving of works in the layout of the cycle as a whole, in the interests of performance practicality each work may be independently

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performed by removing intermediary works (e.g. Nature’s Recompense Stanza 1-5 may be directly connected to Stanza 1-6 to create a stand-alone work.)

Contrary to the subtle and gradual development and transformation of thematic material employed in *Winds and Waters*, the structure of *Nor the Storms That Pass* is built around the relatively abrupt changes in the music which delineate between the core narrative work and the intermediary works. Stylistically however the pieces remain cohesive so as to function as a whole.

*Table 4.1: “Nor the Storms That Pass” source texts and authors*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POEM</th>
<th>AUTHOR (Year)</th>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nor the Storms That Pass</td>
<td>Mary Gilmore (c. 1910)</td>
<td>Supplementary – Setting scene of natural environment and raw forces of nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dona Nobis Pacem</td>
<td>Latin Prayer</td>
<td>Accompanimental, ‘Give us Peace’. Foreshadowing the purpose of the narrator’s journey and the final work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora Prima Lux</td>
<td>Latin Prayer</td>
<td>Supplementary – descriptive, elaboration of the question as prayer for freedom and enlightenment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn Stanza 1 - 2</td>
<td>Frederick George Scott (c. 1897)</td>
<td>Indirect Narrative - the voices of nature obscurely reply to The Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aurora Prima Lux</td>
<td>Latin Prayer</td>
<td>Supplementary – as above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Dawn**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Stanza 3</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frederick George Scott (c. 1897)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Narrative – Invitation to embrace the freedom of nature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Nature's Recompense**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Stanza 9</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duncan Campbell Scott (c. 1898)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Narrative – resolution, acceptance of freedom in nature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Voice of God</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James Stephens (c.1909)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Narrative – revelation of nature as God and ultimately of the self as part of nature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Dona Nobis Pacem</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latin Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return of the prayer for peace, in a simpler and more prominent format. The purpose of the narrator’s journey has come full-circle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>The Peace for Which I Seek</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duncan Campbell Scott (c. 1898)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary – Conclusion, A Prayer for Peace in English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Representation

4.3.1 Homophonic-Polyphonic Man-Nature Duality

The construction of the works themselves is built around the duality of the mundane human world (which the narrator seeks to escape) and the beauty, complexity and inherent spirituality of the natural world. Based on the stylistic examples of Clare Maclean and Bill Douglas illustrated in 4.2, this duality is represented on the one hand by the application of relatively static, vertical homophonic harmonisations for the principal ‘earthly’ texts, such as in the vertically aligned setting of The Voice of God (Example 4.2) or similarly in the more staggered but still homophonic setting of Nature’s Recompense (Example 4.3.) Conversely, a more flowing, overlapping, contrapuntal treatment is used for the text which deals with the natural, spiritual realm, such as Dawn (Example 4.4.) Finally, Nor the Storms That Pass, Aurora Prima Lux, Dona Nobis Pacem and The Peace For Which I Seek, which are supplementary and descriptive standalone texts, combine the two techniques through the use of predominantly vertical harmonic treatment with the addition of internal part-movement and extended complexity to the elaboration of the chords, representative of their purpose as hybrid works existing ‘outside’ of the story.
Ex. 4.2: “The Voice of God” – Vertical text alignment

Ex. 4.3: “Nature’s Recompense” – Staggered vertical text alignment
Ex. 4.4: "Dawn" – Contrapuntal text treatment
4.3.2 The Choir and the Soloist

An important technique used in the delivery of the text in the choral works was the establishment of narrator as soloist and choir as Greek-chorus, voice of nature, etc. This is primarily achieved by allocating the soloist a distinctly different part from the rest of the choir, with the solo line usually employing tuplets and syncopations to create a natural, speech-like rhythm for the delivery of the text, in contrast to the more rhythmically rigid stylings of the choral parts, such as in *Dawn* (*Example 4.5.*). The choral parts are not only less natural in their emulation of “speech-patterns”, they also tend to feature the constant repetition of a Latin phrase or vocables, drawing more focus to the contrasting English passages. When the choir *does* provide accompaniment in English, it is generally set slightly behind the soloist’s iteration of the text, functioning more as an echo which reinforces the soloist’s assertions (*Example 4.6.*)

*Ex. 4.5: “Dawn” – speech-like Mezzo solo*

*Ex. 4.6: “Dawn” – Echoing within choir*
4.3.3 Textual Layering and Vowel-Interactions

Particular attention was given to the technical requirements of contrapuntally overlaying differing texts in the development of these works, as initial attempts resulted in the frequent and dissonant interaction of ‘harsh’ vowel combinations (e.g. an ‘ah’ sound layered beneath a prominent ‘ee’.) As a result, efforts were made to ensure that where possible vowels were matched between overlapping parts. A perceived difficulty of this was that vowels are not necessarily pronounced in the same way between languages, and so the vowels of the Latin text may prove subtly different than the vowels of the English text. While this may have become an issue with a soloist-driven work or a contemporary theatre-based work with more natural vowel shapes, the general shaping of vowels for choral music is toward the “pure, Italian” rounded open vowel sounds, which are directly compatible with the accepted pronunciation of Latin text. This can be seen in use in Nature’s Recompense (Example 4.7.) Note the association between the soloist’s long vowels and the syllabic transitions in the choral part to avoid strong vowel-clashes. For example b.24 ‘come’ (kʌm) is matched by ‘do’ (dɔ), b.25 ‘old’ (ɔld) and ‘no’ (nɔ), b.28 ‘dumb’ (dʌm) and ‘pa’ (pa).

4.4 Reflection

4.4.1 Revisions

Nor the Storms That Pass underwent substantial revision before reaching its final state. It was originally conceived as a simple set of five thematically related choir pieces which would be connected into a cycle of choral works through their shared thematic content, with narrative illustrated by the gradual subject development from the earthly to the spiritual, and each of the five core works was in fact composed as a stand-alone piece. It was only after examining the five works together that it became apparent there was a distinct sense of ‘characters’ – the Man, Nature and the ‘Chorus.’ In particular it became evident that the main narrated work Nature’s Recompense pivots between question and answer prior to the final stanza, and so the works were edited and re-assembled around this point.
Ex. 4.7: “Nature’s Recompense”. Vowel matching

But all is vain, they will not come; those voices that I knew of old:
great Nature’s lips to me are dumb, her heart to me is dead and cold.
5. VESPERS

The final inclusion in the portfolio, Vespers is a large-scale, non-liturgical setting of the Roman-Catholic Vespers mass for symphonic orchestra, chorus, soprano soloist, baritone soloist and child treble soloist. The work is divided into three movements with a total duration of 30 minutes and represents a combination of previously discussed synthesis techniques as well as the exploration of some more abstract connective constructs.

5.1 Conception

5.1.1 Synthesis of Textual Dichotomies

Vespers represents an attempt to further explore the connective capabilities of the textual-synthesis techniques already applied and to build upon the efficacy of these techniques. The philosophy behind the construct of the previous works in the portfolio was one of providing beginning, middle and end points to a supposed plot, giving minimal extra information as deemed necessary and relying on the interconnectedness of the text or thematic material to support the listener’s natural desire to infer the missing segments of the story. Vespers does not have such clearly defined points, in fact it does not seek to define a pre-existing story at all. The guiding concept for the work was the extension of the previously-defined compositional techniques to unite texts provided by historical authors who shared fundamental (and at times extreme) differences in ethos. Jesus and Hitler, for example, represent two historical characters who preached mutually exclusive messages of love versus hate. Therefore this work seeks to explore the effectiveness of compositional techniques in unifying texts from authors of extreme contrast, and to present these not as the implicit development of a plot, but rather as a coherently synthesised didactic concert work.

5.1.2 Text Selection

The process of selecting texts for this work involved the juxtaposition of writings or quotations from historical figures with strongly incompatible beliefs. The selected authors are outlined in Table 5.1, grouped by opposition. Also included in the work are several poems by unrelated authors with contrasting treatments of related themes (Table 5.2.) The final text is ethereal poem High Flight by John Magee, which is
independent of the contradictory themes of the other content and which is allocated as a solo for child treble soloist due to its innocence and freedom from the ‘worldly’ concerns of the other texts.

**Table 5.1: “Vespers” - Opposing authors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author 1 (positive)</th>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Author 2 (negative)</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
<td>Acceptance, love.</td>
<td>Adolf Hitler</td>
<td>Prejudice, hate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddha</td>
<td>Gentleness, compassion</td>
<td>Mao Tse-Tung</td>
<td>Forcefulness, intolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.H. Dalai Lama</td>
<td>Hope, unity</td>
<td>Niccolo Machiavelli</td>
<td>Cynicism, self-interest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.2: “Vespers” - Unrelated authors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author 1 (positive)</th>
<th>Message</th>
<th>Author 2 (negative)</th>
<th>Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Ernest Henley</td>
<td>Faith and strength in the face of adversity.</td>
<td>Emily Bronte</td>
<td>Defeat and surrender in the face of adversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kahlil Gibran</td>
<td>Help others because the soul is eternal.</td>
<td>Emily Dickinson</td>
<td>Help others because there is only this life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.2 Interpretation

#### 5.2.1 The Vespers Format

As shown in Table 5.3, the text is arranged in accordance with the running order of the traditional Roman Catholic Vespers (or Evening Prayers) which took the form of a mass and all-night vigil. The symbolic relevance of a ceremony which lasts through the transition of dusk into night and night into dawn appropriately provided a medium for the progressive development of the message of the texts, through fear, hate and acceptance, with one movement of the work attributed to each of these three stages of the all-night vigil. The structure outlined below represents the traditional Vespers structure, however appropriate text substitutions have been made. The structure of individual versus group sections of the mass have also been preserved, such that
prayers and canticles are presented by a soloist, and congregational sections such as hymns and the responsory involve full chorus.

Table 5.3: “Vespers” – Application of text to structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Order</th>
<th>Substitute Text Author</th>
<th>Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOVEMENT 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– DUSK –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening Prayer</td>
<td>Kahlil Gibran</td>
<td>Soprano Solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymn</td>
<td>Emily Bronte</td>
<td>Choir &amp; Soprano Solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canticle</td>
<td>Kahlil Gibran, Mao Tse-Tung, Buddha</td>
<td>Baritone Solo &amp; Choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOVEMENT 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– NIGHT –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Adolf Hitler</td>
<td>Baritone Solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsory</td>
<td>Jesus Christ</td>
<td>Choir &amp; Soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnificat</td>
<td>W.E. Henley</td>
<td>Baritone Solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOVEMENT 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– DAWN –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer</td>
<td>John Magee</td>
<td>Child Treble Solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lord’s Prayer</td>
<td>Buddha, Dickinson</td>
<td>Soprano Solo, Choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing Prayer</td>
<td>Machiavelli, Buddha, Mao Tse-Tung, H.H Dalai Lama</td>
<td>Baritone &amp; Soprano Solo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benediction</td>
<td>Dickinson</td>
<td>Choir</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3 Representation

5.3.1 Duality and Drama

The concept behind the musical treatment of the texts was to imply a church-like setting in which a congregation attend (and at times participate in) a religious ceremony. As previously discussed, this ceremony is structured around the predefined format of the Catholic Vespers Mass. The Christian mass is interesting in that it provides an environment in which teachings of both fear and judgement may be preached concurrent with teachings of love and acceptance – a medium which is therefore an appropriate setting for the presentation of contradicting texts. It is hoped that the evocation of the recognisable mass format will create an expectation of potential duality of the various ‘teachings’ and assist in allow the juxtaposition of texts to be perceived as acceptable.

Due to the opposing nature of the textual material in use, the musical treatment of the text is particularly dynamic and relies heavily on text-painting. The musical treatment and in particular the orchestration are both reflective of the duality of the work. In the setting of texts with cautionary, fearful or hateful content, the didactic passages are treated as still, ominous plain-chant (Example 5.1.) Dramatic outbursts are orchestrated with extensive use of low brass, jagged string bowings and moving dissonant counterpoints, often in the horn parts, drawing upon orchestration techniques found in grand opera (e.g. Verdi, Puccini) and film underscore (Example 5.2.) Meanwhile the softer but still tense moments are conveyed through the mimicking of recognisable baroque religious works (such as Handel’s Messiah or Israel in Egypt.) This technique is recalled at various times throughout the work, with each iteration demonstrating added complexity in the use of increasingly extended or dissonant modifications to the harmony, and increased chromaticism in the counterpoints (Example 5.3 and Example 5.4.) The responsory sections make use of the dissonant diatonic tone clusters and the rhythmic complexity of aleatoric passages to mimic the mutterings of a nervous crowd, such as the Movement 1 Hymn, in which the soprano and alto choral parts are allocated set rhythms at pitches (though these are ascending diatonic tone clusters) while the tenor and bass parts are instructed to “recite ‘prayer-like’” in own time, some at pitch, some spoken’. This technique provides a word-painting effect of the fearful mutterings of a crowd in response to the (symbolic) falling night, and the gradual descent of
organisation and control into increasing chaos and building panic (Example 5.5.) By contrast the more ‘enlightened’ texts are set predominantly with delicate string, harp and woodwind orchestrations, harmonically resolute and gentle (Example 5.6.) Note the extensive use of fermata and free or ad-libitum passages. This temporal flexibility is particularly prevalent in the setting of didactic texts.

The setting of the introspective, reflective and meditative texts makes use of the hypnotic repetition of ostinati and subtle gradual changes, as might be observed in the works of some minimalist composers such as the opening movement of Michael Nyman’s The Piano Concerto or the entirety of John Adams Harmonium (Example 5.7.)

Ex 5.1: “Vespers” – Imitation of plainchant
Ex 5.2: “Vespers” – Mvt.1 Finale. Jagged string parts, dissonant moving brass accompaniment

Ex. 5.3: “Vespers” – Oratorio imitation Mvt.1
Ex. 5.4: “Vespers” – Oratorio imitation Mvt.2

Ex. 5.5: “Vespers” – Use of aleatoric techniques
Ex. 5.6: “Vespers” – Temporal freedom of positive text

Ex. 5.7: “Vespers” – Use of ostinati
5.3.2 Thematic Development

Rather than the elaboration of a plot-based narrative, the sense of progression in this work is a result of the interaction between these extremes of text and orchestration and in particular the gradual transformation of the text and musical treatment, in the form of an evolutionary journey from uncertainty and helplessness in the first movement, to controlling and fearful in the second and finally to acceptance and kindness in the third. This conceptual ‘path to enlightenment’ was informed by the closing section of Britten’s *War Requiem* in which Wilfred Owen’s poem tells of two enemies of war compassionately united in death. In Britten’s work the orchestration gradually transforms from sharply dissonant and sparse interjections to an ethereal, still and peaceful ascending finale – in *Vespers* however the journey is not one of finding closure in death, but rather in coming to the conclusion that regardless of one’s beliefs, meaning and purpose may be found in life through the small differences made in the lives of others. This notion is thematically represented throughout the work by an ever-present pentatonic motif (*Example 5.8.*) This motif is used throughout to denote enlightenment, kindness, thought and the ‘positive end’ of the textual spectrum in general and is eventually revealed to represent the ultimate revelation of the work: that if a difference may be made in the lives of others, then “I shall not live in vain” (*Example 5.9.*) The contrasting fearful, viscous and persecutory material is associated with a simple, rising minor theme, seen in the Violins 1 and 2 in *Example 5.10.* This theme is revealed at an early stage to represent the assertion that it is natural to be cruel, discriminatory and that there “There has to be evil” in the world (*Example 5.11.*) and iterations of the motif often underscore the ‘darker’ textual material. The final recurring motif in the work is a longer passage associated with the revelation during the first *Canticle* that our perceptions shape our actions and that “we think too small,” making fearful and prejudicial decisions as a result (*Example 5.12.*) This theme serves a transitional purpose, representing expressions of uncertainty or questioning in the text, as the ‘clergy and congregation’ taking part in the mass - represented by the baritone and choir – descend into fear and prejudice before being gradually enlightened by the peaceful teachings of the soprano and treble soloists. This change in perception and attitude (occurring at the end of Movement 2 as a result of the revelation or decision that the “soul is unconquerable”) is reflected in shifts in modality, with extensive use of
strictly minor tonalities and harmonic minor scales gradually giving way to increasingly ‘major’ modalities, as shown in Table 5.4.

While the structure of the previous works in the portfolio is naturally conducive to the invocation of creative cognition in the listeners, Vespers must rely almost exclusively upon the development of thematic material to convey the sense of synthesis throughout the work. Due to this heightened need for recognisable material, the motifs and harmonic structures are interchangeably used throughout all movements of the work. As such, the structuring of the work into three distinct sections is primarily related to the divisions between thematically related textual materials, but each movement of the work is not necessarily entirely musically independent from the other two movements.
Ex. 5.8: “Vespers” – Pentatonic motif

Ex. 5.9: “Vespers” – Use of motif

Ex. 5.10: “Vespers” – Rising ‘negative’ theme

Ex. 5.11: “Vespers” – The ‘There Has to be Evil’ theme

Ex. 5.12: “Vespers” – ‘Revelation’ theme
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Running Order</th>
<th>Dominant Modalities</th>
<th>Harmonic Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOVEMENT 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– DUSK –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening Prayer (Soprano)</td>
<td>Aeolian, Mixolydian</td>
<td>Extended use of gentle dissonances – major 7ths, major 9ths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hymn (Choir)</td>
<td>Traditional Minor Scale</td>
<td>Diatonic tone clusters, dissonances, chromaticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canticle (Baritone &amp; Choir)</td>
<td>Traditional Minor Scale</td>
<td>Dominance of diminished intervals, greater use of dissonance and chromaticism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOVEMENT 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– NIGHT –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading (Baritone)</td>
<td>Pan-tonal melodies based on Traditional Minor Scale and diminished intervals</td>
<td>Chromatic tone clusters, hard dissonances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsory (Choir)</td>
<td>Pan-tonal melodies, some serialisation</td>
<td>Increased chromaticism, hard dissonance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnificat (Baritone &amp; Choir)</td>
<td>Chromaticism &amp; diminished intervals, gradually returning to Aeolian scale, gradual increase in ‘tonality’</td>
<td>Initially chromatic, harmonically unclear. Gradually returning to recognisable harmonic structures built on Aeolian mode.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MOVEMENT 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>– DAWN –</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer (Treble)</td>
<td>Aeolian, Mixolydian</td>
<td>Gradual return to use of gentle dissonances – major 7ths, major 9ths, 11ths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lord’s Prayer (Soprano)</td>
<td>Dorian, Mixolydian, Ionian, pentatonic scale, melodies built on rising 3rds and 5ths, falling 4ths and 2nds</td>
<td>Simplification to open 4ths and 5ths built on pentatonic scales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Closing Prayer  
(Soprano, Baritone, Choir) | Mixolydian | Repetition of i-VI progression with overlaid ostinato |
|-----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------|

| Benediction  
(Choir) | Ionian, Aeolian, Dorian, Mixolydian | Repetition of simple progressions with overlaid ostinato, rising diatonic countermelodies and simple choral homophony |

5.4 Reflection

5.4.1 Pan-Movement Thematic Development

While an effective technique for unifying the work as a whole, the decision to develop thematic content more gradually effectively precludes the possibility of performing a single movement as a stand-alone work in a concert setting (unlike for example Mvt I of Grieg’s *Piano Concerto in A minor* which is a popular and functional stand-alone movement.) This is, however, a relatively minor consideration when compared to the contribution that the use of this technique to the coherence of the piece and the synthesis of the texts.

5.4.2 Efficacy of Textual Synthesis and Narrative Delivery

*Vespers* represents an important exploration into the extent to which the concepts discussed and applied throughout the portfolio may be effectively used to synthesise texts into new works. Unlike the earlier works, which guide the process of narrative inference and perception of textual relationships through the provision of certain amounts of direct narrative, *Vespers* relies so exclusively on the listener’s interpretation of the compositional development of the material that the extent to which the underlying narrative might be perceived is uncertain. It can be assumed however that even in the event of a lack of perceived narrative the use of thematic repetition and development will be sufficient to impart a sense of textual coherence - of a single unified work.
6. CONCLUSION

Each of the works presented in the portfolio demonstrates different methods of approaching the synthesis of unrelated text through compositional devices. As the creative process of each work in the portfolio demonstrates, an important and recurring technique in the communication of the texts as a unified work and of the implied narrative inherent in the collected texts is the consistent introduction, repetition and development of recognisable thematic material. In this case these thematic motifs take the form of a recurring melodic passage, repeated harmonic progression, new melodic or harmonic material based on the transformation, extrapolation or inversion of previously introduced material or the consistent global application of a particular stylistic syntax. The importance of thematic recurrence is relatively constant, as it provides the listener with a contextual perspective from which to view the texts, and exploits the brain’s process of making narrative inferences based on initially subconscious recognition of word-relationships and sound-relationships, and the subsequent process of interpretative reasoning which leads the active listener to draw their own conclusions as to the inferred content and meaning of the works. As demonstrated, once these inferences are made they are accepted as factual recollections of events which took place. By extension, it stands to reason that if a listener’s comprehension and recollection of a work comprises a ‘complete’ story (internally manufactured through the inadvertent combining of direct and inferred narrative when committing the story to memory) then they will not question the relatedness of the text used to deliver the narrative.

While the exploited principles of creative cognition are well documented and scientifically accepted, they provide only a philosophical basis for the developmental principles of constructing narrative works – in this case, within the framework of tonal, vocal-works with carefully selected and organised textual content. Future studies might examine the application of these techniques to purely instrumental music, atonal music, or truly random unrelated text with no pre-preparation. It would also be interesting to gauge cognition of inferred narrative in these works through group studies, or through empirical fMRI brain imaging and EEG brainwave scans in order to gain an objective understanding of the effectiveness of techniques and structures applied to each work through confirmation of activity in the Superior Temporal Gyrus and Inferior Frontal
Gyrus and observation of alpha-rhythms in the right Posterior Cortex, however this is well beyond the scope of this project. Instead, the works included and compositional techniques demonstrated in the accompanying portfolio represent just one creative exploration and interpretation of the unifying potential of music in the synthesis of unrelated texts and it is hoped that these examples will provide a technical, stylistic and philosophical resource for composers, writers, lyricists and other professionals with an interest in taking texts and poems, old and new, and “singing a new story.”
LIST OF SOURCES

SCORES


ABBREVIATION


http://groups.psych.northwestern.edu/mbeeman/research.htm.


