A PORTFOLIO OF COMPOSITIONS AND COMMENTARY

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Abstract

In this portfolio of compositions, I have explored the concept of musical ambiguity. I perceive this kind of ambiguity as an interesting and purposeful instability, created by employing a variety of techniques to arrange and manipulate complex compositional materials. Interrupting the narrative flow with unexpected, disturbing fragments should increase the expressive tension of the musical structure and narrative, thereby obliterating 'habitual' hierarchies of perception and eradicating a false sense of stability in the listener. My techniques include the simultaneous juxtaposition of several aural 'viewpoints', such as dense versus lucid textures, as well as the fragmentation and repositioning of chosen elements. In the analyses of my compositions I have made use of some ideas and terms from the visual arts, architecture and philosophy to clarify my arguments.

Every musical element from tonality, texture and rhythm to structure and narrative is questioned and reinterpreted by means of fragmentation and juxtaposition with the aim of creating layers of textures and timbres. Prior to this treatment, a composition is generally begun with a musical idea, derived from my mental 'sound library', which already alludes to timbre, instrumentation, atmosphere, modality and provides motivic impetus. Furthermore, a lively collaboration with musicians plays an important role during the compositional process and has enabled me to find my own voice through the shaping of the experimental materials into the two orchestral works, a few ensemble pieces and solo works.

List of Scores

Opaque Transparencies (2014-16), *Trois Valses Fantastiques* for orchestra, 15 minutes

Piano Concerto (2016) for piano and strings, 26 ½ minutes

Balkanesque Dances (2015-16) for clarinet, violin and piano, 11 minutes

Three Trio Nanos (2016) for clarinet, violin and piano, 5 ½ minutes

Deconstructive Songs about Female Struggle and Empowerment (2016) for soprano, baritone and piano, 17 minutes (staged)

Experimenzas (2015-16), solo pieces for piano, double bass, violin 18 ½ minutes

CD Tracks (Audio-CD attached inside back cover)

1	*Opaque Transparencies*	*Valse 1*, *Valse 2* (*Valse 3* not rec.) Eton College Symphony Orchestra Tim Johnson (conductor)	5:26
2	*Piano Concerto*	*Nachklang* *Scherzo* (*Furiant* not rec.) Eton College String Orchestra Jack Rozman conductor), Jean Beers (piano)	13:47 7:32
3 4 5 6	*Three Trio Nanos*	*Nano 1* *Nano 2* *Nano 3* Miniatures Trio: T. Mocilnik (cl.), V. Popescu (vln.), J. Beers (pno.)	1:15 2:42 1:24
7 8	*Deconstructive Songs about Female Struggle and Empowerment*	*Machiavellian Kindness* *Chopin* *Where everything comes together* (not rec.) E. Strutt (sop.), T. Wood (bar.), J. Beers (pno.)	3:33 4:54
9	*Experimenzas*	*Lucid Nightmare* Jean Beers (piano)	3:45
10		*Song for Double Bass* Kristina Edin (double bass)	5:50
11		*Fantasie* Litsa Tunnah (violin)	6:43
Total Time			54:11

Introduction

> Die Kunst ist eine Vermittlerin des Unaussprechlichen,
> darum erscheint es eine Torheit,
> sie wieder durch Worte vermitteln zu wollen;
> doch indem wir uns darin bemühen,
> findet sich für den Verstand so mancher Gewinn,
> der dem ausübenden Vermögen auch wieder zugute kommt.[1]

Resting on Goethe's maxim, this technical commentary intends to express in words what the compositions communicate in music, hoping to give an insight into the phenomenological process. The purpose is to help clarify the operations involved in the methodology practised in these compositions. On account of the density, complexity and the inert pulse rate of changing elements, the musical material and the methods applied need to be categorised and dissected.

In all compositions of this doctoral project, I have endeavoured to create several aural 'viewpoints' of and between materials to generate a 'positively controlled' instability by means of fragmenting, juxtaposing, restructuring and fusing musical building blocks. Through the manipulation of disparate elements, the impact of parts of these complementary structural relationships can be increased to achieve a greater expressive force.

My compositions are characterised thus by contrasts between 'soft sound clouds' and a motoric drive, created with the energy from deconstructing[2] materials. These techniques were adopted from philosophical, aesthetic, visual-perceptual and architectural theories inspired by Jacques Derrida's

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[1] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'Literatur und Kunst, *Maximen und Reflexionen.* Translation: 'Art is a medium of what no tongue can utter; and thus, it seems a piece of folly to try to convey its meaning afresh by means of words. But, by trying to do so, the understanding gains; and this, again, benefits the faculty in practice.', Selected and translated by Thomas Bailey Saunders in conjunction with Sir Frederick Leighton, paragraph 497, p. 53, online source (10/08/17).
[2] Aubrey Neal, 'The Promise and Practice of Deconstruction', *Canadian Journal of History* (1995), pp. 49-79.

deconstructivism and adapted to suit working in synergy with musical materials sourced phenomenologically.

One of the founding members of the architectural deconstructivist movement[3], Daniel Libeskind, exemplifies such methods in his designs, such as the *Jewish Museum* in Berlin and *Sapphire* (Fig. 1), his recent condominium there.

Fig. 1: *Sapphire* by Libeskind[4]

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[3] Deconstructivist Architecture, exhibition, Museum of Modern of Art, New York City, 1988.

[4] Daniel Libeskind, Sapphire Berlin, 2016, Chausseestraße 43, Berlin, Photo copyright: Jean Beers.

Many visual artists, such as Olafur Eliasson, have also dealt with this concept. He engages with deconstruction as a means of creating ambiguity and awakening new modes of perception. The installation *Mikroskop* (Fig. 2) shows a huge cast iron structure covered with mirror foil, that results in distorted reflections through the fragmentation of any visual image and therefore generates conflicting viewpoints.

Fig. 2: *Mikroskop* by Eliasson[5]

An important aspect of my work rests on the viscerality of manipulating palpable textures. The textural ambiguity created by Mark Rothko in his paintings tempted me to appropriate his gently oscillating colour fields into my treatment of orchestral textures aiming for 'soft' ambiguity (see Fig. 4 p. 30).

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[5] Olafur Eliasson, Mikroskop, 2010, Scaffoding, mirror foil, aluminium, daylight; 17,70x18,50x27,10m, *Innen Stadt Aussen*, city installation, Martin Gropius Bau Berlin, 2010, Photo: María del Pilar García Ayensa / Studio Olafur Eliasson, Copyright Olafur Eliasson.

Generally, in Western thought opposites, such as positives and negatives, are categorised in binary concepts.[6] I propose that the juxtaposition of musical contrasts, as well as their merging, can create an instability and ambiguity that offers the possibility to re-examine existing 'binaries' in music. The repositioning, reassembling and layering of intricate textures in close vicinity can often achieve an enigmatic expressivity. Upon hearing works by Steve Reich, which employ the technique of 'phasing',[7] as well as György Ligeti's *Poème Symphonique* for 100 metronomes, I felt inspired to investigate these techniques in my own work. Even the slightest movement within textural layers causes other fragments to 'shimmer' through the dense texture, an effect much like several layers of finely meshed lace curtains, in *Opaque Transparencies* for orchestra.

Harmonic and tonal materials are subjected to 'ambiguation' through bi-/pan- and 'free' tonality, as well as pitch-bending (melodic microtonal glissandi)[8]. Rhythmic instability was created by fragmenting, layering and superimposing rhythmical patterns.

Integrating 'other sources' such as popular folk music from the Balkans enriched the sonic and expressive possibilities of my own music and helped to manipulate the musical materials actively, comparable to Igor Stravinsky, who is said to have

> worked with the defining traits of modernism - inter alia, its fragmentation, its discontinuity, its primitivism, its eclecticism, its pluralism, its oppositions.[9]

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[6] Here, I use Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivak (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1997), in which he talks about the binary of presence versus absence, as a generic reference.

[7] Steve Reich, *Electric Counterpoint* for 13 guitars, *Pendulum Music,* (London: Barbican, concert, 05/11/16).

[8] 'Ambiguation' is the act of making something ambiguous.

[9] Jonathan Cross, *The Stravinsky Legacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 8.

Mauricio Kagel's percussion ensemble piece *Dressur,* where he uses simplistic diatonicism, easy rhythmic shapes and a tongue-in-cheek combination with theatrical performance instructions, provided creative motivation for the *Deconstructive Songs about Female Struggle and Empowerment*.

The complexity in my music frequently results in technically challenging pieces and, as a performing musician myself, I enjoyed working intimately with colleagues to exploit both sonic and virtuosic possibilities of instrument and player in the solo *Experimenzas*. Therefore, the timbral needs of the instrumentarium generally determine the idea of a new composition of mine and are harvested from my mental 'sound library'. This starting point results in the construction of a network of co-dependencies between each musical element, that is likely to collapse if an uncontrolled alteration of one element were to be carried out.

This commentary shows how I have explored various aesthetic modes of expression through fragmentation and how the resulting complexity is a necessity for achieving my 'brand' of expressivity.

I. Orchestral Works

Experiments with Pitch and Texture

Opaque Transparencies for orchestra

Piano Concerto for piano and strings

This chapter discusses two orchestral pieces in which I experimented with pitch and texture and the extended technical possibilities of an orchestra. Various types of textures will be highlighted, as well as the two main methods used to create an impression of ambiguity. As the main objective of this thesis is the investigation of the properties and the treatment of opposites to create situations of ambiguity, the programmatic words 'opacity' and 'transparency', taken from the first orchestral piece's title, are the guiding themes.

Background, Summary, Narrative

Opaque Transparencies (from here on referred to as *OT*) was composed when I was Composer in Residence at Eton College. The commission for a short tone poem for the school's symphony orchestra to commemorate WWI comprised two movements, *Valses Fantastiques 1* and *2*. After the premiere I composed *Valse Fantastique 3*, increasing the musical drama and 'completing' the narrative to form a work of 16 minutes. As befits the occasion, I used dramatic and contrasting musical materials, reminiscent of war-like sounds and startling interruptions. The piece culminates in a threatening climax after exploring an ever-present emotional story of a pivot note F. The personification of a single pitch hints at my own extrovert and passionate approach to music. This F weaves through microtones, circles indecisively around itself, before its

opposite, G*b*, briefly takes over, suggesting a death toll and funeral march; the original pivot F regains strength assisted by harmonies and motives around it. The journey ends as it began.

The second orchestral piece, the *Piano Concerto* (from here on referred to as *PC*), was written as a showcase for me as a pianist and to offer a pleasurable collaboration in a chamber music partnership. After performing several 20th-century (chamber) concertos (Shostakovich nos. 1 and 2, Gorecki op. 40, Prokofiev no. 2), I avidly anticipated writing a concerto that would combine traditional virtuosity with 'unusual' echoing sounds from inside the piano. Orchestral textures imitate the 'Nachklang'[1] effect, which conjure up echoes of real or imagined sound attacks. On the piano, this occurs when the keys are briefly struck while the sustaining pedal is held. The compositional methods are instrumentally-derived. In the first movement, the orchestra assumes the 'alter ego' of the piano's sustaining pedal and begins the interaction with a pulsation through various contrasting textures. The second movement, *Scherzo*, cheekily explores 'grotesque' elements interspersed with echoes.

While the brief solo cadenza in *Nachklang* (1st mov.) is an organic part of the musical structure, the *Scherzo*'s cadenza, framed by an eight-bar coda, offers a more elaborate expressive tool for the soloist. Much like in a Romantic concerto, the first cadenza is intrinsic to the narrative flow. It develops material from the first movement, which it concludes virtuosically prior to the tutti coda. At the premiere, I decided to also include the voluntary second cadenza.

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[1] 'Nachklang' = echo of sound, echoing sound, resonance, reverberation, reminiscence, recollection, after-effect, repercussion, aftermath (German); it is not to be confused with *Nachklang* in italics, the 1st movement of *PC.*

<u>Analysis</u>

In both *OT* and *PC,* I explored the concept of ambiguity arising within musical contexts, focussing on timbres in a large body of instruments. It is unquestioned that listeners 'archive' individual experiences of music and sound in their 'sound library', with which they unconsciously navigate any music they hear. Sudden, aggressive sounds, for instance, may be categorised as emotionally distressing or war-like.

1.   <u>Formal Structure</u>

1.1   *Opaque Transparencies*

The first movement serves as an exposition of the harmonic, textural and timbral material determining the narrative, while the second develops the material to reach a climax consisting of two parts: a climax in the usual sense (loud, active, epic, bb. 47-53); followed by a non-traditional climax, its own 'Nachklang' (hushed, sliding, small intervallic changes in a high register, increasing internal drama through the tension between closely compressed pitch contrasts, that reinforce the juxtaposition of the pivot F to Gb, bb. 54-58). In the third movement, previous material is developed, while extracting and developing tiny fragmented cells and reshaping them into new, independent motivic blocks. The narrative flow between all movements is accomplished by inserting short, coda-like bridge passages. The first bridge passage uses the tiniest motivic cell, the pitch-bend, to introduce a harsher tone, tinged with accented regular quavers, arranged to suggest a fugato. They thus allow the lively climactic development to take shape in the second movement (bb. 33-37). The bridge between the second and last movement alludes to a calm recapitulation of the three layered 'sound clouds' (=layers of 'soft textures,

amorphous colour planes, discussed on pp. 28-31), which were heard at the

very start (tutti bb. 1-7 seen at Ex. 3, p. 16 and Ex. 8, p. 26, tutti bb. 1-7; relates

to tutti bb. 59-70).

1.2   *Piano Concerto*

The structure of this score is stricter and the first movement demonstrates a

clear sonata-like form (Fig. 1). Unlike the first movement's complexity of

intertwined large blocks, the second and third are built with smaller, clearly

defined motivic units (Figg. 2, 3). The main aim of *PC* is the communication

between soloist and orchestra. The motives, themes, harmonies, rhythms and

'Nachklang' (echoing sounds)[2] are thrown back and forth in a polyphonic play of

question and answer, the piano clearly taking the lead. The two hands of the

piano are mostly treated equally with constantly moving melodic material

between the hands, resembling a 'Klangfarbenmelodie' within the constraints of

a piano's timbres.

Nachklang (1st mov. *PC*)

The exposition introduces the main harmonies and motives, which are

subsequently developed by magnifying and reinterpreting small fragments. The

solo cadenza pianistically reinterprets melodies and gestures from the previous

sections, and a final development section works with several variations of

melodic fragments of the 'sigh' motive from *OT*, by which a contrapuntal

network of closely stacked melodies is created and enhanced by glissandos.

The coda recapitulates and reinterprets the motivic material from the exposition.

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[2] Ibid, see footnote 1, p. 7.

Fig. 1

Section	Bars	Description	Form
A	1-24	A-motive: 'Beers'-motive = B*b*, E, E, D, E*b*,[3] b. 5, piano	**Exposition**
A	25-33	motive dev. fugally, in retrograde etc.	**Development**
A'	34-55	cluster chord, tutti, same as 'Nachklang', b. 391-396, 3rd mov.	
Bridge: A-motive	56-58	motive dev. (melodically)	**mini. Recap.**
A'	58-68	cluster chord, gestures	
B (B-motive)	69-88	B-motive: pno., bb. 69-70 = dev. of bb. 11-12, contrapuntal gestures creating 'Nachklang' bleeding into each other	
C	89-99	solemn choral-like polyphony, tutti	
A-motive dev / all materials dev	100-114	solo piano cadenza	
D	115-126	polyphonic layering and superimposition of motives and characteristics: M4, 'phrase' 2	
E	226-153	polyphonic layering: M4, 'phrase' 3	
A	154-162	dev. of gestures and A-motive	**Coda**

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[3] See Fig. 5, p. 40.

Scherzo (2nd mov. *PC*)

Fig. 2

Section	Bars	Description	Form
A	163-168	bursts (piano), harmony (strings)	**Rondo** (ABACAD)
B	169-171	melody (cello), supported, M4	**(Rondo)**
A'	172-178	'hard' sound clouds, grotesques	
C	179-200	pizzicato theme with syncopated rhythms, drives to climax (M3)	
Bridge 1	201-206	chord of E-major, related to fragment from b. 3, first mov.	
A	207-211	recapitulation of bb. 163-168	
D	212-233	syncopated piano, strings answer	
D/A'/C	234-239	D in pno./A' in Vln. 1 + Ce./C in Vln. 2 + Vla.	
Bridge 2	240-243	pno. b♭- (A+ implied), strings E♭+	
A/D dev	244-247	solo piano cadenza	
C/D dev	248-262	cadenza	
Bridge 1 dev	263-271	cad.	
all sections dev	272	cad. coda: free piano improvisation of arpeggio cascades on an E-major XI chord	
Bridge 2 dev	278-279	fragment (C, D*b*)	
D/A'/C	279-284	D in pno./A' in Vln. 1 + Ce./C in Vln. 2 + Vla.	**Coda**
Bridge 2	285-289	pno. b♭- (A+ implied), strings E♭+	**Coda**

Scherzo (2nd mov. *PC*)

Furiant (3rd mov. *PC*)

Fig. 3

Section	Bars	Description	Form
A	290-309	dev. fragment from Bridge 2, b. 241, 2nd mov. with strings E*b*+	**Strophic** (AAA)
A (motivic fragment)	301	important motivic fragment (gesture)	
A	311-383	continuous development of A	
GP	384	general pause	
A (motivic fragment) dev.	385-386	'Ad libitum' dev. of motivic fragment A (improvisatory style), also related to material D, piano, b. 222 2nd mov.	
B	387-397	strongly conversational (tutti), ambiguity through slides and pno. pedal techniques; also related to Bridge 1, 2nd mov.	
A'	398-406	further dev. of A, syncopated rhythms to climax	**Delayed continuation of B**
B (motivic fragment)	407-410	important motivic fragment (gesture), derives from fragment of Bridge 2, bb. 241-243, 2nd mov.	
C	411-413	C = A from 1st mov. strings, 'Beers'-motive, M 2, M3 harmonies	(felt as overall **recapitulation**)
A (motivic fragment) dev. 1st phrase	414-418	sparse texture, also related to material D ('Klangfarbenmelodie' amongst the strings, piano, b. 222 2nd mov.)	**Ternary** (ABA)
B 2nd phrase	419-422	'soft' texture, ambiguous pitch-bending	**(Ternary** (ABA)**)**
A (motivic fragment) dev. 3rd phrase	423-427	'hard' sound cloud texture with Bartok pizzicato	
B 4th phrase	428-433	'soft' sound cloud texture: 1st inversion d- with disturbance of D*b* and E*b*	**Fragmented Ternary** (BA)
A (motivic fragment) dev. 5th phrase	434-441	hard' texture, further dev. of motive from pno. b. 222	**Frag. Ternary**
introduction	442-444	stretto-effect of staggered entry, grotesque gestures	**Coda**
recapitulation of A dev.	445-454	culminating dev. of A	**Coda**
B 'Nachklang'	455-464	soft' sound cloud, B dev. 'Nachklang' after climax	**Coda**

2.   Techniques for Ambiguity

A sense of emotional 'ambiguity' was achieved by various manipulations of those elements, combinations of textures, timbres and intervals, which I enjoy and identify as 'ambiguous'. I also experimented with combinations of several tonalities, juxtapositions of pitch choices, and layers of rhythmic patterns. Throughout most of my compositions tonal ambiguity is something I have learnt from folk music, particularly that from the Balkan regions. In this genre, several combinations of pitches are clustered over each other and remain in constant movement via glissandos. In *OT*, I focus my analytical comments mainly on the fragmentation of a melody, in order to highlight how tonal ambiguity affects the narrative. In *PC*, the discussion features the use of motivic impetus to construct a set of gestures and interwoven textures. The use of layered 'sound clouds' and how the differing rhythmic patterns influence the perception of the sonic texture and timbre is emphasised with examples from both pieces.

Tonal/Intervallic ambiguity is created by pairing and juxtaposing opposite pitches, such as B-natural with B*b*. Hearing them simultaneously will create aural uncertainty as to which pitch is sounding. *Tonal ambiguity* is also possible when one pitch appears unstable: when it bends and slides through microtones to a neighbouring (opposing) pitch. My use of the word 'tonal' refers solely to the perception and movement of pitches and how they are combined.

Textural ambiguity is the combination and overlapping of several textures, created by notating different playing techniques (Exx. 1, 2). Generally, tremolo creates nervous excitement because of its speed. The usual type of tremolo, bowed on a single note, gives an impression of trembling. However, the tremolo consisting of two constantly alternating notes sounds rather like a

trill, an energetic ornamentation.[4] Employing both tremolos simultaneously

dissolves the block-like chords and avoids stasis through the trembling

ornamented flow.

Ex. 1: Two different types of tremolo, *OT*
　　　Ex. 1a: strings, bb. 43–44

　　Ex. 1b: woodwind, bb. 43–44

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[4] Samuel Adler, *Study of Orchestration*, 3rd Edition (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002) pp. 29-30.

Ex. 2: Tremolo juxtaposed with static notes, *PC*, bb. 1–3

Timbral ambiguity is caused when several instruments with different timbral qualities are combined to create a new sound colour. Example 3a shows a combination of various sonic characters playing a short melody in unison: the double bass's high, flute-like artificial harmonics are combined with the piano's 'plucked' sound (harp-like), accompanied by a 'grating' sound (harp sliding up and down a bass string with plectrum). I have employed sound effects that differ from each instrument's inherent timbral qualities. This achieves a 'mixed' sound. In Ex. 3b, each different timbre is juxtaposed so clearly that the sound quality appears uncannily 'off-balance'.

Ex. 3: different timbres:

Ex. 3a: 'mixed' sound, *OT*, bb. 3–7

Ex. 3b: 'clear-cut' sound (timbres juxtaposed), *PC*, bb.198–199

Working with *texture* and *timbre* is most effective in a large ensemble; the greater variety of instruments (timbres) and the larger number of players (playing techniques), increase the density of the compositional material and diversify the techniques.

<u>*Rhythmic ambiguity*</u> (layered rhythm) is effected by syncopated accents, changing time signatures and blurring rhythms (Ex. 4a). These devices can create a sense of instability and pulse, possibly increased by canonical layering (Ex. 4b). Another type of *rhythmic ambiguity* occurs when rhythmic motives are exchanged between several instruments in a game of question and answer (see also Ex. 3b). Ambiguity through rhythmic layering appears in the solo part of the first movement of Prokofiev's *Piano Concerto no. 2*. The use of a rhythmic construction of 'two against three' results in nervous 'tumbling' at rehearsal mark 16; the diverse rhythms with disturbances of the pulse at rehearsal mark 17 result in a lopsided rhythmic feeling.[5] In *PC*, rhythmic 'blurring' occurs when the first violin quietly echoes the second violin, the viola and cello, while the double bass glissandi between melody notes, as well as blurring the pulse (see Ex. 4a).

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[5] Sergei Prokofiev, *Piano Concerto no. 2*, op. 16, Full Orchestral Score (Moscow: Soviet publ. Muzgiz, 1957), pp. 117-118.

Ex. 4: Layered rhythms

Ex. 4a: *PC, Scherzo*, bb. 186–190

Ex. 4b: canonical layering of syncopated pattern, *PC*, bb. 295–295

2.1   <u>Treatment of Pitches and Intervals in *OT*</u>

Pitch relationships with respect to 'Tonarten-Charakteristik' are important to me, because my musical background is strongly rooted in 19th-century piano reper- toire. In *OT* the most basic tonal opposite is the pitch-bending cell (F–G*b*), a 'sigh' motive, initially played by the clarinet (bb. 2–3) as part of the melodic layer (see Ex. 15a, p. 36) and represents an expressive motive. Other intervallic rela- tionships include the purposeful juxtaposition of opposing pitches within a chord to create harmonic tension with uncertainty of perception. This was done in the harmonic base, juxtaposing the low E of the cellos with F in the violas, and B*b* in the second violins with B-natural in the first violins (see Ex. 15c, p. 37).

Combining intervals that imply certain 'leitmotivic' interpretations proves a useful tool. A 2nd symbolising a 'sigh' or 6th symbolising an inflection of 'Sehnsucht' are two examples. These are contrasted with a tritone or a 9th, reflecting a sense of 'modernism' with their dissonant harmonic character. My extensive use of the 2nd and the 6th, alluding to 'sighing' and Romantic 'Sehnsucht', can be found throughout the melodic materials in *OT* and *PC*.

In the timbral layer of 'soft sound clouds' in *OT* (see Ex. 15b, p. 36), created by harps, piano and percussion, I aimed at intervallic relationships with a subversive 'symbolist' manner, focussing on the (often) rising minor 6th ('Sehnsucht') and the (often) falling minor second ('sigh').

2.2   Fragmentation of Melody (in *OT*)

The afore-mentioned 'dramatic journey' of pivot F hints at my focus on a languid melody 'flowering' around the F and its pitch-bending tonal qualities in *OT*. In order to create a dramatic drive and a sense of musical tension, the melodic phrases were extended to gradually lengthening fragments. This treatment of phrases is frequent in Beethoven's piano sonatas, where he follows 'question' fragments with 'answer' cells and subsequently completes the entire melody.[6] The construction of melodic fragments in *OT* is informed by this method. After initially abortive attempts of a complete melody, tension is created in a 'breathless' accumulation of phrases, and a sense of structural balance and symmetry arises.

My analytical remarks on *OT* focus on the treatment of a fragmented melody (see Ex. 6), as it is of central importance to the structure and narrative of the composition. Whenever the melody is heard, one may hear either a large section of the melody or merely a tiny fragment. Rather than accumulating the fragments into a symmetrical whole, the different stages of fragmentation cause temporal and narrative uncertainty.

The melody was taken from a solo flute piece written in 2013 (Ex. 5) and transcribed to use flat accidentals, ensuring a sombre timbral quality (Ex. 6). The fragmented melody (Ex. 6) is never heard in its entirety. As the melodic cells are altered and shared (mainly between clarinet, flute and strings), a nervous atmosphere arises, intended to bring about a sense of emotional insecurity.

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[6] An example might be the first movement of Beethoven's op. 57, bb. 1-12.

Ex. 5: Entire melody used in *OT*, solo flute[7]

IV. Melancholy
inspired by Edvard Munch
Solo Flute (with extension to low B)

Jean Beers

The fragments and their corresponding appearances in the score are identified

below (see Exx. 6.1–6.9, pp. 21–22).

Ex. 6: Fragmented melody (partially transposed),
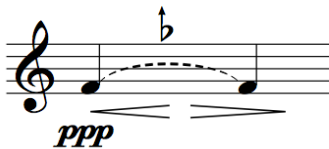
relationship of pivot notes F and G*b*, *OT*

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[7] Taken from Jean Beers, *IV. Melancholy* for solo flute from *Munch Music* for flute, oboe, bassoon (Cologne/London: 2009/2013), https://soundcloud.com/jeanbeers/beers-melancholy-for-solo.
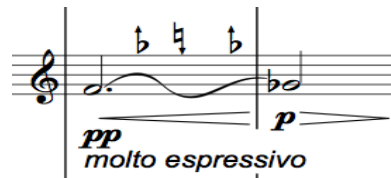
<u>Fragments (in *OT*)</u>

Fragment 1 (Ex. 6.1) represents the smallest unit of musical opposites, two

contrasting pitches. This is the dramatic journey of pivot F.

Ex. 6.1: Frag. 1, pitch-bending cell (F-G*b*)   **Ex. 6.1a:** Frag. 1, cl., bb. 2–3

Ex. 6.2: Frag. 2, pitch-bending cell,   **Ex. 6.2a:** Frag. 2, cl., bb. 3–5
followed by rising gesture in clarinet
(first development of Frag. 1)
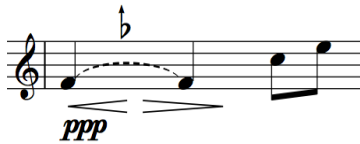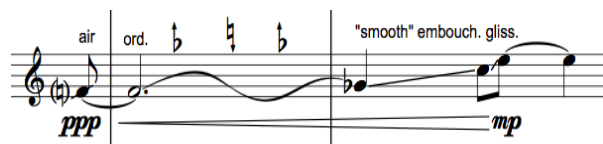
and violin 2, bb. 18-19
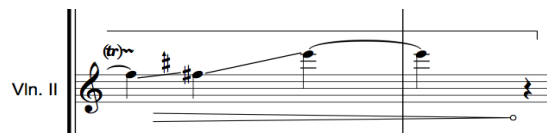
Fragment 2 can also be found in bar 18, solo violin, flute, alto flute, as well as in

bar 23, clarinet, bass clarinet.

Ex. 6.3: Frag. 3, entire melodic phrase (second development of Frag. 1)

Fragment 3 is almost the same as Fragment 5 (Ex. 6.5) and appears

extensively throughout the composition (i.e. flute, bb. 20–21).

Ex. 6.4: Frag. 4 (in first and second version),

bird-like motive with 'commentary' function

Ex. 6.4a: Frag. 4, flute, b. 9

Ex. 6.5: Fragment 5, extended melodic phrase (third dev. of Frag. 1)

Ex. 6.5a: Frag. 5, flute, bb. 20-21

Ex. 6.5b: Frag. 5, strings soli, bb. 191–194

Ex. 6.6: Fragment 6, a more fragmented version of Frag. 3 with 'commentary' function,
developed into frenzied climax, tutti (Ex. 7b, p.24)
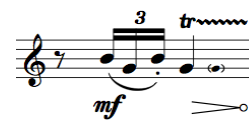
Ex. 6.6a: Frag. 6, flute, b. 22

Ex. 6.7: Fragment 7, variation of Frag. 4 with 'commentary' function

Ex. 6.7a: Frag. 7, flute, b. 23

Treatment of Fragments (in *OT*)

The original Fragment 1 (Ex. 6.1a, also in clarinet bb. 6-7) is gradually obscured and used both as the miniature cell that forms the basis for the texture and for rhythmic drive. Apart from changing its timbre by wandering through different instruments, it appears closer to the original in a fugato passage (Ex. 7a). Then it is rhythmically altered and repeated, to achieve a frenzied climax (Ex. 7b). It appears in the 'funeral march' with regular rhythm in the middle voice of the chord (Ex. 7c), and in a passage with giocoso trilling (Ex. 7d). The cell also informs the grotesque gesture of the two pivot notes sliding up and down – with a major 9th in the strings, and sounding like 'screams' (Ex. 7e).

Ex. 7: developments of fragment 1 throughout the entire piece

Ex. 7a: fugato passage, violins, bb. 11–13

Ex. 7b: frenzied climax, tutti, b. 48

Ex. 7c: Chopin's funeral march,
pno., bb. 164–166[8]

Ex. 7d: fl., cl., b. 81

Ex. 7e: strings, i.e. b. 65

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[8] This is a musical quotation from Chopin's *Sonata no. 2*, op. 35 for piano, the 3rd movement 'Marche funèbre' (1839), (St. Petersburg: Kompozitor, 2003), pp. 16-19.

Fragment 2 begins with the pitch-bending cell of Fragment 1 and continues with a glissando up towards E, which represents the binary opposite of pivot F mirrored downwards. The relationships between the fragments 1 and 2, as well as fragment 1', a developed version, can be examined below (Ex. 8).

Ex. 8: Excerpt from the score, flutes and clarinet, bb. 1–7

The tritone leap adds a 'modern edge' to the Romantic appoggiatura ('sigh' motive) here. The fragment is altered and repositioned frequently until it reveals itself in a new character (see Exx. 6.4, 6.5, p. 22).

Fragment 4 (Ex. 6.4) is an ornamental cell, appearing infrequently in a 'commentary' function, first in the flute (bb. 9, 18), where it doubles the alto flute in a varying rhythmic metre but with the same pulse function. The bass clarinet follows the clarinet canonically with the motive (b. 23, Frag. 4) and appears again in the clarinet as the original version (b. 61), giving some rhythmic structure to the wavering melodic fragments by injecting energy with the staccato note, like a suddenly arrested development. Intervallic tension is released slightly, helping to complete the symmetry of the melodic phrase with a sort of 'breath mark'. In the Coda of *Valse 3* the first violins lead a five-bar phrase, rooted in Fragment 4 but rhythmically augmented (Ex. 9).

Ex. 9: Frag. 4 developed, strings, bb. 201–205

Fragment 5 is the completion of the melody started as Fragment 1 and appears extensively: in the flute (bb. 17–18, 20–21), in the violins (bb. 22-24), in tutti, melodic development (bb. 50-64), in the woodwinds (bb. 120–123), and in solo strings (bb. 192-195). Fragment 5 differs from Fragment 3 in that the E ascends a perfect 5th to B-natural rather than a tritone to B*b*, as in Fragment 3. The vibraphone develops Fragment 4 and 5 by rearranging the pitches but keeping the opposing tonal relationship of the pivoting semitone, which is a B-natural and B*b* here (Ex. 10a, p. 28). A more disjunctive form of the original melody can be found in several sections and instrumentations (wind bb. 174–178, tutti bb. 221–225 and 230–233), where the vibraphone's version is developed by reconstructing these fragments to form new blocks of material and rearrange them for new interpretation. This method is particularly evident in the rhythmic independence (strings, bb. 132-139, see Ex. 10b, p. 28), having created a completely new rhythm for the block.

Ex. 10a: Frag. 4 and 5 developed, vibraphone, bb. 97–100

Ex. 10b: Frag. 4 and 5, rhythmic independence, strings, bb. 132–134

Fragment 6 and 7, miniature variations on Fragments 3 and 4, have the function of 'commenting': adding a rhythmic impetus to connect the fragments into a melody.

2.3   Layers of Texture (in *OT* and *PC*)

In both works the orchestral texture was manipulated to highlight opposites capable of being juxtaposed to create material which I describe as 'soft' and 'hard' layers. By superimposing, layering and disrupting blocks (and fragments), I hope to reinterpret the perception of textures and timbres as part of the narrative. Compositional decisions about texture, and therefore choices of the combinations of rhythmic patterns creating texture, mostly grew out of the manipulation of the 'soft' textured 'sound clouds', because of their simultaneous opacity and translucence.

The 'soft' texture consists of 'clouds' of sound, often concentrating on the use of several timbres and textures so that a softer and amorphous texture may

emerge. Although the complexity of these combined materials creates increased density, the resulting opacity is often infiltrated by shafts of lucidity, for instance by gestures (*PC*) or 'Klangfarbenmelodie' (*OT*).

To create 'hard' texture, I reposition and interweave tiny cells of musical information. The sources of cells with energetic and 'spiky' musical material are often not entirely identifiable, but have the function of driving the pulse and narrative forward. These are woven together to form new blocks of overtly disjunctive material. The fragmentation of the melody in *OT* can be categorised as a 'hard' texture, since it has contrapuntal properties rather than planes of colour. Another example of this texture is the treatment of the 'Beers'-motive in *PC* (pp. 41–42).

To create 'soft' textures, and inspired by Mark Rothko's painting techniques, I have searched for analogous techniques in the way I treat planes of sound to create a sense of shimmering lucidity (Fig. 4).

> [His] paintings stack two or more brushy blocks or bands of color, separated and surrounded by a contrasting background. Some of the contrasts, … are barely discernible.[9]

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[9] Peter Schjedahl, 'The Dark Final Years of Mark Rothko' *The New Yorker* 19/12/16, ttp://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/12/19/the-dark-final-years-of-mark-rothko.

Fig. 4: Image of Rothko's ambiguous colour planes, *Seagram Murals* [10]

A sense of undefined edges arises with layered 'sound clouds' (strings tremolo, *OT* and *PC*). In *PC,* the colour planes in the strings consist of a chord with mixed texture, tremolo bowing woven in between static notes (Ex. 11).

Ex. 11: 'soft' texture 'sound cloud' (strings), impulses (piano), *PC*, bb. 1–5
(some rests are hidden from view for greater graphic clarity in this Ex.)

The texture is differentiated by combining three playing techniques:

- static notes (violin 1 and 2) forming tritone

- tremolo (viola, cello, double bass)

- glissando con vibrato (viola, cello)

With the late arrival of the pitches E and G#, the tritone implies a chord of E-major, but the tonality remains ambiguous. The piano mainly gives motivic impulses, echoed immediately or within the development and answered by the strings. It also provides texturally suggestive gestures, echoed and sustained with 'Nachklang' by the orchestra (bb. 36–48, 71–73, 83–88) as well as contrary motion at micro level (bb. 64, 79–82). Wherever 'Nachklang' appears in the orchestra, its role is that of an 'alternate character' that grows out of the piano's sustaining pedal. Owing to the interval's rich open timbral quality, the open 5th 'unlocks' the palette of overtones. A subtle tremolo chord is another way of creating 'soft' texture (strings, Ex. 12).

Ex. 12: 'soft' texture, strings, *PC*, bb. 88-89

In both compositions, the intervallic relationships are interwoven in many layers and fragments of musical material to create 'sound clouds', in turn increasing their complexity at both micro and macro levels. These infiltrate the textures in minute detail. I share the thoughts of Rudolf Arnheim on models of interaction between interdependent parts with respect to intervallic relationships:

> the insoluble puzzle of how to establish, as a point of departure, the identity of any one of the components since the influences caused by the other components must be taken into account from the beginning.[11]

Sounds are described as 'coloured silences' when an echo is imitated by other means, particularly through amorphous orchestral textures, another type of a 'soft' texture. Originally I experimented with this phenomenon at the piano. Traces of harmonic material and overtones remain half hidden during a pause achieved by manipulating the sustaining pedals. Echoing sounds created by this playing technique are found extensively in music by Ravel and Debussy.[12] These ghostly appearances merge echoes with distinct as well as undefined harmonies, intertwining the timbres of the orchestra with those of the piano. Strongly contrasting hints of looming danger and human suffering are expressed through 'sighing' gestures in the piano.

There are some texturally dense sections of closely stacked materials, followed by a section either of total silence or keeping only one note or a transparent texture tied over (Exx. 13, 14).

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[11] Rudolf Arnheim, *Toward a Psychology of Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 226.
[12] Claude Debussy 'Reflects dans l'eau' from *Images I* (London New York: Wise, 1996); Maurice Ravel 'Le Gibet' from *Gaspard de la Nuit* (Paris: Durant, n.d.).

Ex. 13: silence before piano entry, showing E-major chord from b. 3
and motivic imitation, bb. 68–69, *PC*

Ex. 14: silence 'coloured' by piano pedal and double bass,
pitch relationships as passed around, tutti bb. 75–76, *PC*

The *Scherzo* explores presence and absence of sound in a lively exchange of question and answer between the piano and strings. In the first six bars the piano bursts give the impetus for the hushed chord in the strings, which then 'learns' that it can have bursts of its own, 'commenting' on the piano's bursts with 'sighing' pitch-bends (also bb. 212–239). I aimed for the flexible effect of a 'bouncing give and take'. Also, later on (bb. 197–199) the question and answer function remains important in a more concrete texture.

In *Furiant* the play between jagged syncopated motivic material and sudden breaks is used to prevent the ongoing toccata from becoming rhythmmically repetitive and stale. The sudden bar of freedom of the pulse (b. 310), the startling drop in dynamic level (b. 317) and, of course, the chopped-off crescendo and general pause (bb. 322–323) attest to such play. The subsequent pulse-free bridge (bb. 324–325) approaches silence from another angle.

Section B (bb. 326–334, see Fig. 3, p. 12) enables calm but intense listening 'between the lines', paying special attention to the overtones and tonal ambiguities occurring with every extremely slow lift of the sustaining pedal. The sudden silence ('Nachklang' in the pedal, b. 343) changes the sonic experience of the recapitulation of the first movement's opening material: the five disjunctive phrases (bb. 351–379) preceding the Coda offer a rich interplay between a variety of 'coloured silences' and rough 'spiky' material, while the 'Nachklang' effect (piano), harking back to a more functional diatonic harmony (b. 365), is echoed slightly altered (strings, bb. 366–379). The piano arrives aggressively at the final chord, echoed by the strings as a ghostly remnant of the slowly lifting sustaining pedal (bb. 391–end). See also pp. 39-43 about *PC*.

OT opens with three main layers of harmonic colour planes in a variety of orchestral timbres and textures; these then reappear and are developed throughout the piece.

The melodic layer, characterised by *tonal ambiguity,* presents a lamenting duet between the flute and clarinet (Ex. 15a, p. 35), focussing on drifting pitch (Ex. 15a1). It is a 'hard' texture owing to its contrapuntal character, although the combination of these three layers makes up a 'soft' texture in an overall feeling of ambiguity (see Exx. 15b, 15b1, p. 36).

The 'harmonic base' layer with *textural* and *tonal ambiguity* consists of shimmering colour planes in the strings and represents a 'soft' element (see Ex. 15c, p. 36). These colour planes consist of harmonic blocks of two minor 9^{ths} and are magnetically held together by trembling with another dissonance (tritone, see Ex. 15c1, p. 37). This chord reappears in the coda of every movement to ensure a degree of formal symmetry. Although this layer remains harmonically and rhythmically largely static, the base is used as a tool to provide the tonal atmosphere and create harmonic and textural thickness; at the same time, the smooth melody is introduced and the 'Klangfarbenmelodie' unfolds gradually. As soon as the timbral layer has thickened the texture with a sound carpet of its own 'Nachklang', the static harmonic base is no longer needed and disappears (b. 14). Ralph Turek describes this type of texture as an

> additive process: A compositional technique frequently employed by Stravinsky and other twentieth-century composers in which a texture is created through the gradual superposition of diverse and unchanging elements. These elements (a melodic figure, a rhythmic ostinato, and so on) typically are heard separately at first. Their subsequent combination and recombination in various registers and instrumental groups may be seen as a form of development.[13]

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[13] Ralph Turek, *Analytical Anthology of Music*, Vol. 2 (California: McGraw-Hill, University of California,1992), p. 551.

The layer of 'Klangfarbenmelodie' is created from 'droplets' of varied timbres and textures in the orchestra (Ex. 15b), focussing on this timbral variety and expressive intervallic relationships (Ex. 15b1). Its textural quality changes continuously and combines 'soft' and 'hard' textures, resulting in 'soft' ambiguity. These fragmented melodic and timbral layers are passed between instruments to create a varied mix of timbres. While the harmonic base layer is mostly hidden after its initial appearance, it is implied repeatedly throughout by short pedal notes and fragments, harking back to the chord of the harmonic base (Ex. 15c1, p. 38).

Ex. 15: Three layers to achieve effect of 'soft' texture, through the mix of 'soft' (harmonic base, Klangfarbenmelodie) and 'hard' (contrapuntal melody) tutti, *OT*, bb. 1-7

Ex. 15a: Melodic layer: 'hard' texture (fl., cl.)

Ex. 15a1: Pitch-bend – most prominent motive of this layer (Frag. 1)

Ex. 15b: 'Droplets' of 'Klangfarbenmelodie': 'soft' and 'hard' texture'
(percussion, harp, piano, later mixed instrumentation

Ex. 15b1: timbral melody with intervallic relationships

Ex. 15c: Harmonic base layer: 'soft' texture (tremolo strings)

Ex. 15c1: Intervallic relationships inside the harmonic base,
collection of pitches in bb. 1-13

Sometimes, a 'sound cloud' is used to drive forward energetically, when applying melodic material. 'Counted' trembling, rhythmically measured tremolo, has been employed purposely with oscillating semiquavers (Ex. 16a) to make a distinction between the use of uncounted tremolo (see Exx. 15c, 11, for instance) and rhythmically strict notation. A slightly different effect of 'counted' trembling, achieving ambiguity in rhythm and tonality, can be brought about by 'unfree' counted rhythmic blocks (Ex. 16b).

Ex. 16a: melodically driven 'sound cloud', different tremolo techniques,
strings, *OT*, bb. 43-45

Two types of tremolo bowing techniques were used to give a sense of trembling. While the single tremolo in the double bass achieves a brief complete melody, framed by two opposing tritones (ascending C–G*b*/C, descending G*b*),

the cello persistently outlines the same melody with a more active tremolo technique, similar to trilling. The fast alternation between the pitches implies a dense harmonic texture. The higher pitched material in the violins and viola outline melodic fragments — the viola reacts contrapuntally to the bass melody, mostly alternating between the two tremolo techniques. It achieves an intricately interwoven trembling texture that is ambiguous in timbral density and texture, creating nervousness.

Ex. 16b 'counted' trembling, strings with piano, *PC*, bb. 22-24

My interest in techniques of chordal and tonal layering was sparked by *Shaar* for string orchestra (1983) by Iannis Xenakis, in which he tightly weaves layers of microtones to form homogenous clusters, creating a snake-like, microtone-filled atmosphere. Subsequently I experimented with thickening orchestral sound carpets; in the *Scherzo* movement of *PC,* several opposing textures, dynamics or pitches were superimposed on each other (bb. 242-274 and 331-348, see Exx. 3b, 4a, b, pp. 16, 18).

3.   <u>Motives and Chords in the *Piano Concerto*</u>

The whole concerto is based on a collection of chords, with contrapuntally linear and motivic material, and created through the juxtaposition of contrasting tonalities, textures, and rhythms.

<u>Materials</u>

• 'Beers'-motive (M1)

• Eighteen chords (harmonies 'H'): 'phrase' 1-5 (M2), 'phrase' 6 (M3)

• Sonorous melodic gestures (M4)

These were manipulated to emulate an explosion in space, shattering differently sized fragments, connected by 'magnetic pull'. Intricate intervallic relationships determine the interaction between the 'Beers'-motive and the eighteen chords, while maintaining affinity with the 'flavour' of intervals with respect to 'Tonarten-Charakteristik'.

The main motive (Fig. 5), with key intervals of the fanfare-like tritone, the expressive minor 2nd 'sigh'-motive and the bold compound major 2nd (Exx. 17, 17a), supported by similar, yet clashing, intervallic relations in the strings (Ex. 17b), appears in section A (bb. 1–68) of *Nachklang*.

Fig. 5: letters —> pitches

B	E	E	R	S
B*b* in German notation	pitch **E**	pitch **E**	'Re' = pitch **D** in Italian notation	**E***b* in German notation

Ex. 17: 'Beers'-motive (M1), b. 5, piano

M1

B(e) E E

7 3

tritone

minor 2nd

compound maj. 2nd

R(e) (e)S

Ex. 17a: intervallic relationships, implied harmony, piano, bb. 1–5

tritone tritone

perfect 5th

- 2nd

B♭ implied

Ex. 17b: intervallic relationships, chord H3 at bb. 3 & 6, strings, bb. 1-5

tritone E+9 −2nd

perfect 5th

(at bb. 3 & 6)

The eighteen chords (H = harmony) of the 'pitch-pool'[14] are grouped in four 'phrases', although these 'phrases' are not essential for the structure and cannot always be identified (Ex. 18). They build up from three, to four, to five chords in one musical breath; the last 'phrase' of six chords comprises three questioning and three answering chords. Some 'voices' of the chords are repeated, allowing for a rounded, 'home'-key feeling. These chords have been employed at times as motivic impetus for a section (Ex. 19a) combined with sonorous melodic gestures (diatonic, Ex. 19) and developed into contrapuntal melodies (Ex. 20), that are treated to 'fugal dovetailing' (Ex. 20a). Chord 'H8' is characterised essentially by two major 9^{ths} (i.e. diminished octave sounding like major 9th), connected with the unison of the D♭ octave (Ex. 18).

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[14] The enharmonic spelling of the pitches is not an issue.

Ex. 18: pitch pool for entire *PC*, 18 chords in 4 'phrases' (M2, M3)

Ex. 19: sonorous melodic gesture 'subject' (M4), pitch pool for section D
(see above, Fig. 1, p. 10), taken from 'phrase 1' M2

Ex. 19a: sonorous melodic gesture, strings, bb. 115-120

Some of the rhythmic language and intervallic relationships of this

melodic 'phrase' (M4) were reinterpreted, creating another four melodic

'phrases', which then were used as pitch and motive pools in sections D and E

in the movement *Nachklang*.

Ex. 20: sonorous melodic gesture 'countersubject' (M4), 'phrase' 2, pitch pool
for section E, taken from 'phrase 4' M3

Ex. 20a: fugal treatment of 'phrase' 2, tutti, bb. 126–132

While the main motive (M1) is developed extensively throughout

Nachklang, it reappears only as an echoed memory in *Furiant* before the coda.

The harmonic material (M2, M3) is interwoven through all movements to

connect the narrative and structure, while the melodic material (M4) from

sections D and E in *Nachklang* forms a pitch and motive pool for *Scherzo* and

Furiant (Ex. 22).

While a literal quotation of this piano passage (Ex. 21) can be found in

section D of *Scherzo* (bb. 212-241), it has – together with the eighteen chords –

determined the intervallic make up of *Furiant.*

Ex. 21: original 7-bar passage for piano, created from the 18 chords (M2, M3)

II. Vocal Work

Another Approach to Ambiguity through Deconstruction of Words

Deconstructive Songs about Female Struggle and Empowerment

for (mezzo-)soprano, (bass-)baritone and piano

I. Machiavellian Kindness

II. Chopin

III. Where everything comes together

<u>Lyrics</u>

I. *Machiavellian Kindness*
       Thou hast committed—
       Fornication: but that was another country,
       And besides, the wench is dead.
                      [Excerpt from 'The Jew of Malta' by Christopher Marlowe, 1589][1]

II. *Chopin*
       We have heard the fashionable Pole –
       Dobrze tak! – [2]
       transmit the music with her wisps of hair and fingertips.
       So delicate, her Chopin, that we know
       this soul should, could, can be resurrected
       alone with some friends.
       One, two or three.
       They will not touch the bloom,
       that is questioned in a larger room.
       Delicate, her Chopin. Latest Pole, her music.
            [Lyrics inspired by T. S. Eliot's 'Portrait of a Lady', 1915][3]

III. *Where everything comes together*
       Thou hast committed fornication.
       Her soul is dead, latest.
                        [Lyrics abstracted from *I.* and *II.*]

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[1] Christopher Marlowe, 'The Jew of Malta', ed. David Bevington (Glasgow: Bell & Bain, Manchester University Press, 1997); used by Eliot as an epigraph to his poem.
[2] 'Dobrze tak!' = Good yes! (Polish).
[3] Thomas Stearns Eliot 'Portrait of a Lady' from *Selected Poems* (New York: Harbrace Paperbound Library, 1930/1964) p. 17.

Background

The lyrics of these three songs derive from a deconstructive procedure applied to different text fragments, with some unchanged quotations, some free associative vocabulary and a few words radically reduced to single sounds. The songs intend to give an impression of the atmosphere rather than offering a traditional 'setting' to lyrics. The titles complement the lyrics and musical sentiments in an interpretative manner. The first song uses an excerpt of an Elizabethan play, *The Jew of Malta*, in which Christopher Marlowe paints a picture of a Machiavellian-style business man, Barabas, accused of sexually harassing and subsequently murdering an anonymous woman of low social standing during his quest for more power and money. He cares little about her gruesome fate, but is finally caught up by his actions. The second song was inspired by the recording of an expressive reading of T.S. Eliot's *Portrait of a Lady* by the poet, after which I devised the lyrics loosely leaning on Eliot's narrative. For the third song, text particles are interwoven to evoke musical impressions of the dramatic yet ambiguous underlying narrative culminating in a funereal procession of morality and female emancipation.

Synopsis

The story unfolds from *I. Machiavellian Kindness*, in which a female protagonist demands justice from an immoral male chauvinist character. *II. Chopin* proceeds in an unexpected contrasting change of setting and temporal genre to a social gathering, in which an elegant couple enjoy some drinks and a portion of delicate culture provided by a possibly female pianist, who performs music by the Polish composer Frédéric Chopin. The lady character is neither troubled by disasters such as experienced by the 'wench', nor seems to have

much depth of emotion concerning the high art she is witnessing. In the final song, *III. Where everything comes together*, the focus returns to the adulterer, suggesting that the abuse and murder of the 'wench' is in fact on equal footing with the implied abuse of culture in the second song – a possible reading of modern society's (mis)treatment of high art. This possible exegesis of the cycle's narrative should not be seen as the ultimate and only interpretation, having purposefully been obscured through abstraction and deconstruction of musical motives and lyrics, therefore merely offering a critical view on society through the prism of art.

The provocative text citation in *I. Machiavellian Kindness* casts an unexpected darkness over the light-hearted drawing room atmosphere of the second and foreshadows the aim of the third song to attempt a socio-philosophical commentary. This presents the opportunity to increase the contrasts by exaggerating the disparate atmospheres and textures, so that they may be experienced as a heightened expressive emotional state.

Although the cycle's genre remains ambiguous, the distance in the historical temporality of the lyrics and the diversely chosen narrative creates curiosity and alienation between and within the three songs. The poetic scene in *II. Chopin* is created with musically rich imagery that engages in a musical dialogue with the lyrics, while an interchange of gender ambiguities creates uncertainty in assigning the characters to their roles. The gender stereotypes and inter-relational hierarchies between the characters are ambiguously shifted.

This takes full shape in *III. Where everything comes together*. The compositional focus shifts to a full deconstruction of the lyrics to achieve ambiguity through abstraction, as well as the theatrical elements choreo-graphing a picture of absurd theatrics. Instructions such as 'like a gentleman' evoke the stereotype of an upper class English gentleman of the late 19th and early 20th century. The soprano is instructed to 'lean sadly onto the wall […]' thus indicating a less confident person, perhaps accustomed to being suppressed (i.e. b. 174). Throughout this song, the soprano begins to emancipate herself from a subaltern position, whereas the first two songs see her transformation from an inanimate 'wench' into a cultured lady. The nearly wordless lament of the concluding third song culminates in several Chopin-inspired funereal passages, when text and musical fragments from both preceding songs are repeatedly torn apart and reassembled. The narrative of the tortured female builds up drama with shadows of the effortless, decadent soiree lurking in the background pointing out similarities of (im)moral. A few frozen text fragments are reassembled to reach the culmination in a dramatic accusatory ending in a nonetheless patriarchal gender determination, although the female character has, at this point, emancipated herself, possibly to plan a revenge and protect herself from future objectification.

As the focus moves from adultery to music as the epitome of delicacy and culture, two narrative layers are elucidated: that of high culture and delicacy, as well as that of debauchery and decadence with the uncomfortable implication that the latter cannot be escaped, as it may inevitably accompany such cultural events.

<u>Methodology</u>

The study of Ravel's *Histoires Naturelles* (1905-06)[4] and Berio's *Sequenza III*

(1965-6) informed my own vocal writing regarding sonically interesting ways of

working with text. Ravel subordinated his compositional needs to the phonetic

requirements of the language, thereby dismantling a substantial barrier between

'high art' and the style found at the café-concert.

In Berio's experimental piece, *Sequenza III* for female voice, written in

collaboration with soprano Cathy Berberian, fragmentation of a 'modular' text[5]

displays a catalogue of vocal gestures.[6] Berio described his treatment of

consonants as percussive sound effects creating an 'objective physical reality'

of its own, achieving a 'symbolism of sound'.[7] By fragmenting words to achieve

percussive effects (Exx. 1a, b), 'everyday' vocal sound effects (Ex. 2) and

'Sprechgesang' (Ex. 3) to represent the atmosphere of the poem, I have

attempted to create such a 'symbolism of sound'.

Ex. 1: percussive fragmentation

> **Ex. 1a:** 'committed', baritone, b. 13[8]

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[4] Maurice Ravel, *Histoires Naturelles* (Paris: Durand, n.d.); premiered by soprano Jane Bathori, accompanied by Ravel at a Société Nationale concert, 12th January, 1907, Paris.
[5] Text by Markus Kutter, Luciano Berio, author's note, http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1460?1487325698=1, 03/12/16.

[6] Robert Kirzinger, http://www.allmusic.com/composition/sequenza-iii-for-voice-mc0002364404, 03/12/16.

[7] Luciano Berio, *Studio di fonologia musicale*, 1956, RAI, Ed. Rizzardi, De Benedictis, Rome, 2000, pp. 266-273.

[8] Bar numbers are continuous throughout the cycle, the examples (Ex.) suffice with 'bb.' indications.

Ex. 1b: 'fingertips', soprano, baritone, bb. 90–91

Ex. 2: 'sigh', sop., b. 12

Ex. 3: 'Sprechgesang', sop., bari., bb. 101–3

Musical fragments with different textures, in imitation to the sharply contrasting emotions discussed in the lyrics, were juxtaposed and mingled. The performers are involved as actors with a theatrical setting suggested in the score. This is common in a 'Singspiel' but rather unfamiliar in a narrative or lyrical song, where one character transmits a story, often in form of a self-reflecting monologue, with a suitable piano accompaniment.

The delicacy ascribed to Chopin's sound world played a vital role in my selection of his *Préludes* as stylistic material for the inspiration of the Chopinesque passages. This way the shocking contrasts between the texts are thematised clearly.

In *I. Machiavellian Kindness*, crass abandonment of morality is expressed through simple, regular rhythms, as well as verbal fragmentation to emphasise the double entendre. The second song's absurdly honeyed fragments crackle delicately to and fro, also demonstrating the fragile Romanticism and instrumental splendour of Chopin's piano music. The title of *III. Where everything comes together* indeed ambivalently represents a conglomeration and makes use of elements from both previous musical tactics.

1.   <u>Analysis</u>

Tools used for heightened expressivity:

- Theatrical style and different viewpoints

- Tonal and narrative ambiguity

- 'Leitmotif' and 'word painting'

- Fragmentation and frenzied repetition

1.1   <u>Theatrical Style and Different Viewpoints</u>

Barbara Hannigan's inspirational semi-staged performance of Ligeti's *Mysteries of the Macabre,* conducted by herself, uses theatrical mimicry, gestures and costume, to support and enhance Ligeti's complex music and informed the 'heightening' of the narrative expressivity in the more intimate chamber song cycle.[9] Instructions in the score suggest a dramatic interchange pertaining to costume, movements, emotional expressivity and lively acting, as well as

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[9] György Ligeti, *Mysteries of the Macabre* with Barbara Hannigan (soprano), Gothenburg Symphony, performed in Gothenburg, 12th April 2013.

engaging with the audience, also emphasising the independent role of each musician.

Two singers engage with each other, not dissimilar to an opera recitativo, although without set personalities assigned, while the piano has the supple role of constantly interchanging between a third character, a narrator or commentator, as well as a means of setting the scenic atmosphere. The accusatory statements in the songs *I.* and *III.* are shared between the characters to allow for interchange on several narrative layers, with the piano offering harmonic and atmospheric support. Song *II.* has two main characters conversing and emotionally engaging with the piano, that shadows memories, bad conscience and finally an implied moralistic commentary during song *III.*

While the theatrical instructions in the first and second song remain quite subversive, the third song specifically includes a greater range of emotions and scenic movements and a repeated segment with theatrical dance qualities (Ex. 4). This funeral march represents the growing puppet-like quality of the vocalist – provoked by Stravinsky's collaboration on choreographies with Nijinsky in *Petrushka* and *Le Sacre du Printemps* – while the piano keeps hold on the musical narrative and increasing sonic drama.

Ex. 4: Funeral procession: somber striding at slash-notes in a circle around the piano, covering face at every stand-still, in silent lament, bb. 212–222

The glove worn by the pianist when striking the interior strings clusters, adds drama by introducing associations of throwing a gauntlet, as well as simply protecting the piano strings from condensation through sweaty palms.

1.2   Tonal and Narrative Ambiguity

In *I. Machiavellian Kindness*, the amoral atmosphere is pursued by contrasting elements of sudden harsh chords cutting through the quiet texture. The piano supplies a harmonic 'pitch pool' to introduce the pitches for the vocal parts. The pitches F# and G present opposing forces, incidentally again outlining a 'sigh' motif. They represent the black and white piano keys and simultaneously imply a rich, dense harmonic 'home' tonality such as F#-major to contrast with a

brighter and simpler G-major, for instance. These clashing pitches are the closest neighbours as 'pitch classes' in a dodecaphonic system, while embodying opposite forces in the diatonic system.

Positioned strategically distanced from each other with the 'rich' F# first in the sumptuous bass of the piano and passed to the baritone – in a timbre usually used for bass – the G is heard in the middle register in both piano and voice like a chiming church bell, with a static and inevitable quality (Ex. 5). The use of dark foreboding 'bells' was informed by Ravel's *Le Gibet*, based on the poem by Aloysius Bertrand about a hanged man's body swinging in the evening sun, where the death toll on a B*b* pitch irresistibly chimes (Ex. 6).

Ex. 5: bells with piano pitch pool, bb. 1–4

Ex. 6: Ravel *Le Gibet*, bb. 1–3 (see bib.)

1.3   Leitmotif and Word Painting

Bells emerge from a texture of distant echoes in the pedal of

I. Machiavellian Kindness, the sombre scenery is broken by an accented chord struck twice (see Exx. 5, 7a). This chord represents the Machiavellian character

and is heard in the harsh treble timbre of the piano, constructed from a stacked

tritone/fourth chord (C–F#–B) in the right hand, underpinned with a single E in

the left (labelled 'Machiavellian chord' from now on). Its task is the addition of a

Romantic undertone, established by a minor 6th distance to the chord. As in *OT,*

but more strongly literal here, this interval symbolises romantic yearning

('Sehnsucht').

The relationship between this 'Machiavellian chord' (Ex. 7a) and the

'Chopin chord' (Ex. 7b) is one of contrasts. The second chord appears to be in a

Romantic pianistic style, with the single melody note positioned at the top of the

hierarchical structure, while the 'Machiavellian character' is represented by

placing the melody note at the bottom. An intervallic representation suggests

the relation with the medieval belief that the tritones had devilish associations.

Ex. 7a: 'Machiavellian chord', b. 3   **Ex. 7b:** 'Chopin chord', bb. 111–113

The 'Machiavellian chord' appears in the same position in the piano and

has the same task every time it is heard (bb. 3, 4, 13, 21, 25, 26, 28), a

leitmotivic tool found also in piano accompaniments to silent films and Wagner

operas, where a given harmony or motif represents a particular emotion or

character. The same chord reappears in the third song *III. Where everything*

comes together repeatedly, signalling the struggle of the characters to uplift

their consciousness from the boundlessness of negative urges.

1.4.   <u>Fragmentation and Frenzied Repetition</u>

Throughout the song cycle, fragmentation of words, motives, melodies, phrases and rhythms occur and frenzied repetition is used as both a narrative and technical tool. As the male character starts to whisper fragments of 'fornication' in the first song, the soprano begins to wail tentatively (bb. 5–8). He whispers the word in very fast repetition, accenting every quaver beat, thus evoking frenzied nervousness; the soprano's wailing on the pitch G begins with 'Mah' (closed mouth slowly opening); the open 'Ah' then morphs into a sexually aggressive tone and diverges from the pitch G down to F natural, continuing supple slides between the two pitches and ending in a brief voluptuous sigh (bb. 5–12). The soprano symbolises a moralistic memory of the deed of "fornication" and her death ('the wench is dead'), which is supported by the baritone's disjointed 'com–mit–ted' as his bad conscience (Ex. 8).

Ex. 8: memory of the 'dead wench', bb. 10–12

The 'Machiavellian chord' is joined by the baritone's percussive stuttering, fast repetition and verbal fragmentation, building up tension which is supported by the soprano's wailing. A slower quaver triplet knocking motif (with a nervous semiquaver four-note group) is passed between the three musicians, creating ambiguity of pulse (bb. 15–16). The baritone's low register portrays a chauvinistic character, whose rude actions are accompanied by intervallic steps

of tri-tones and semitones and clothed in a simple, straight-forward rhythm (bb. 17–19, 23–34).

Schubert uses fast repetition, followed by a dramatic silence in the narrative setting of Goethe's *Erlkönig*, a song that served as an inspirational source. The piano's sudden 'terrible silence' heightens the (theatrical) suspense before the child's death is revealed (Ex. 9).

Ex. 9: Schubert *Erlkönig*, final bars, p. 175 (see bib.)

The fragmentation of 'country' has an uncomfortable 'double entendre' and is highlighted by abandoning the fragment with an abrupt quaver rest cutting the word in half, before resolving onto a calming B*b*, that implies resignation in g-minor harmony (Ex. 10). The wench's death is announced with a harmony implying c-minor (sop., b. 33), followed by a cruelly sharpened harmony (baritone, g-minor has whitened to G-major with the use of B-natural and sharpened even more with the use of G# and F#), lending the harmonic atmosphere an unpleasantly sharp quality. After a brief rearing-up of the knocking rhythms with harmonic variations of the 'Machiavellian chord', the three musical parts unite for the final line ('the wench is dead') in a regular, grave rhythm after returning to the original pitches of F# and G in wide position yet clashing close intervallic relationships for a static finish.

Ex. 10: vocal parts, bb. 30–34

In the third song, the presentation of the carefully chosen minimal material offers a clear contrast between extreme fragmentation, the repetition of the syllable 'for-' (appearing as a mere sound 'foh' to conjure up an impression of a 'Hannibal Lecter' character, in bar 181) and the static block of the accusation culminating in the shouted word 'death' in bar 182; this is a jarring tactic for expressivity in this song (Ex. 11).

Ex. 11: fragmentation contrasted with shouted complete word, bb. 187–191

1.5   Conglomeration of Tools

There is a point where the use of 'Leitmotif', the word painting, frenzied

repetition, fragmentation and theatrical style, merge into one co-dependent

network of a meaningful dialogue with the text. This is particularly apparent in

the second song, *II. Chopin*, where the literary party-goers describe a piano

performance flippantly as 'the latest' fashionable event. The pianist's playing

style is given characteristic words, while the text fragment 'latest' is re-

interpreted in the third song to imply the concept of a deceased, 'late', friend.

Now 'her' soul is dead, rather than merely the impersonal 'wench'; she has

'become' a person with a soul. The descriptions of the performance of Chopin's

music 'with her wisps of hair [and] fingertips' gives rise to palpable images of

physical attributes of the composer-pianist Chopin. Methodological

'word painting' refers to Chopin's idiomatic piano writing, harmonic language

and attempts to recall the listener's aural memories of his piano compositions,

and suggests a narrative picture of the performer's physique. The character-

ristics of a performance style suitable to Chopin's music were achieved by

including material reminiscent of the *Préludes*, such as 'leitmotivic' use of the

'Chopin chord', Romantic piano writing and highlighting the words 'Chopin',

'music', 'hair' and 'fingertips' as representatives of nimble piano playing in itself.

Again, the scene is set with a 'tutti'. The party din is produced by means

of 'atmosphere painting': active material and tightly placed harmonies generate

a nervous sonic density. Closely juxtaposed pitches with fast-moving

semiquavers display different articulation techniques: legato (soprano) and

quick trills (right hand) with staccato (left hand) in the piano, short 'sighs'

(baritone), accompanied by a skittish texture in the piano (left hand) with

interjecting tremolos. These merge into a rhythmically and harmonically active 'party din'. A few words in Polish have been added to underline Chopin's heritage and sentiment (Ex. 12).

Ex. 12: 'party din', bb. 41–43 and 'Polish heritage', bb. 44–46[10]

Syncopated piano chords counter the natural rhythm of the baritone's speech, where the accent lies on the first syllable of the word. The rhythm and dance-like feeling also stretches out to Chopin's folk-inspired rhythmic *Polonaises* (indirect 'word painting'). While Ravel followed 'speaking rhythm' and specific colloquial pronunciation, this text is purposely set against the natural stresses in the second song. Emphasising words of subaltern importance, such as 'to' and 'the' with longer note values in the opening sentence breaks up any impression of naturalness (Ex. 13). Also, the resulting fragmentary character acts as a prismatic filter, giving a sense of the 'chaos' of simultaneous party-conversations.

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[10] 'Dobrze tak!' = Good yes! (Polish).

Ex. 13: longer note values to accent secondary words, bb. 48–49

The recurrence of the slow 'knocking rhythm' (Ex. 14) from the first song, presenting the four-note pattern now presented as demisemiquavers visualises active 'fingertips' (heard later, bb. 88–95), accompanied by rapidly repeated notes in the piano. The melismatic singing of the word 'transmit' creates a breathy transmission of sound through the singer's mouth (bb. 60–61).

Ex. 14: 'knocking rhythm', piano, bb. 54–55

The Romantic character of the text 'the music' is underlined by a triangular three-note rising–falling phrase, their intervallic relationships heard as 6^ths (soprano). Again, the 6th is used to flavour the composition with a trace of 'Sehnsucht'. An ironic bitterness is added with the baritone's triangular melodic phrase, in rhythmic unison with the soprano, which undermines her phrase with a major 3rd and tritone (bb. 62–63).

Apart from the importance of the rising 6th as a 'Leitmotif', its importance extends to upholding a general sense of yearning; it reappears throughout *II. Chopin* in similar harmonic casting, triadic in the soprano (bb. 66–67 implying

c-minor and g-minor in b. 79) and under-laid in the baritone ('edgy' tritone, bb. 69–70).

To support these melodic fragments with a suitable Chopinesque atmosphere, the piano displays diatonic material, inspired by Chopin's *Préludes* (Ex. 15) and develops into a passage of a falling–rising phrase and its opposite (bb. 79–83).

Ex. 15: Chopinesque piano writing, bb. 63-76

The reference to hair in the vocal parts is achieved through the light and airy sounds produced by the repeated fragmenting of the word 'hair'. The overload of 'h' achieves a nervous breathy panting (bb. 82–85) and an impression of uncontrolled contours of soft flowing hair through apparently aimless rising 'gasps' (tritones, Ex. 16).

Ex. 16: 'gasps', bb. 82–85

The short 'i' paired with the percussive 'ps' and focussed with the 't'

('tips') lends a pointed and nimble quality to the rhythmically agile piano material

(Ex. 17). This is supported by nervous miniature clusters of harmonic material in

the piano (bb. 84–92) and then fully takes responsibility for the

'word painting' of 'fingertips' with fast repeated notes (bb. 92–99).

Ex. 17: Nimble 'fingertips', bb. 87–91

'So delicate' is symbolised by interwoven melodies and whispering,

combined with the previous 'music' material and idiomatic piano writing, which

lends support to 'her Chopin' (Ex. 18). Diatonic triads in b*b-* and g#-minor are

positioned strategically in wide root position with the melody note in the right

hand reinforcing the root, completing this with a 'Romantic' arpeggiating chord

(left hand).[11] The 'Chopin chord' derives from Chopin's *Nocturne*, op. 9 no. 1 in b-flat minor (bb. 1–3, p. 7, see bib.).

Ex. 18: Chopinesque arpeggiating, 'Chopin chord', bb. 108–115

Representing softness and beauty, the melody note, elegantly placed far above the harmony, the 'Chopin chord' contrasts the 'Machiavellian chord' of the first song, swapping the hierarchical intervallic relationships. The 'answering' phrase (bb. 108–112) calms down with the aid of the 'relaxing' phrase end in the soprano part. The G# in the piano implies a tonality of c#-minor and the soprano forms a kind of countersubject with a melisma on the word 'Chopin', while the baritone begins the final phrase in this triangle with a rising 6th followed by a semitone (bb. 112–113). Again, the 6th is used to present a Romantic flavour; this phrase is particularly reminiscent of the Tristanesque 'Leitmotif' for love, although the semitone is altered to ascend in 'her Chopin' to create a positive sensation of consonance. This version of the phrase, paired with the word 'Chopin', reappears at the end of the song.

In the remaining five bars, the soprano's countersubject joins the baritone in a closely-knit intervallic treatment of the melody. This gives a dramaturgical impression of concluding on a consonance despite actually ending on a

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[11] Style popularised by Arthur Rubinstein (1887-1982).

dissonance (tritone) with an incomplete sentence: 'So delicate, her Chopin that we know this soul […]'. The dramaturgy of the song arches towards the end with a final pianistic passage (symbolising fast fingers) and diatonic harmonies (referring to *Préludes* bb. 79–83, 120–128). With a hushed, percussive 'sh–sh', sung at semiquaver distance between soprano and baritone, the resolute, faster demisemiquaver rhythm (doubling the 'r' between the vocalists, bb. 126–127) draws attention to the 'delicacy' of Chopin's music. After a brief soprano cadenza involving a melismatic chromatic scale downwards, the minimal coda begins. The vocal parts converse contrapuntally (bb. 149–158), accompanied sparsely by shadow harmony in the piano. The recurring diatonic chord (bb. 146, 154) consists of a simple f-minor triad, harmonically confused by bitonality (added Bb and D, left hand), thus creating a strong Bb-major triad, but together resembling a tolling bell with an undecided harmony surrounding the absurd conversation. This aural 'double entendre' anticipates the phrase 'that is questioned in a larger room', as a sort of musical question, implying a lack of sonic decision.

The division of the word 'question' strives for a re-interpretation with the remaining fragment 'quest' (b. 156) alluding to the pianist's quest for beauty, that should remain untouched in her performance of Chopin's music in order to facilitate the resurrection of the composer's soul. When the piano returns with the knocking rhythm, combined with the rising Gb-major arpeggio (b. 161), the soirée guests content themselves by whispering 'delicate' before the final phrase closes on the key word, 'Chopin'.

The increase of de-structuring in the third song leads to heightened alienation and ambiguation with only shadows of the accusation and memories

of the first song's crimes reappearing, while there is a gradual shift from

Chopinesque beauty to silent horror of mourning and death with the tragically

'broken' female character losing her voice in agony, but not ceasing her struggle

(Ex. 19).

Ex. 19: 'broken' sound achieved by high timbre in forced quiet dynamic,
bb. 233–238

The means of this mutation are extreme fragmentation of musical and

textual elements. The choice of lyrics creates several layers of meaning. While

the accusatory statement of the first song initially remains unchanged, the

following text line disturbingly merges the 'soul of music' from song *II.* with the

'death of the wench' from *I.* The further uncomfortable addition of the word

'latest' creates interpretative ambivalence: a state of being 'late' and therefore

dead, as well as expressing a flippant 'latest' fashion. Musically, the material is

built on a simple recapitulation of the first song with few fragments of the se-

cond shimmering through. The narrative is, however, disturbed by the growing

emotional turmoil of the singers with the 'Machiavellian chord' repeated five

times before it is deconstructed into several versions of rising arpeggios (see

Ex. 20), reappearing in the character of a Romantic piano passage as the fu-

neral march, which swells and disappears following the principal of presence

and absence discussed in *Nachklang* (*PC*, Chapter I).

Ex. 20: development of 'Machiavellian chord', bb. 197–206

This obsessive reduction in musical material was prompted by the interpretation of the cycle's narrative, namely that the female character's tireless struggle to self-empowerment may be allegorised with the hardships of artistry in the society. By merging several temporalities of genre and gender characteristics in the three songs, binaries are scrutinised, offering a platform for discussion even with regards to the way society (and the entertainment business) tends to objectify and sub-ordinate female protagonists.

III. Ensemble and Solo Works

Folkloristic and Experimental Instrumentalism

Balkanesque Dances for clarinet, violin and piano

Three Trio Nanos for clarinet, violin and piano

Experimenzas for solo instruments:

Lucid Nightmare for piano

Song for Double Bass

Fantasie for violin

1.   Folkloristic Instrumentalism

Composers have long been known to enrich their musical language with elements borrowed from folk music. Countless examples come to mind, from Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* for piano, Brahms' *Hungarian Dances* (WoO1) for orchestra, Shostakovich's *Suite for Jazz Orchestra no. 2*, to Prokofiev's use of an old Hebrew song in his sextet *Overture on Hebrew Themes*, op. 34*,* to name just a few works, which I particularly love. Although Liszt's *Rhapsodies* have been traced back to popular Roma tunes rather than Hungarian peasant music, their spirit remains essentially Hungarian. Bartók's field research and recordings of Hungarian peasant music, however, were instigated by the quest for a national identity and remained a guiding example. I studied Bartók's *Contrasts* for clarinet, violin and piano (Sz. 111) in preparation for my two trios for the same combination*.*

I have long been influenced by popular and traditional Balkan music (wedding/funeral bands, 'gipsy' Roma bands). This rich part of European cultural history offers opportunities of intense expressivity especially composing for wind instruments. The *Balkanesque Dances*, and the melancholic melody in *OT* attest to this. I found these three characteristics to be prevalent in the folk music of Eastern Europe and Near East regions:

- regular strong rhythmic pulse

- lavish motivic ornamentation

- 'pungent' harmonies[1] interjected by 'edgy' sounds
  (see Ex. 9, p. 79, *Balkanesque Dances*, no. 1)

Frenzied, joyful energy is apparent in Balkan rhythms, which are emphasised by strong beats, especially when 'gipsy' village bands perform in popular music festivals,[2] and originate from the rhythm of these languages; Stravinsky merely extracted the essence of the Russian texts he used, in his pieces with folk-music influences:

> by placing familiar objects in new contexts, he enables us to see them in new ways. A kind of alienation technique … an almost Brechtian desire to prevent the ossification of over-familiar conventions arises in the composer's non-narrative ritualism.[3]

Studying and performing the clarinet trios of Bartók, Stravinsky, Milhaud and Ives was a helpful method of informing myself prior to composing these folkloristically inspired pieces. In the small ensemble version of *L'Histoire du Soldat* for clarinet, violin and piano, Stravinsky gave the instruments a new independence and took 'infusions' from 'other sources': a raspingly discordant

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[1] 'pungent' = strong, sharp smell, …[may be] perceived as unpleasant; Collins dictionary online, 16/08/17. I used this word specifically to denote harmonies that may be perceived as unpleasant in a diatonic context.
[2] To give just one example, the Trumpet Festival in Guca, Bulgaria, http://www.guca.rs.
[3] Jonathan Cross, *The Stravinsky Legacy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 8.

and ironically neo-classical movement, 'Le Petit Concert', and 'Tango' attests to this. Milhaud's almost sarcastic neo-classical *Suite* for this instrumentation creates an expressive ambiguity of genre with a humorous touch; Ives employs a similar technique in his *Largo*. Yet it was Bartók's trio *Contrasts* that has influenced my two clarinet trios most. I have closely followed some of the musical gestures from the third movement of *Contrasts* in passages of frenzied ornamental gestures.

My trios have several features: the use of 'pungent harmonies' (= an expression I use to describe straight forward diatonic harmonies that are 'coloured' by dissonances, i.e. 9th, -2nd, 7th), danceable continuous rhythmic patterns, interjection of simple but ornamented folkloristic melodies, and the equal partnerships between three very different instruments.

1. 1   ***Balkanesque Dances*** for clarinet, violin and piano

I. *Balkan Village Dance* (clarinet in Bb)

II. *Balkan Day Dream* (clarinet in A)

III. *Balkan Night* (clarinet in A)

The three movements of this trio are strongly contrasting, even though they share motives and other features. Covering a wide variety of motivic material, the work is rhythmically close to traditional folk dances. Rhythms and motives are more abstract and complex, but I aimed at keeping a flavour of the rhythmic drive of Slavic folk music – the pulse and energy of a dance. Modality, form and rhythm from Balkan models were not copied, but rather my composition was infiltrated by fragments of a 'Balkan spirit' into my composition. A burning

melancholy and passion for life with a spirit of 'surviving against all odds'

defines the various musical styles specific to the troubled Balkan and Middle-

Eastern regions. The combination of three instrument types is perfectly suited to

express the rhythmic vitality and pitch flexibility through expressive

ornamentation. Lively pitch bending qualities in the violin and clarinet are

supported by motoric energy in the piano.

Regular Strong Rhythmic Pulse

Historically, music in these areas was mostly used for ritual purposes (i.e.

Catholic Orthodox music, earlier ritualistic music). Listeners could be

transported into a state of mystical trance by a strong continuous rhythmic

pulse. Specific features such as energetic toccata style blocks can be found in

most of my compositions. Additionally, I intended to evoke ornamental qualities

through short glissandi and microtones.

Ravel is popularly known for the rhythmic seduction of his *Bolero*,

Stravinsky used themes and rhythms from Pagan Russia for his *Le Sacre du*

Printemps. Even through the filter of 'art music', the repetitive folk rhythms and

the unnervingly changing beat within the 4/4 pulse are extremely powerful.

Stravinsky's use of ostinatos and rhythmical structures based on repeated small

cells are meant to conjure ritualistic qualities.[4] A strong sense of pulse is

imperative in village dances, possibly to entice the people to dance away their

daily hardships.

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[4] Richard Taruskin and Piero Weiss, *Music in the Western World, A History in Documents* (Belmont: Wadsworth Group/Thomson Learning, 1984), pp. 447-449.

Informed by extensive preparatory research, I found that one specific rhythmic pattern of Balkan bands was similar to other regional folk music ('Balkan rhythm', Ex. 1) and could be discerned also as a part of Tango patterns. Syncopated in nature, owing to the dotted rhythm, and in a pulse of two, this simple and lively pattern also features prominently in popular 'gypsy' Roma songs. One of the most popular songs is *Ushti Ushti Baba*, which was popularised worldwide both by Goran Bregovic with his *Wedding and Funeral Orchestra*[5] and by DJ Shantel.[6]

Ex. 1: 'Balkan rhythm'

I have made extensive use of this rhythm throughout *Balkanesque Dances,* notably in the first movement and in *Three Trio Nanos.* In *Balkan Village Dance*, it is heard in these main versions:

- o   very clearly in its original form (Ex. 2)

- o   shared between instruments (Ex. 3)

- o   hinted at with the use of accents (Ex. 4)

While ornamentation is used extensively as motivic material in the second and third movements, the 'Balkan rhythm' appears throughout the first movement.

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[5] *Ushti Ushti Baba*, Goran Bregovic, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Ey266-SuNQ, 08/12/16.
[6] *Ushti Ushti Baba*, Shantel, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrFiVe5mH2g, 08/12/16.

Ex. 2: original rhythm, violin, I. bb. 5–6

Ex. 3: shared between instruments,
clarinet, violin, I. bb. 1–2

Ex. 4: hinted at with the use of accents

Ex. 4a: piano, I. bb. 1–2

Ex. 4b: violin, I. bb. 65–66 (accented by virtue of changing pitches)

Ex. 5: slightly developed, piano, I. bb. 11–12

Ex. 6: very fragmented, clarinet, I. bb. 65–66

<u>Ornamentation</u>

Traditionally functioning mainly as decoration in Western music, ornamentation was useful to prolong the sounding of a pitch on a non-sustaining instrument like the harpsichord and to make micro adjustments to the structure and musical narrative. In non-Western music, however, 'ornamental' figures form an essential part of the structure, as they often display key elements of the harmony and motivic material, while determining the (rhythmic) texture as well as the melody. Both traditions are connected by the art of improvisation. C.P.E. Bach saw ornaments as a necessity.

> the pianist playing a fantasy,[7] has utmost freedom to display his capabilities.[8]

> No one, surely, has ever questioned the need for embellishments … They connect notes; animate them… [9]

Generally, ornaments can play a vital role; for example, when Shostakovich thematises a simple 'turn' as a melody in the coda of the first movement of his *Symphony no. 5*, or when Grisey characterises ornaments as motives in the first movement of his *Vortex Temporum*, creating an intricate motivic network with ornamental figures.

I have treated ornaments as a part of the essential musical material in *PC*, where arpeggiated gestures may appear like ornaments but are identifiable as the essence of a motive (section D, first movement). In *Balkan Day Dream* and *Balkan Night,* the manipulation of ornamentation as motivic and harmonic impulses is apparent, and extensive passages of the second movement consist

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[7] A fantasy was synonymous for his contemporaries to 'improvising'.
[8] C.P.E. Bach, *Versuch über die wahre Art das Clavier zu spielen* (Berlin: ed. Gustav Schilling, 5th Edition, Franz Stage, 1856), ii.e. §5, p. 327.
[9] Taruskin/Weiss, ibid., p. 270.

of melodic material grown out of already developed ornaments, such as trilling patterns (II. bb. 31-74). Therefore, referring directly to the full score, I discuss two simple figures with which I have worked as starting points for my building blocks of ornamental elements as motives: the trill and the turn.

Both these figures appear close to the original 'as' an ornament, as well as rhythmically augmented. A trill becomes a slow pitch-bend (I. clarinet & violin bb. 47–48 and bb. 94–95; II. clarinet bb. 49–50; violin II. bb. 51–53).[10] In a similar way, a turn develops into a fast fugato, passed around amongst the instruments (II. bb. 45–48, II. bb. 54–58), or is given a slow melodic rendition, which is, in itself heavily ornamented and shared amongst the players (I. bb. 126–138; III. bb. 6-9, bb. 12–13). The first ornamental element, a simple, trill-like oscillation between two pitches, was altered to appear in several intervals: a major 2nd, a minor 6th, an 8ve, a major or a minor 3rd.

Aiming at the kind of modal inflection found in Roma tunes, I combined a classically notated mordent (II. clarinet, b. 35) or trill (II. clarinet, b.37) with a modal upbeat using the phrygian mode. This was then developed by inversion, altering the rhythm from a slower triplet to a fast four-note group and some of the pitches (II. clarinet, b. 41). Entire passages have developed from these ornamental starting points, with very occasional interjections of 'pungent harmonies' and lost echoes of the 'Balkan rhythm' (II. piano, bb. 66-69, 72, 75).

Apart from melodies ornamented with trills and turns, the third piece makes use of disjunctive cells of 'pungent harmonies', repeated quickly in an ornamented fashion; these make new passages of frenzied Balkan ornamentation (III. piano bb. 20-21, clarinet and violin, bb. 22-25, tutti bb. 28-

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[10] Much like 'Fragment 1' in *Opaque Transparencies.*

33). The codas of the first and third movements explode into a folkloristic melody in c-minor, which drives itself into an exhaustive frenzy of ornamentation (II. bb. 153-170, III. bb. 44-52). This musical 'merry-go-round' was strongly influenced by Bartók's third movement of *Contrasts*; he achieves ritualistic qualities with ornamental motives, strung together in frenzied passages and structured by a rhythmic ostinato similar to folk dances.[11]

'Pungent' Harmonies

When diatonic triads are 'disturbed' with minor 9^{ths}, the harmony takes on a 'pungent' character, an 'uncertain' sharpness, without becoming a-tonal. The deciding feature of the chord sequence below is its strongly diatonic character despite such disturbances (Ex. 7).

Ex. 7: my original chord sequence with diatonic character, 'edgy' disturbances

Ex. 7a: chord sequence in *Balkanesque Dances*, piano, bb. 48-52

The sonic character of this chord sequence is my interpretation of a Bavarian folk tune, which I heard in my childhood played by the Glockenspiel of the town hall in Munich.[12] Although these tunes had simple diatonic harmonies, I heard

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[11] Béla Bartók, *Contrasts*, III. Sebes, bb. 18-28, 180-233.
[12] 'Schäfflertanz' is a barrel makers dance from the 17th century.

them as infused with 'edgy' disturbances – the bells were notoriously 'out of tune'. This timbre of 'slightly off' diatonicism fascinated me.

This chord sequence provides the only actual melody in my trio (Ex. 8), as opposed to the rhythmically augmented ornaments. The melody appears prominently at several moments during all three movements (Ex. 8 a–c) and is treated with techniques similar to those used in the orchestral works, namely the fragmentary build-up of a melodic phrase in stages.

Ex. 8: 'pungent' melody, original

Ex. 8a: melody as duet in fragmented phrases,
clarinet, violin, I. bb. 17-32

Ex. 8b: melody (developed) in trills, clarinet, I. bb. 53-57

Ex. 8c: trills melody outlined by multiphonics[13], clarinet, I. bb. 67-86

Other moments of 'pungent harmony', sudden chords or 'edgy' interjections of

motivic material, are dotted around in all parts (Ex. 9a–c).

Ex. 9: Examples of various types of 'pungent' harmonies:
   Ex. 9a: 'pungent harmony' in *Balkan Village Dance*
         tutti, b. 3; violin, piano, b. 14; clarinet, violin, bb. 102-103

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[13] Examples of multiphonics always appear at written pitch.

Ex. 9b: 'pungent harmony' in *Balkan Day Dream*

Ex. 9c: Four examples of 'pungent harmony' in *Balkan Night*
   Ex. 9c1: piano, bb. 9-10, 20-25; tutti bb. 34-42;

Ex. 9c2: piano, harmonic ambiguity, bb. 44-52

1.2 ***Three Trio Nanos*** for clarinet, violin and piano

Nano 1

Nano 2

Nano 3

These three miniatures are sourced from fragments of the first movement of *Balkanesque Dances*. I extracted their essence and experimented freely to arrive at a condensed abstraction. I chose sections that are very distinctive in their rhythmic character.

The inspiration for these *Nanos* was Stravinsky's eight-minute work, *Three Pieces for String Quartet*, in which he focussed on a selection of fragmentary motives and gestures, conjuring up a rich imagery stretching from mechanical items to religious liturgy and folklore:

> The bare and enigmatic Three Pieces are in fact contrasting studies in popular, fantastic, and liturgical moods… "Dance" is akin to Stravinsky's adaptations of Russian tunes from the same period.[14]

Although the two *Nanos* are based on the exact same motivic cell, *Nano 1* explores the material with energetic rhythms at a fast pace, while in *Nano 2* the cell is worked into a wash of slowly echoing timbres with occasional brief bursts of energy. *Nano 1* disjoints the musical flow by using fragmentation. *Nano 2* achieves a narrative flow by layering fragments, although both use 'Klangfarbenmelodie' to control the fragments and contrasting atmospheres. *Balkan Village Dance* and *Balkan Night* both end with frenzied celebratory codas in c-minor. I have attempted to develop this coda as subtly as possible in *Nano 3* and to end the miniature trio with fireworks. I have deconstructed the big trio's narrative and created an abstracted miniature version of the essence of its expressivity with the following fragments (Exx. 10, 11).

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[14] Joseph Horowitz, http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Igor-Stravinsky-Three-Pieces-for-String-Quartet/368, 08/12/16.

Ex. 10: Selection of most important fragments from *Balkan Village Dance*

Ex. 11: Selection of the most pertinent fragments from *Balkanesque Dances*

2.   Experimental Instrumentalism: ***Experimenzas*** for solo instruments

> Every time man makes a new experiment he always learns more.
> He cannot learn less. … Freeing his time for its more effective
> exploratory investment is to give man increased wealth.[15]

The common ground in *Experimenzas* was the search for expressive and experimental techniques developed for each instrument, with an underlying interest in fragmentary musical structures, and echoing sounds – the 'Nachklang' effect. Working closely with instrumentalists, I investigated their technical and musical craftsmanship to enhance our mutual understanding.

I aimed to keep the formal structure of each piece relatively straight-forward in order to allow more freedom of expression through the use of unconventional sound effects, such as a double bassist singing a duet with the harmonics she plays. I intended a clearer, more translucent narrative. This enabled the simultaneous perception of all elements and facilitated a more intimate and investigative working atmosphere.

In *Lucid Nightmare* I obscured the harmonic characteristics by placing contrasting chords in close proximity so that their tonal qualities can intermingle. In *Song for Double Bass* timbral ambiguities result from the juxtaposition of 'strange' effects with expressive 'beautiful' sounds. In *Fantasie* the use of slides and pitch-bends were used to conceal the tonal centre.

While all three pieces express a 'human voice', the violin and piano pieces are more specifically intended as 'laments of human suffering'. They may appear to be more removed from 'banal immediacy', but display a distinct narrative undertone. *Fantasie* consists of various 'sighing' motives and melodic

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[15] Richard Buckminster Fuller, *Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth* (Baden: Lars Muller Publishing, 2008), p. 29.

fragments which also appear in polyphonic writing and are interspersed with

harmonics and tremolos. *Lucid Nightmare* highlights contrasts between dark

and light timbral qualities interwoven with a small melancholic song.

I explored the contrasting timbres created by the playing techniques 'sul

ponticello' (harsher, somewhat metallic) and 'sul tasto' (slightly muffled, more

gentle). In both string pieces I wanted to explore the metallic timbres of 'sul

ponticello' and contrast these with 'sul tasto'.

2.1   *Lucid Nightmare* (2015) for piano

> A simultaneous development of material heard as sound on the keyboard
> and as resonance from the sustaining pedal. The result is music that
> integrates the piano's capabilities to striking effect.[16]

Similarly to Berio in *Sequenza IV* for solo piano (1966), I chose to focus on the

sound occurring *after* striking the note on the keyboard, when the echoing

sound remains in the haze of the sustaining pedal, my 'Nachklang'. Having

listened to my use of 'Nachklang' in *OT* during a masterclass in Freiburg in

2014, composer Jörg Widmann encouraged me to explore this phenomenon

with a view of writing solo pieces revolving around this subject.[17] What began as

an exploration for piano in *Lucid Nightmare* developed into a more extensive

study of this effect in a series of ongoing works, the *Experimenzas*.

Lucid Nightmare (LN) focusses entirely on echoing sounds and is indeed

constructed by returning to the most important pitches of the 'Nachklang' in *OT*.

Two groups of pitches were used, the 'Klangfarbenmelodie'-motive (see *OT*, bb.

3–7) and the chord in the strings forming the 'harmonic base' (see *OT*, bb. 1–7)

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[16] Richard Whitehouse, *Luciano Berio Sequenzas I-XIV for Solo* Instruments, CD booklet, Naxos
8.557661-63, p. 3.
[17] Jörg Widmann, German composer, born 1973, http://www.joergwidmann.com, 04/12/16.

of the orchestral piece (Ex. 13).

Ex. 13: pitch pool of 'Nachklang' from *OT* used for *LN*

I explored different techniques of striking the keys and employing

different sustaining pedals to refine the duration and timbral quality of the echo.

In this piano miniature I made use of all three pedals on a modern grand piano

while restricting myself to minimal musical material. In this piece I have

minimalised my experimental techniques, but in a slightly longer piece for piano,

Heartbeats (2015), I explored the 'Nachklang' effect by striking pitches and

sounds on various places inside the body of a grand piano. However, *Lucid*

Nightmare provides a more pertinent example of sparse material and simple

means used to create 'Nachklang'.

2.2 *Song for Double Bass* (2016)

This piece was commissioned by Swedish bassist Kristina Edin with the

instruction that it must neither damage the instrument nor require an

extraordinary effort to learn new playing techniques and notation. My

grandfather was a life-long chamber musician and orchestral double bassist and

hearing him play, I could always try out a few sound effects.[18] For me, the

lowest string appeared like a pedal out of which all musical ideas can grow. This

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[18] Adrian Beers, MBE (1916-2004), principal bass, Philharmonia Orchestra.

is the case in *Song for Double Bass*, where the low E, the first note as well as the start of the melody, returns repeatedly, like a 'home' key.

I appropriated some of Lachenmann's string techniques for the effect of 'wind on the shore' (Ex. 14).[19]

Ex. 14: 'wind' effect:
bowing on the wooden string-holder beyond the bridge, bb. 1–5
bowing diagonally, bb. 70–71

The fragmentary construction of melodic phrases is created as a counterpoint. Slides on harmonics, which I label as 'seagulls', can sound 'strange' and break up the 'beauty' of the narrative's melodious nature. I wrote a short 'duet', combining Kristina's natural, untrained singing voice with her highly trained professional bass playing (Ex. 15). I interrupted the dialogue with aggressive harmonic slides ('seagulls', Ex. 16) and a knocking rhythm ('little march', Ex. 17), bowed or percussively tapping the instrument. The combination of the low double bass timbre intertwined with a high female voice aims to involve the listener emotionally.

Ex. 15: singing, bb. 62–68

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[19] Helmut Lachenmann, *Gran Torso*, string quartet, (Kassel: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1991), viola solo, b. 104.

Ex. 16: 'seagulls', b. 8, bb. 70–71

b. 8, bb. 72-73

Ex. 17: 'little march', bb. 13–14, 64–67

2.3 *Fantasie* (2016) for violin

I studied some works for solo violin by Ysayë, Bartók, Prokofiev, George Benjamin and J.S. Bach to enlarge my knowledge of the technical and expressive possibilities in contrapuntal writing for violin. Especially captivating were Ysayë's 3rd sonata for violin, *Ballade Obsession*, and Bartók's *Solo Sonata*.

    Fantasie is essentially a lamenting melody exploring various traditional and experimental violin techniques, such as double stops, in order to create a melodic dialogue. Open strings take turns as a 'drone' and timbral effects, such as sul ponticello tremolo, interrupt repeatedly. Natural harmonics imply bells (Ex. 18), while artificial harmonics in tremolo on the bridge create eerie 'wind sounds' (Ex. 19) to break up the development of the lamenting melody, which consists of a series of 'sighs' and silences. The range of timbres and sonic textures are thereby enlarged.

Ex. 18: 'bells', bb. 14, 36

Ex. 19: eerie 'wind sounds', bb. 1–4, bb. 22–24

This interplay between superficially 'old' and 'new' sounds has captivated me throughout this doctoral project and taken on a central role in these later pieces.

Conclusion

Even though at first sight, the spectrum of compositions in this doctoral project

covers a large scope of heterogeneous works, they were without exception sub-

jected to several tools to develop a breadth of heightened expressivity through

techniques adopted from philosophical, aesthetic, artistic and architectural theories

inspired by Jacques Derrida and found in the work of Daniel Libeskind and Olafur

Eliasson. Methods of de-construction were used for the exploration of instrumental

and vocal sounds – a composer's building blocks – and are at the root of the

attempts to ultimately rearrange and reinterpret the implied narrative and musical

meanings of the compositions. It needs to be understood that

De-*con*struction differs from de-struction. The latter merely aims to de-story or

eradicate, any structure, while de-*con*struction of musical materials offers the

opportunity to re-structure and re-position fragmented elements. These tools allow

for the building of a complex structure that renders new viewpoints. Comparable to

an architect, traditional building materials i.e. musical materials are used but different

viewpoints were offered. I have explored four methods: the layering of textures

(orchestral), theatrical treatment of text (vocal), other influences (folk music) and

idiomatic instrumental writing (solo).

Each of the diverse compositions in this portfolio serves to exemplify the

paraphernalia used in search of musical ambiguity via deconstructive methods.

While both orchestral pieces primarily explore timbral and tonal ambiguity as well as

textural layering, the solo pieces make use of individually devised extended

techniques. Another tool was the infusion of the 'Western new music' style with

elements and characteristics inspired by Balkan folk music to create motivic

tensions, as well as offering tonal ambiguity through pitch-bends in the clarinet trios.
In the songs, I explored theatrical techniques and verbal fragmentation on the basis
of diverse literary sources, in order to highlight rhythmic sonorities, narrative
ambiguity and heighten the dramatic tension.

In the future, close collaboration with musicians as well as interdisciplinary
research will be desirable to search for answers to the challenges faced in the
music environment today. The perceived distance and compartmentalisation
between the academic music world, composers, performers as well as the hard
separation between the entertainment music sector and the (shrinking) consuming
public of 'classical music' are issues that have been urgent for a while and I would
like to contribute to this discussion with my future research projects and creative
output.

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Piano Concerto: https://youtu.be/PnQXPVC1uag

Three Trio Nanos: https://youtu.be/_Ele5rCd_RM

Deconstructive Songs: upon request*

Lucid Nightmare: https://soundcloud.com/jeanbeers/beers-lucid-nightmare

Song for Double Bass: https://youtu.be/oNcN4pSJESE

Fantasie: https://youtu.be/bo7VEkeq5k0

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