

Incantations

Concerto da Camera for Piano and Ensemble (2015)

The balance of traditional and progressive musical parameters through the concertante
treatment of the piano

Analytical Commentary

Graham Waterhouse

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Abstract

The aim of this research project is to investigate *concertante* techniques in composition with reference both to traditional models and recent works in the genre, and to redefine a contemporary understanding of *concertante* writing in preparation for the principal work of this thesis, *Incantations* for Piano and Ensemble. Starting with the contradictory meanings of the word “concertare” (to compete and to unite), as well as with a fleeting, non-musical vision of combining disparate elements, I investigate diverse styles and means of combining soloist (mainly piano) and ensemble. My aim is to expand my compositional “vocabulary”, in order to meet the demands of writing a work for piano and ensemble. This involved composing supporting works, both of concerto-like nature (with more clearly defined functions of soloist and tutti), as well as chamber music (with material equally divided between the players). Part of the research was to ascertain to what extent these two apparent opposites could be combined to create a hybrid concerto/chamber music genre in which the element of virtuosity transcends the purely bravura, to embrace a common adaptability, where soloist and ensemble players are called upon to assume a variety of roles, from the accompanimental to the soloistic.

Special attention is paid to the use of the parameters harmony/form, *concertante* piano writing and extended techniques in my supporting works and how these are developed and applied to the principal work. The use of extended techniques, originally intended for wide-scale deployment in the principal work, is essayed especially in two works for cello and speaking voice. For one of the latter a new method of notating certain techniques had to be devised. The validity and effectiveness of the extended techniques is assessed in a number of different contexts and conclusions are drawn regarding their deployment in the principal work.

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“So eine Arbeit wird eigentlich nie fertig, man muß sie für fertig erklären, wenn man nach Zeit und Umständen das Mögliche getan hat.“¹

Goethe, *Italienische Reise* (1816)

¹ ‘Such a work is never finished: it must, however, pass for such as soon as the author has done his utmost, considering time and circumstances.’ (Translation by Rev. A.J.W. Morrison, 1849)

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Konstantin Sellheim (viola), Graham Waterhouse (cello)
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Markus Schön (clarinet)
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Graham Waterhouse (cello)
Recorded 25th October 2017, Obrecht Studio, Munich
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Graham Waterhouse (cello)
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Finally, I should like to thank my son, 10 years old when *Le Loup-garou* was begun, for his (unwittingly) useful advice on which cello techniques to include and which to leave out; also, my wife, for enduring long spells of non-communication and absence during the protracted gestation period for this thesis.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

This is a composition PhD entitled *Incantations* after the principal work, a chamber concerto written for the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. There are 11 supporting works, scored for various chamber combinations, two further supporting works in the Appendix and an analytical commentary.

The principal aim of this research project is a search for the balance between traditional and progressive practices in musical composition with special emphasis on three musical parameters:

- 1) harmony and form
- 2) *concertante* writing²
- 3) extended instrumental techniques

The commentary individually addresses these parameters in three dedicated chapters, before considering them together in *Incantations*. This is not to infer that other aspects, such as rhythm and timbre are not relevant in the works discussed, merely that the parameters listed above are those which I chose to concentrate upon for the purposes of this research project.

The principal work and the 11 supporting works are listed as follows:³

1. ***Incantations***, Concerto da Camera for Piano and Ensemble (2015). FP March 2015, Huw Watkins (piano), BCMG, cond. Richard Baker, CBSO Centre, Birmingham

² For the purposes of this thesis, 'concertante' has two inter-related meanings: 1) Denoting the virtuosic, bravura aspect of a solo part within a work for instrumentalist and ensemble 2) Denoting a genre of work in which solo writing and tutti writing are juxtaposed, contrasted and played off against each other

³ The scores are listed here in the order in which they are labelled. Scores 13 -14 form part of the Appendix

Supporting works:

2. ***Chinese Whispers***, String Quartet No. 1 (2011), FP February 2011, Bantock Quartet, Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham
3. ***Prophetiae Sibyllarum***, String Quartet No. 2 (2012), FP April 2012, Pelaar Quartet, Gasteig, Munich
4. ***Alcatraz***, String Quartet No. 3 (2014), FP 11. November 2014, Pelaar Quartet, Bergam-Starnberger See, Bavaria
5. ***Sonata Ebraica*** for viola and piano (2013), FP April 2013, Hana Gubenko, Timon Altwegg, Gasteig, Munich
6. ***Rhapsodie Macabre***, Piano Quintet (2011), FP 23rd October 2011, Valentina Babor (piano), members of the Munich Philharmonic, Graham Waterhouse (cello), Liszt Festival, Gasteig, Munich
7. ***Sylla and Charybdis***, Piano Quartet (2014), FP 2nd November 2014, Katharina Sellheim (piano), David Frühwirth (violin), Konstantin Sellheim (viola), Graham Waterhouse (cello), Gasteig, Munich
8. ***Concerto da Camera*** for Cello and Ensemble (2012), FP October 2012, Graham Waterhouse (cello), Taschenphilharmonie, conductor Peter Stangel, Allerheilige Hofkirche, Munich
9. ***Pas de Quatre*** for Oboe, Violin, Viola and Cello (2013), FP 2013, members of Bayrische Staatsoper, Gasteig, Munich
10. ***Der Werwolf*** for Speaking Voice and Cello (2010), FP July 2010, Graham Waterhouse (Cello), Goethe-Festival, Essen-Werden, Nordrhein Westphalen
11. ***Le Loup-garou*** for Speaking Voice and Cello (2015), FP August 2016, Graham Waterhouse (Cello), National Chamber Music Course, Preston, Hertfordshire
12. ***Red Champion*** for Clarinet Solo (2015), FP 8th October 2012, Emma Johnson (clarinet), Stratford Music Festival, Stratford-upon-Avon

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13. ***Cello Concerto*** op. 27 (1989), FP June 1990, Graham Waterhouse (cello), Orchestre d'Yverdon, cond. Charles Baldinger, Yverdon, Switzerland

14. ***Praeludium*** for Piano op. 32 (1992)

Discussions of form and harmony (chapter 2) centre on the three string quartets; discussions of *concertante* writing (chapter 3) feature mainly the two piano chamber music works, the *Concerto da Camera* for cello and ensemble, and *Pas de Quatre* for oboe quartet. The chapter on extended techniques (chapter 4) deals mainly with the solo works - i.e. *Der Werwolf* and *Le Loup-garou* for Cello and Speaking Voice, as well as *Red Champion* for Clarinet Solo. Chapter 5 discusses the background to and the working out of the principal work *Incantations*; the concluding chapter 6 attempts to draw the strands together and retrospectively to reflect upon the nature of the compositional journey and some of the lessons learned.

Research background

As a professional cellist based in Germany I have been involved in performances of both traditional and contemporary repertoire,⁴ both in orchestral and chamber combinations. For the first concert with our newly formed Piano Trio we had to rehearse trios by Haydn and Salvatore Sciarrino. We discovered that the struggle to achieve rhythmical accuracy and precise intonation in Sciarrino's Piano Trio paid dividends in rehearsing Haydn's; the study of traditional and progressive repertoire proved to be mutually beneficial. In many concert-giving circles in continental Europe, especially Germany, modernism prevails, "Neue Musik" leads an increasingly autonomous existence, largely isolated from mainstream musical life. The festivals of New Music at Darmstadt, Witten or Munich attract different audiences from those that frequent symphony concerts in traditional venues. Free-lance instrumentalists may by nature tend to be more inclusive of traditional and contemporary repertoire, regarding tradition as a fluid force, connecting old and new practices. As a composer I have tried to combine traditional and progressive musical

⁴ For the purposes of this thesis, the word 'traditional' refers to the concert repertoire between about 1700 and 1945; the word 'contemporary' refers to the (musical) trends, sensibilities of a period of history between 1970 and the present day, but may also refer to works post 1945. The word has come to imply an undercurrent of dismissiveness regarding traditional/historic values

ideas and impulses according to the nature and circumstances of the work in question, hopefully in a mutually beneficial way. I see a parallel between the actor, who brings to life a wide variety of roles and character-types, both historic and present; as a composer aspiring to a pluralistic approach, I try to embrace both old and new technical and compositional procedures. In terms of this research project, that has involved composing works in different combinations, some of them using *concertante* elements, combining traditional and progressive compositional practices, much in the same way that a professional instrumentalist does as a matter of course.

Selection of a *concertante* work

The inherently confrontational aspect of a *concertante* work, the duality of soloist against ensemble, provided a challenge for my compositional endeavours. My ideal was for a kind of *Sinfonia Concertante* style, embracing both the solo/*tutti* aspect of a concerto as well as the chamber music-like discourse of a *concerto grosso*. Part of the focus of my research was to devise a means of combining these two apparent opposites.

In the early 1990s I received a commission from a semi-professional Swiss orchestra to compose a cello concerto (see score 13 in Appendix 3). My most ambitious composition project to date, this proved a protracted learning process, spanning ten years between the initial run-through with the Swiss orchestra and publication in 2000 by Hofmeister Musikverlag, Leipzig. Whilst the form of my *Cello Concerto* was largely informed by historical models such as *Liedform* and rondo form, I resolved that my next *concertante* work would use a conciser, more spontaneous form, following the natural unfolding of the musical material, with a greater emphasis on dramatic and interactive dialogue between soloist and orchestra.

I had long hoped for an opportunity to write a piano concerto on a similar or larger scale to the *Cello Concerto*. Part of the reason for embarking upon this research project was to get closer to realising this goal. When the opportunity arose to write for BCMG and the

prominent pianist, Huw Watkins, I decided my principal work would be in the chamber concerto genre. The new work would address some of the compositional aspects which had pre-occupied me whilst writing the *Cello Concerto* and take them to a new level.

In *Incantations*, I aimed for a more astringent, cogent musical argument. Traditional elements of virtuosic writing, inherited from the 19th century concertos, were to co-exist with a leaner, more flexible, chamber music oriented type of exchange between the instruments. Whilst the unfolding of the musical argument in the earlier Cello Concerto had been delayed by protracted orchestral *tuttis* introducing the material before being taken up by the soloist, the interaction and cross-referencing between soloist and ensemble in *Incantations* was to be more spontaneous and robust.

Reasons for selecting piano as *concertante* instrument

My knowledge of contemporary concerto writing for soloist and smaller ensemble was largely based upon first-hand experience playing in contemporary music ensembles such as Ensemble Modern and MusikFabrik NRW as well as with the Philharmonia Orchestra and the Munich Chamber Orchestra. The crucial elements which constitute an effective concerto, so I had learned from experience, were imaginative use of the solo instrument, a lively sense of dialogue between soloist and ensemble and stark contrasts of mood and texture. My own instrument, the cello, with its broad range and variety of expressive timbres, renders it a versatile instrument *par excellence*; as concerto instrument, however, it can struggle to balance with a larger ensemble.⁵ The piano's distinctive timbre, by contrast, prevails over almost any ensemble (a situation which cellists can only dream of). Its wealth of textures, from the single-line to 10-part chords, as well as an unlimited capacity for fulfilling the widest variety of roles within an instrumental ensemble prompted the choice of the piano as solo instrument for the projected Concerto da Camera.

⁵ Concertos by composers such as D'Albert, Martinu, Ibert and Tovey testify to this.

Not a pianist by training, I was concerned whether my own lack of advanced piano technique might be a hindrance to writing idiomatically for the instrument. Hindemith's response sprang to mind recalling a similar reservation expressed by the non-string playing Stravinsky before commencing his own violin concerto. "An advantage", replied Hindemith, as this "would give rise to ideas [...] not suggested by the familiar movement of the fingers" (Stravinsky, 1936, p. 168). The piano, I speculated, an instrument less entwined with my own musical world, would pose the greater compositional challenge within a *concertante* work.

Dual aspect of composer/performer

The fact of being a professional cellist has influenced both my compositions involving cello and, by extension, my attitudes to instrumental composition in general. Since earliest attempts at writing music, I have been conscious of deploying the cello in widely differing roles. Composer/instrumentalists may have additional insights into coupling the technical potential of the instrument with its power of expression and may be more inclined to stretch their instrument and its technique. The composer/instrumentalist may be well placed instinctively to know which techniques, figurations, even individual notes (based upon the acoustics of the respective instrument) can advantageously be used in a work to help bring it to life. These instrumental considerations were especially relevant while writing the two settings for cello and speaking voice, *Der Werwolf* and *Le Loup-garou*.

Etymology of the word *concertare*

The word *concertare* is derived both from the Latin noun *certamen*, meaning a competition or a fight, as well as from the verb *conserere*, signifying to unify or to join. These contradictory associations within the same word are suggestive of alternating stances of independence and cooperation, opposition and unity. The ambiguous etymology of the word *concerto* offered a useful parallel for the multifarious approaches to *concertante* writing I wished to explore.

A non-musical vision of *concertante* writing

Whilst on tour in Umbria, during the early months of research for this project, I found myself swimming in a mountain lake, perched on the *Monte de Muro* near Umbertide. Quite unexpectedly I had a fleeting vision of how a *concertante* solo part might be integrated within a score. The sun lay low on the horizon as I swam towards the edge of the mountain lake, which was bordered by a craggy outcrop of vertical limestone rock, strata of varying thickness and depth etched into its surface. Sunbeams were reflected by the ripples I created on the water's surface and projected in bright, horizontal shafts of light onto the rough limestone surface. According to the changing patterns in the ripples, the reflections of the sunlight were concentrated higher or lower onto the rock-surface, refracted over parts of it, or over the entire rock-surface. The frequency and amplitude of the ripples were determined by my movements in the water. The result was a dazzling, continually changing, stroboscopic flux of bright patterns of light on the grey limestone rock-surface. This fleeting, transient moment of nature struck me as offering a parallel for the role which a *concertante* piano part might play within a composition. The rays of the sun (piano) were projected with greater or lesser intensity, higher or lower (varying types of piano writing, and in different registers) onto the rock-surface (the score with just the ensemble instruments) through subtly changing configurations of the ripples (versatile compositional technique) to create a play of light and shade (a diverse score). Similarly metamorphosing piano writing within an ensemble work was an objective I set out to achieve. The wide spacing of the reflections on the limestone hinted at the enormous 7-octave span of the piano and the pristine clarity of the bright, reflected sun-rays on the gnarled and weather-beaten rock surface hinted at the unique articulation which only the piano can achieve against the standard orchestral instruments.

Precedents for concertos for reduced forces

During the 19th century there was a tradition for transcribing piano concertos for reduced forces. Johann Nepomuk Hummel arranged Mozart concertos for piano and string quartet; Carl Czerny and Franz Lachner transcribed several of Beethoven's piano

concertos; Chopin arranged his own first concerto for piano and string quartet. Given the possibility of representing a full orchestra by reduced forces, I concluded conversely that it should be possible to write for smaller forces and aspire to the expressive breadth of full orchestra. *Rhapsodie Macabre* was initially intended as a miniature piano concerto with string quartet; for *Incantations* I had in mind the full impact and force of a symphony orchestra, even with an eight-member ensemble *à disposition*.

Questions of style

Musical styles have never been so diverse as at present. The reactions to the *lingua franca* of serialism of the 60s have long since diversified and pluralism holds sway. As composer, and indeed as instrumentalist, I wish to cover a wide expressive range in my works, reflecting the contours and vagaries of life itself. In my recent work, I have increasingly allowed the musical material itself (and its treatment) to define the style of a composition, rather than working to a pre-conceived notion of how the music should sound. On a subconscious level, the musicians one writes for may also affect the nature of the composition, be it for a New Music ensemble, for colleagues in orchestras, for a soloist, with whose style one is familiar, or for oneself.

Two case studies from the traditional literature

I looked at two historical concertos representing opposite poles in *concertante* writing. Mozart's *Piano Concerto in D-minor, K.466* (1785) epitomizes the integrated concerto. Soloist and ensemble are treated as equals; the soloist variously takes the lead or supports other solo instrumentalists (or instrumental groups) within the orchestra. The musical argument is carried as much by the orchestra as by the soloist and there is an entirely satisfying symbiosis of the two protagonists. Each of the three movements displays judicious use of the wood-winds, who, at times, assume *concertante* status themselves. In Mozart's piano concertos the soloist and orchestra are so perfectly

integrated, as George Benjamin has pointed out,⁶ that the orchestra is treated as an extension of the keyboard. Mozart creates a meta-piano, as if encompassing the entire ensemble with which it plays (see Appendix 1, extract from *Concerto D-minor, K 466*, bars 88-90). The piano writing displays a sense of spontaneity and extemporisation, and is entwined within a varied and coloured web of orchestration. In *Incantations* I wished to emulate this approach, treating soloist and ensemble as equals.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is Moritz Moszkowski's *Piano Concerto no. 2 in E major*, op. 59 (1897) in four movements, representing the archetypal, late-19th century pianist's concerto, designed to showcase the brilliance of the composer/performers' own piano technique. The work is strikingly undemanding for the orchestra, which is confined almost exclusively to an accompanying role. The work demonstrates how well-suited the piano is to repeated figuration, generated no doubt by familiar, well-rehearsed hand-patterns of the composer (see Ex: 1.1).



Ex. 1.1: M. Moszkowski, *Piano Concerto No. 2, E-major op. 59*, i, bars 34-35, characteristic figurations

Partly as a negative reaction against this one-sided type of concerto, my initial intention was to play down the virtuosic approach to writing for piano. Whilst working on *Incantations*, however, technical bravado found its way increasingly into the score. The piano part needed defining by a kind of virtuosic writing to set it apart from the ensemble writing, but, so it was hoped, without resorting to vacuous bravado for its own sake. In

⁶ Program booklet for his performance of Mozart Piano Concerto A major, K 488, Cambridge University Chamber Orchestra Concert, June 1982

Incantations I aimed for a kind of translucent writing, often playing on brittle, glockenspiel-like piano sonorities which could combine with demanding ensemble writing. Devising effective, characteristic piano figurations, free of cliché, yet lying within the hand and of sufficient strength to prevail against an ensemble was one of the objectives in devising a convincing solo part for the pianist from both a musical and a technical point of view.

One is tempted to see the role of the soloist in *concertante* works, possibly *Incantations* among them, as a metaphor for various life situations.⁷ Just as a person may adapt behaviour with regard to mood and circumstances, so too should the soloist be flexible, according to the changing musical demands. To achieve a meaningful co-existence with an ensemble, the soloist must know when to grasp the initiative, when to remain deferential and follow his/her colleagues. During my work on *Incantations*, an extended definition of virtuosity crystallised in my mind – that is, the awareness and ability to shift seamlessly between functions of leading and accompanying. Whilst maintaining instrumental prowess, the soloist preserves at the same time those chamber music sensibilities required for a varied interaction with the collaborating ensemble.

Conclusion

Among my investigations were several contemporary works for piano and ensemble, to be discussed later. Having decided upon the nature of the principal work I set about working on eleven prospective compositions to address the challenges of writing for piano and ensemble. The pieces were to concentrate on different parameters - form/harmony, *concertante* writing and advanced techniques - to be considered from both traditional and contemporary stand-points, so devising a more innovative

⁷ One must guard against taking this parallel too far. Rostropovich referred to the role of the soloist in Lutoslawski's *Cello Concerto* as a symbol of the solitary artist in a totalitarian regime, a point of view rigorously denied by the composer as "a vulgar interpretation" (Kaczynski, 1984, p. 64). Lutoslawski also admitted the concerto "was created under the strong impression of Rostropovich's personality as a performer", adding "certain life situations can be reflected in the principles of structure and musical form." (quoted in Wilson, 2007, pp 327-328)

approach to questions of *concertante* writing, which could have repercussions on all aspects of instrumental composition.

Chapter 2: Aspects of Form and Harmony

This chapter examines my approach to form and harmony with reference to the following supporting works from my portfolio:

- *Chinese Whispers*, String Quartet no. 1 (2011)
- *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*, String Quartet no. 2 (2013)
- *Sonata Ebraica* for Viola and Piano (2014)
- *Alcatraz*, String Quartet no. 3 (2015)

The intention is to show a progression, both formally and harmonically, mainly through examination of the Viola Sonata and the three string quartets, from the more traditional, three movement *Chinese Whispers* (2010) to the more advanced and exploratory approach of the 2nd and 3rd string quartets. The parameters of form and harmony will be examined separately.

I took a long time to discover the subtle balance between conscious decision-making and musical intuition in creating music. One of the challenges for the quartets was to determine to what extent a pre-conceived musical form might specify the course of the work and to what extent the spontaneous working out of the musical material be allowed to determine how the music unfolded. Whilst *Chinese Whispers* (Quartet no. 1) and the *Sonata Ebraica* (Viola Sonata) make use of standard forms, the avowed intention for *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* and *Alcatraz* (Quartets no. 2 and 3) was to venture away from the traditional virtues of exposition, development and recapitulation. I discovered that a musical form generated by literary or extra-musical ideas may still contain elements of traditional form, even if unintentionally. Those fundamental principles of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis (the basis of Sonata form) as espoused in Hegelian logic (Charles Rosen, 2010, p. 62) may be just as relevant in unorthodox musical forms as in standard forms. Experience shows that a clear formal structure (be it traditional or extemporary) can

facilitate the approach to a new work for musicians and listeners alike. For *Alcatraz*, *Skylla and Charybdis* and *Incantations*, details of structure, proportion, harmonic language were worked out before commencing, though a flexibility of approach remained within the pre-ordained framework.

Writing about form in the chapter “Periform” in *Orientations* (Boulez, 1981, p. 102), Boulez asks, “is it a gesture, an accident? [...] a chance encounter, a discipline? [...] an act of the will?”. Admittedly Boulez inherited a somewhat old-fashioned and academic view of form from his training at the Paris Conservatoire. Such rhetorical questions suggest a subliminal creative force at work in composition which addresses architectural considerations in an indirect way. Britten speaks of having a “very clever subconscious”⁸ where connections between the motivic material are present and palpable, but not knowingly constructed. Celibidache’s dictum, ‘Musik entsteht, es wird nicht gemacht’ (music comes into being by itself, it is not made to happen)⁹ also suggests the impact of the subconscious level on all aspects of music-making.

Form depends upon the recurrence and recognition of distinctive material. In the chapter, “A letter to Boulez” in *Finding the Key* (Goehr, 1998, p. 5), Goehr remarks that personal style is “necessarily a product of repetition”, presumably implying a question of formal coherence. He suggests that the removal of repetition (a fundamental aspect of the serialism of late Webern) was “a negative style precept”, which eliminates sensuous, dramatic or expressive elements. Ligeti’s *Cello Concerto* (1966) an example of a work from the 60’s, rigorously eschews traditional formal elements based on the repetition of material. Attitudes have changed, and some composers may be more inclined to acknowledge and embrace the mantle of tradition. There is a deep-lying human satisfaction in re-visiting something one recognises, be it a place, a view, a sound, and

⁸ Televised interview with Canadian Broadcasting Corporation 1968

⁹ Quoted from the author’s notes, written during Celibidache’s orchestral rehearsals with Schleswig-Holstein Festival Orchestra, Salzau, August 1987

form must rely for some of its impact on the element of recurrence or repetition. This need not be within the strictures of traditional form. As Goehr has also written, it is generally accepted that the composer's quest for an individual style will involve an "earnest, constantly renewed exploration of musical roots"¹⁰.

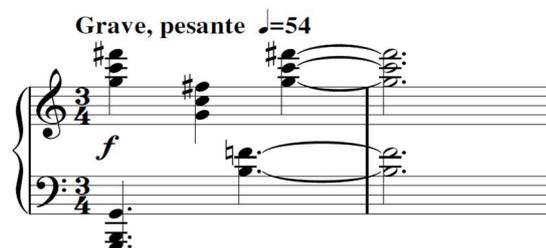
Compound chords

Stravinsky's famous chord, scored for tuba, trombones and trumpets at figure 42 in the score of *Symphonies of Winds* superimposes two variously spaced common chords: a widely spaced diminished triad on d and a close-set triad on g, together achieving a rich, highly coloured expression from otherwise common triads (see Ex. 2.1). Functionally, it can be defined as a dominant chord of C major with added flattened ninth, though the chord is not used in the context of a "functioning" harmony.



Ex. 2.1: I. Stravinsky, *Symphonies of Winds*, brass chord at Figure 42

In the opening piano chords of *Sonata Ebraica* the aim was to create a monumental, arresting effect by combining chords, their notes drawn from a pentachord with "g" as common tone. In common with the Stravinsky chord, these chords are treated as 'sonic objects' and are devoid of any contextual function (see Ex.2.2).



Ex. 2.2: *Sonata Ebraica*, bars 1-2, superimposition of triadic chords

¹⁰ Words from Alexander Goehr's University website, www.mus.cam.ac.uk/directory/alexander-goehr

In the 2nd movement there are bitonal passages, lending a sense of alienation to the Yiddish folk song, “Ofyn Pripetshik” (“At the Hearth”) through the superimposition of a harmonically “surreal” figuration in the piano, drawn from the opening of the movement.

(Adagio, piangendo, serio $\text{♩}=46$)

50

IV
p con sentimento e con
 sonore scuro e cupo

lontano

Ex. 2.3: *Sonata Ebraica*, ii, bars 50-54, bitonal elements

The movement closes with a further *Verfremdung* of the opening line of the folk song, set in high artificial harmonics in b minor set against a low-lying chord of diminished and perfect fifths in the piano (see Ex. 2.4).

70

p

Ex. 2.4: *Sonata Ebraica*, ii, bars 70-74, “Verfremdung” of the folk song

In the final movement of the sonata the polytonality is taken yet further, combining three different layers; piano left hand, right hand and viola each play diatonically recognisable, yet harmonically unrelated material (Ex. 2.4).

Allegro vivo $\text{♩}=118$

199

Ex. 2.5: *Sonata Ebraica*, iii, bars 199-200, polytonality

The piano quartet *Skylla and Charybdis* explores a more extended bitonality, here between piano and the three strings. In Ex 2.5 the strings play *bariolage* passages around a D-minor triad, whilst the piano plays a chordal passage in E-major, creating a distinctive harmonic effect (see Ex. 2.6).

The image shows a musical score for three systems. The top system is for the piano, starting at bar 160. It features a treble clef with a 3/4 time signature and a bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Allegro demonico' with a quarter note equal to 124. The piano part is marked 'p' and consists of a series of chords in E major. The middle system is for the strings, also starting at bar 160. It features a treble clef with a 3/4 time signature and a bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Allegro demonico' with a quarter note equal to 124. The string part is marked 'p' and consists of a series of chords in D minor. The bottom system is for the piano, starting at bar 161. It features a treble clef with a 3/4 time signature and a bass clef with a 3/4 time signature. The piano part is marked 'p' and consists of a series of chords in E major. The string part is marked 'p' and consists of a series of chords in D minor.

Ex. 2.6: *Skylla and Charybdis*, bars 160-162, bitonality

The bitonal device is used to heighten the tension as the climax of the section is reached. In a later passage, the piano left hand and cello play a rising and falling pentatonic passage on 'black' notes, whilst the piano right hand and upper strings play a parallel, diatonic passage on 'white' notes (see Ex. 2.7).

The image shows a musical score for three systems. The top system is for the piano, starting at bar 177. It features a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature and a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The piano part is marked 'sfz' and consists of a rising and falling pentatonic passage on 'black' notes. The string part is marked 'p' and consists of a parallel, diatonic passage on 'white' notes. The middle system is for the piano, starting at bar 178. It features a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature and a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The piano part is marked 'p' and consists of a rising and falling pentatonic passage on 'black' notes. The string part is marked 'f' and consists of a parallel, diatonic passage on 'white' notes. The bottom system is for the piano, starting at bar 179. It features a treble clef with a 4/4 time signature and a bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The piano part is marked 'sfz' and consists of a rising and falling pentatonic passage on 'black' notes. The string part is marked 'f' and consists of a parallel, diatonic passage on 'white' notes.

Ex. 2.7: *Skylla and Charybdis*, bars 177-178, passage on 'black' and 'white' notes

Aspects of form

Sonata Ebraica

The idea behind *Sonata Ebraica* was to write an instrumental Sonata incorporating technically challenging musical material for both instruments within a clear musical form. Initially I hesitated to use the word “Sonata” in the title, considering the overwhelming weight of tradition behind it. During the 20th century, however, many composers adopted the word for their own purposes, for example, Stravinsky’s *Piano Sonata* (1924), which employs the word in the original sense of sounding, unrestricted by expectations of a pre-meditated form. Ligeti’s *Sonata* for unaccompanied viola (1994) consists of a series of inventions, each with differing micro-forms and with various degrees of virtuosity, adding up to a composite work of almost arbitrary design with regard to convention.

The form of the first movement of *Sonata Ebraica* was nominally pre-conceived as a sonata structure, though the proportions of the sections were determined by the strength of accumulated musical tension as the movement unfolded. This was continually assessed during the compositional process. Despite the clearly demarcated sections, there is a sense of developing variation within the three respective sections, calling to mind Schoenberg’s ideal of “developing variation” as espoused in his discussion of Brahms’ string quartet in c minor op 51/1 in the essay “Brahms the Progressive” (Schoenberg, ed. Newlin, 1950, p. 73 ff). The traditional elements of the sonata (referring to a thematic/motivic interpretation of Sonata) in the first movement, especially regarding the contrast between first and second subjects, are set against a more individual take on the form, which includes the drastic shortening of the recapitulation and further development of the first subject within the coda.

Here is a tabular summary of the first movement of *Sonata Ebraica* (modified Sonata form)

Bars	Observations
1-29 Introduction	Bell-like chords in piano, quasi-cadenza in viola
30-86 1 st subject	Insistent, repeated-note motive in the viola on low f-sharp, accompanied by off-beat chords in the piano. Motive rises through viola registers to high “a” octaves (bar 66)
87-121 2 nd subject	Piano leads, viola amplifies the texture with <i>pizzicati</i> and double-stopped harmonics
121-153 development	Unrelated 4-bar theme with variants, increasingly ornamented and elaborately scored, culminating in a <i>quasi-cadenza</i> , with reference to slow introduction
154-202 shortened recapitulation	1 st subject re-appears a minor third higher in pitch, adding brilliance to the viola sound. 2 nd subject compromised. Sense of continuous development of the main material
206-223 coda	Further transformation of the 1 st subject (repeated-note motive), leading first to octave a’s in bar 219 (cf. bar 64), then on to high f-sharp before plummeting back down to the depths of the C-string

***Chinese Whispers*, String Quartet no. 1**

This work employs a largely pentatonic harmonic language and a clear formal pattern. The intention was to combine the static nature of Chinese court music (which by nature eschews thematic development) with contrapuntal devices and textural aspects of Western art-music. There are passages of imitation and of *fugato* throughout the first movement, which both opens and closes with a stylized “chiming bell”, as if calling the listener to attention for an imaginary ritual, achieved by a mixture of tremolo glissandi,

sustained chords of fifths and accelerating and decelerating open-string *pizzicati* in the cello.

Ex. 2.8: *Chinese Whispers*, i, bar 1, bell-like opening

When this sonority re-appears at the end of the movement, it has a retrospective, recapitulatory feel. A structural element is the use of a gradually changing motive as it is passed from one instrument to another. This idea stems from the children’s game “Chinese whispers”, in which a phrase is whispered from one person to the next, undergoing subtle transformations as it passes around (see Ex. 2.9). This principle of continuous development of the motive was later used in conjunction with the “dies irae” theme in *Incantations*.

Ex. 2.9: *Chinese Whispers*, iii, bars 47-53, transformation of themes

***Prophetiae Sibyllarum*, String Quartet no. 2**

The work opens with two aphoristic, three-chord motives (Ex. 2.10).

Moderato e risoluto ♩ = 108

Ex. 2.10: *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*, i, bars 1-3, thematic derivation from Lassus motet

The violin I part is thematically derived from the top line of the opening bars of Lassus' strikingly chromatic motet of the same name (see Ex. 2.11), which forms the 3rd movement of this string quartet.

Adagio ♩ = 44

p sotto voce sempre, quasi senza vibrato, ma con espressione

Ex. 2.11: *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*, iii, transcription from: string quartet of motet by Lassus

In the first movement, the three-chord motive acts as a demarcation point, signifying changes of musical direction. In place of first and second subjects there are episodes; one features a vigorous exchange of antiphonal chords between violins and lower strings (bar 25 ff); the next, directly succeeding, uses an angular figure in octaves, first in violins I and II (bar 38 ff), later on in viola and cello (bar 89 ff), against a ostinato syncopated rhythm; a further episode features interlocking, double-stopped sixths, cascading down the instruments from violin 1 to cello (bar 65 ff). Cohesion and formal unity are achieved through the recurrence of the aphoristic Lassus three-chord motive, as well as through cross-referencing between the episodes.

***Alcatraz*, String Quartet no. 3 and narrative form**

Alcatraz deploys a kind of narrative form. I had already made steps in this direction in the five-movement structure of *Rhapsodie Macabre*, but here was a more conscious attempt

to generate a form though an imaginary, pre-conceived, narrative plot. Charles Rosen writes of the finale of Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto* as portraying "a series of contrasting sentiments that amounts to a small narrative" (Charles Rosen, 2010, p. 1). Composer Helmuth Oehring has spoken of "a kind of melodramatic docu-drama" in which the dramatic form is predominantly governed by the perception of an imaginary drama (quoted from notes made by the author at a pre-concert talk given by the composer to his work *Cayabyab*). The Lisztian ideal of "psychological music" springs to mind as an alternative to the formerly accepted (now considered spurious) "pure music" ideals of the Brahms/Schumann/Joachim school, for whom the musical material is essayed in its own terms. My concept of narrative form as opposed to traditional form was for a more spontaneous, dramatic type of musical argument propelled by the musical material in conjunction with an imagined scenario, which must not necessarily be followed to the letter. David Shields has written "Plot, like an erected scaffolding, is torn down, and what stands in its place is the thing itself."¹¹ My hope was that narrative form had the potential to extend the imagination. The *Alcatraz* quartet, under the terms of the commission from the Joachim Kaske Foundation, was to be in separate movements and about 20 minutes in duration. I decided to submit to the vivid impressions of the island Alcatraz¹² gathered during a recent visit there. The work was to find its shape and structure during its composition. In George Benjamin's words, "the material... [was to] construct its destiny in front of [one's] eyes".¹³

For the Adagio introduction of the first movement I had in mind a kind of tone-poem describing the remote and exposed island, inhabited through the ages by swarms of chattering, twittering sea-birds. Almost at once, a tiny rhythmic cell separates in the opening bars (Ex 2.12).

¹¹ Quoted from David Shields, *Reality Hunger*, a Manifesto, Knopf, Inc. 2010

¹² I visited the bay of San Francisco and Alcatraz in April 2013)

¹³ Quoted from program notes to a Munich performance of *Dream of the Song*, 2015.

(Adagio $\text{♩}=58$)
slap strings

Ex. 2.12: *Alcatraz*, i, bar 2 (vn I), rhythmic cell

This rhythmic cell appears in different contexts tessituras and timbres throughout the movement, for instance in the cello (Ex. 2.13) and in violin II (Ex. 2.14)

(Adagio $\text{♩}=58$)

Ex. 2.13: *Alcatraz*, i, bar 29, rhythmic cell in cello

(Adagio $\text{♩}=58$)

Ex. 2.14: *Alcatraz*, i, bars 40-41, rhythmic cell in violin II

The deployment of both unifying and contrasting material can cause a type of musical tension otherwise associated with conventional formal principles. Working with non-predetermined forms required an especially fine balance between the two apparently contradictory *modi operandi* of speculation and instinct. The progress of the piece required constant re-assessment to ensure a logical working-out of the material.

Henze's *Ode to the West Wind* for Cello and Orchestra can be understood as a metaphor for the synonymous poem by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1819), though non-dependent (according to the composer) upon the poem for its justification as a concert work. The quartet *Alcatraz* was generated by the imagination of certain scenarios, yet was intended as a concert piece, without reliance upon an outside programme for its own musical coherence.

The many sounds and impressions drawn from the Alcatraz, which had variously been a bird sanctuary, sacred island for the indigenous population, civil war strong-hold, fortified prison and, most recently, national park, suggested a wide range of different compositional approaches. Historical aspects of the island which gave rise to the material and its treatment are:

- The ubiquitous twittering of birds
- The clanking of locks on prisoners' cells
- The despair and anguish of the prisoners (see Ex. 2.15), exacerbated by the proximity of the island to the mainland, the everyday sounds of which would waft over the stretch of water to reach them.

Ex. 2.15: *Alcatraz*, i, bars 43-47, “anguish” motive

At the height of the first movement, the opening *leitmotiv* from the introductory Adagio recurs (see Ex. 2.16) emphasizing the thematic unity between the two sections of the movement.

(Moderato e risoluto)

The image shows a musical score for four staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass). The tempo is marked '(Moderato e risoluto)'. The score is divided into two systems. The first system is in 4/4 time and features a complex rhythmic pattern of sixteenth notes and rests, with some notes beamed in groups of six (marked '6') and triplets (marked '3'). The second system is in 3/4 time and continues the rhythmic pattern, also featuring groups of six and triplets. The notation includes various accidentals and articulation marks.

Ex. 2.16: *Alcatraz*, i, bars 183-184, combination of 1st mvt figuration with rhythmic cell

The second movement, “Solitary”, in lieu of a scherzo, is faster, more vigorous and uncompromising in its expression, using minor 2nds, giant leaps, pounding repetitions of double stops, and, in a *quasi* trio-section, a two-part twelve-note melody, signifies hallucinations from a past life. The music from the opening recurs, albeit in transformed, truncated manner, ending the movement in an almost vertiginous coda, ascending off the very limits of the four instruments before sinking down to the depths of the cello and viola (bar 76 ff).

Harmonic considerations

Chinese Whispers, Quartet no 1, makes frequent use of the pentatonic scale, a frequent device in Chinese music, in common with folk music from other countries. This was partly in deference to the quartet’s dedicatees, who wished for a work to perform with student colleagues from the Shanghai Conservatoire. The five notes of the pentatonic scale sound harmoniously with each other, enabling a certain contrapuntal freedom of counterpoint. Frequent use is made of canonic and imitative devices, such as the one at the end of the first movement (see Ex. 2.17).



Ex. 2.17: *Chinese Whispers*, i, bars 114-116, imitative pentatonic device

In the 2nd movement, played *pizzicato* almost throughout, false relations and parallel scales of sixths and octaves lend a particular colour to the harmony (see Ex. 2.18).

(Allegro ♩=92)



Ex. 2.18: *Chinese Whispers*, ii, bars 7-8, parallel sixths and octaves

The use of parallel intervals becomes a prominent feature, for instance in bar 63 ff, where parallel fifths in violins are set against parallel fourths in viola and cello.

In bars 61-64 in *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* fifths are the predominant interval in the violins, throwing into relief the chromatic passage-work in the other two instruments. Later in the movement, at bars 65 and 83, the predominant use of 6ths creates a calmer, more static feel. The contrast between different interval types is further pursued in the principal work, *Incantations*, as will be seen later, albeit within a more chromatic harmonic language.

The final 4th movement of *Prophetiae Sibyllarum* inhabits a more diatonic world than the 1st and 2nd movements. Vestiges of the chromaticism of Lassus's motet may be found in mirrored passages such as at bar 97. The Lassus motive is heard initially in fragmented and sparsely harmonised form (bar 56 ff). From bar 177, by way of *dénouement*, the final two lines of the Lassus motet are re-spaced in the three upper strings and accompanied by the characteristic, motoric 9/8 quavers in the in cello part, the double-stopped chords,

using open strings for resonance, whilst supporting the harmonies of Lassus' motet with double-stopped chords (see Ex. 2.19).

(Vivace ♩ = 120)

The image shows a musical score for four staves. The top staff is Violin 1, the second is Violin 2, the third is Viola, and the bottom is Cello/Double Bass. The score is in 6/8 time and marked 'Vivace' with a tempo of ♩ = 120. The dynamics are 'ff sempre' for the upper three staves and 'ff sempre, tutta forza' for the bottom staff. The music features a combination of Lassus motet with a quaver motive. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings (e.g., '2' for double stops).

Ex. 2.19: *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*, i, bars 177-181, combination of Lassus motet with quaver motive
Alcatraz uses a more uncompromising musical language than is to be found in *Prophetiae Sibyllarum*. Similar types of interval are used, for instance, in the first movement, bar 8, where variously oscillating 7ths in the upper strings and diminished fifth in the cello form a kind of static wave. The *Höhepunkt* of the movement is at bar 183, the high-point of the movement, where the richness of the cello's lower strings is combined with a resonant A major 7th chord in violin 1, against the pounding *Leitmotiv* rhythm in diminished fifths in the inner parts (see previous Ex. 2.16).

The 2nd movement begins by exploiting the dissonance of intervals such as the major/minor 2nd (See Ex. 2.20)

Agitato ma non troppo allegro (Tempo I)

Ex. 2.20: *Alcatraz*, ii, bar 1, use of major/minor 2nds

In the middle section from bar 29 a 12-note row provides a contrapuntal contrast to the vertically aligned 2nds and 9ths. In a protracted crescendo passage between bars 45 and 59 a motive based on the interval of the 5th, in constant upwards transposition, is used to increase the tension. In the passage quoted in Ex. 2.21 the intervals are mirrored between two violin parts.

(Agitato ma non troppo allegro)

Ex. 2.21: *Alcatraz*, ii, bars 49-50, mirrored intervals

The music evaporates with the repeated-note figure from earlier in the movement. The conductor Celibidache claimed that the ultimate ideal for performers was the skill to perceive “beginning and end [of a movement] as simultaneous events” (“Anfang und Ende als gleichzeitige Erscheinungen”).¹⁴ I too strive to create a unified work, unfolding over a span of time, in which the individual events emerge, but can be perceived as cohering, creating the impression of an unified structure.

¹⁴ From notes taken by the author during orchestral rehearsals, Schleswig-Holstein, 1988

Modal planes (as distinct from “tonal” planes in the functional sense) can be a unifying force, contributing to a sense of a fulfilled journey in time over the course of a piece. The strong fifths on a and e, heard at the opening of *Skylla and Charybdis* provide a subconscious point of tonal reference on the perfect fifth between the notes “A” and “E” (see Ex. 2.22).

(Adagio lugubre ♩ = 50)

(Adagio lugubre ♩ = 50)

Ex. 2.22: *Skylla und Charybdis*, bars 2-3, tonal centre of “A”

The tonal centre is present at the beginning of the *Allegro demonico* section (Ex. 2.23),

Allegro demonico ♩ = 124

Allegro demonico ♩ = 124

Ex.2.23: *Skylla and Charybdis*, bar 89, persisting tonal centre of “A”

as well as in the final *Vivace* section, where the tonal centre remains “A” (see Ex. 2.24).

Ex. 2.24: *Skylia and Charybdis*, bars 277-280, tonal centre of “A”

The very last two chords of the piece swing from a d#-weighted fifth triad onto an unabashed, crashing A-minor triad, the same notes as the opening fifths motive (Ex. 2.22), bringing the piece full circle (see Ex. 2.25).

Ex. 2.25: *Skylia and Charybdis*, bars 411-413, final A minor triads

Conclusion

Experience shows that the musical material, if allowed to unfold in its own terms, will determine the form, even if this is a protracted process. On occasions it was not until participation in the performance of a new composition that I could ascertain whether a formal structure hung together convincingly. *Rhapsodie Macabre* had to be re-written in places before reaching a satisfactory standard. For the future I'd wish that the composition process be more in the mind rather than dependent upon hearing the aggregate sounds, be they on piano or in trying out a work. Notwithstanding, the connection to the physical sounds, with the sensation of creating and experiencing the combinations of sounds and

their resonance on the instrument, will always have their advantages. Where composers of the 18th and 19th centuries were able to imagine their creations in their inner ear, based on a knowledge of the respective tonal language of the day, the present-day composer will necessarily have to search harder for his material, without the support of an inherent musical language as point of reference.¹⁵ In this regard, I too seek a balance between trusting the inner ear to guide one's long-term progress within a piece and controlling the immediate details in contact with an instrument.

In future I would wish to break the mould of writing in separate movements. Through-composed works such as *Pas de Quatre* (Oboe Quartet) and *Skylla and Charybdis* (Piano Quintet) point in this direction. The challenge remains to achieve formal interest and cohesion both in a through-composed work as well as in a work of separate movements. A further aim will be to enlarge my perception of harmony beyond the phenomenon of tonal centres (as opposed to tonality). Searching for new combinations of intervals, melodic lines, sounds as well as listening to and sensing their effect upon oneself, colleagues, listeners, judging how they differ on different instruments and in different registers continue to be the eternal and inexhaustible preoccupations.

Having examined various approaches to questions of harmonic vocabulary and formal considerations, drawing upon conventional and newer compositional procedures, I now turn to questions of combining soloist and ensemble. My investigations showed that the *concertante* style goes well beyond matters of instrumentation and is a fundamental part of instrumental composition.

¹⁵ Ravel reportedly claimed a composer could not invent new chords without searching for them on the piano

Chapter 3: Aspects of *concertante* writing

Introduction

This chapter discusses the *concertante* element, firstly in works drawn from the standard and contemporary repertoire, then in my supporting works in preparation for my principal work, *Incantations* for piano and ensemble. The preparatory works referred to in this chapter are:

- *Rhapsodie Macabre*, Piano Quintet (2011)
- *Skylla and Charybdis*, Piano Quartet (2014)
- *Pas de Quatre*, Oboe Quartet (2012)
- *Concerto da Camera* for Cello and Ensemble (2012)

Generalities

As mentioned in chapter 1, the Italian word *concertare*, of which *concertante* is the present participle, is an *amphilogia* (Greek for word with a double meaning). Embedded within the word are the apparently contradictory meanings 'to compete' and 'to reconcile'. *Concertante* works, by their very nature, thrive from the reconciliation of opposites. The dual aspect of the soloist competing with, yet simultaneously cooperating with the ensemble is the most obvious manifestation of this dichotomy. Other opposites include speculation (exposition) against improvisation (cadenza), strict form against rhapsody, virtuosity against simplicity, the conventional against the innovative. The very essence of *concertante* writing lies in the confrontation of opposites.

From the perspective of an active instrumentalist, the *concertante* element applies to a wide range of repertoire beyond the standard concerto. The contemporary instrumentalist may be called upon to switch from ensemble member to soloist according to the demands of the repertoire. In contemporary chamber music, the term *concertante* could be also be applied to instances where one instrument or several instruments display solo

characteristics normally associated with the concerto. The rise of a *concertante* style in chamber music over the centuries runs parallel with the emancipation of the ensemble player to soloist. Whilst in Haydn's quartets op. 1 the role of the cellist is restricted to purveyor of the bass line, in the quartets of op. 33 the cellist is called upon to be a more versatile, inter-active member of the ensemble. In Beethoven's middle-period quartets, and in the quartets of Schumann, Mendelssohn and Brahms the cello may be called upon to dominate the texture. By the time of Bartók's 6 String Quartets, as well as works by Janacek, Schoenberg, Berg and Webern, the hierarchy of violin I as leader, violin II and viola as middle parts and cellist as bass part is superseded. I sensed a potential for developing and testing aspects of my own *concertante* style within the field of chamber music, for which I had ample opportunities for trial, rehearsal and performance. Chief among those works written with the *concertante* aspect in mind were two piano chamber music works. These provided practical experience in developing and refining techniques of *concertante* writing.

***Concertante* works from the repertoire**

In the three Prussian string quartets by Mozart, a *concertante* style of writing is particularly in evidence in the cello part as it switches role from bass line to leading part. In Mozart's Piano Quartet K. 478, the pianist variously fulfils the roles of accompanist and of soloist in an imaginary miniature piano concerto. In 20th century works such as Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912), each instrumentalist is featured as soloist as well as members of an ensemble supporting the *Sprechgesang* soloist. The cellist is promoted to an *obligato* role in 'Serenade' (no. 19), whilst in the following 'Barcarolle' the instrument reverts to the role of a strumming guitar-accompanist. Works such as Janáček's *Concertino* and Britten's *Nocturne op. 60* also use an individual type of *concertante* writing, featuring individual instruments as *obligato* soloists in dedicated movements within the respective works. Emmanuel Nunez highlights small groups of soloists in his *Quodlibet* for large chamber ensemble including 6 percussionists while Lachenmann and Kurtág create

concertante units from within their ensembles in *Vor der Erstarrung* (1983) and *Quasi una Fantasia* (1987) respectively.

The proliferation of this kind of *concertante* ensemble music in contemporary circles may be due in part to the fact that the prominent New Music Ensembles, including the London Sinfonietta, BCMG, Ensemble Modern, MusikFabrik NRW, Klangforum Wien and Ensemble Intercontemporain are made up of skilled, dedicated soloists, enabling composers free reign in bridging the traditional divides between solo-, chamber- and ensemble-music. Contemporary concertos such as Adès's *Concerto Conciso* or Ligeti's *Piano Concerto* use reduced ensembles in conjunction with the piano soloist for a more intimate, adaptable chamber music style. Even before these works were written, there had been a renewed tendency towards the piano soloist directing performances of concertos in the manner of expanded chamber music. A precedent was set by Barenboim (Mozart) and Bernstein (Gershwin and Ravel) in the 70s and nowadays concertos by Beethoven and Brahms are sometimes directed from the piano, confirming a more chamber music-like approach to concerto performance.

Mozart example from Piano Concerto in d minor K466 (see Appendix 1)

Mozart integrates piano and orchestra to a highly sophisticated degree, almost to the point of creating a "meta-piano" in which the two elements are inter-twined. Between bars 91 and 114 in the first movement of Mozart's Piano Concerto K 466 is a remarkable *crescendo* passage which embodies many of the qualities of writing for which I sought to find a contemporary equivalent. After beginning with the characteristic syncopated figure in the strings, the piano enters in bar 5 with a 16th note quasi-Alberti figuration in the same register as the violins. Gradually the four-note figure transforms from accompanimental to soloistic as it ascends through the violin tessitura, transcending it in bar 104. The passage culminates in a (temporary) modulation to the dominant at bar 108, at which point the 16th notes are taken over in the left hand with a passage of broken octaves. In bar 112 the 16th notes are taken over by the violas, and the dotted rhythm appears *in stretto* before the final chord in bar 114. This demonstrates the apparently endless

potential of the piano within the orchestral web, from illuminating the middle voices through to dominating the entire texture. As with the lake-side vision, where the beams maintained their clarity at every point in the reflection, so the piano's distinct sonority shines through at every level. I tried to apply this artful and organic transfer of emphasis between soloist and ensemble to *Incantations*.

In his concertos Mozart often favours a transparent style of piano-writing, in which the *Klaviersatz* alone may only sound complete in conjunction with the orchestra. The *Satz* in his piano sonatas, by contrast, tends to be denser, through the need for self-sufficiency. Here were lessons to be learned in avoiding too full a texture in piano and in orchestra for the sake of clarity where the two are combined, though the relative strengths of Mozart's fortepiano and of the modern concert grand-piano must of course be taken into consideration.

Contemporary models of concerto writing

“Ein Konzert ist gerade die Kunstform in der nicht nur die Solisten Ihre Virtuosität und Brillanz zu zeigen haben, sondern auch der Autor“ (Schneider, 1981, p. 232) (“The concerto is the genre in which not just the soloists show off their virtuosity and brilliance, but also the composer”). This in mind, I investigated two contemporary concertos, with emphasis on the varied treatment of the soloist within the concerto framework.

Ligeti's five-movement Piano Concerto (1985-1988) subverts many of the accepted parameters of the genre. Brilliant passage-work and pre-determined roles within the soloist/ensemble relationship have no place in the work. This piano concerto typifies an apparent trend of reducing full-scale concerto writing to chamber proportions. In the opening passage the polyphonic lines of the piano interact with those of individual members of the ensemble creating a sophisticated and intricate web of sound. The simultaneous use of high and low tessituras helps maintain clarity within the conflicting rhythmic patterns. From Ligeti's score could be seen that a hard-edged, well-articulated

piano sound maintains independence against the brittle, percussive, sonorities of the harp, marimba, antique bells, as well as trombone and piccolo.

Lutosławski's *Piano Concerto* (1988) offers a further post-modern reaction to the concerto tradition. His four-movement work is on a grand scale, the respective roles of soloist and orchestra clearly defined. Conventional aspects include broad *cantilenas* in the first movement, recitative-like passages in the third movement and allusion to the Baroque *chaconne* in the fourth movement. Whilst the piano writing is often quite rooted in tradition, at times even reminiscent of Szymanowski and Debussy, the textures of the orchestra embrace aleatoricism and those knotty, cluster-like sonorities familiar from his Cello Concerto. Lutosławski's "limited aleatorism" lends an incandescent quality to the writing. Instructive is his use of disparate harmonic approaches, e.g. the deployment of both tonal and atonal elements, or the juxtaposition or superimposition of triadic or four-part chords. Both techniques I adapted for my work on *Incantations*.

In Lachenmann's *Notturmo* for cello and orchestra, the roles of soloist and orchestra are all but reversed; the soloist assumes the role of accompanist, providing a sparse, almost *pointilliste* background to the more clearly delineated activities within the orchestra. Concertos by Ayres and de Bondt subvert and distort the traditional constellation of soloist and collective resulting in a fragmented, mosaic-like framework, almost like a historical concerto seen through a kaleidoscope with a cracked lens. One is reminded of Shelley's *Ozymandias*, the hardly recognizable sculpture of a torso in the desert, a weather-beaten remnant of ancient times, an *objet trouvé*, fascinating and absorbing, but divorced from the actuality of the time in which it was discovered. Feldman's *Flute and Orchestra*, recently experienced in concert (Musica Viva concert in Munich, with the BRSO and flautist Henrick Wiese), with its dark, static harmonies comes across as mono-chrome, the soloist virtually engulfed by the orchestra and without a clearly defined role. The size of the orchestra appears to be

disproportionately large for the *sotto voce* musical statement as it unfolds like a giant panorama of slowly shifting shades of light. These examples provide somewhat extreme points of reference, none of which proved decisive in my own approach to the *concertante* writing for the purposes of this research project. Elliott Carter's *Dialogues* for Piano and Chamber Orchestra (2004) aspires to a "conversation between soloist and orchestra, each sometimes interrupting the other, or arguing" (Carter, 2004 in an unidentified interview, quoted in the CD inlay booklet), an approach more sympathetic to a flexible deployment of the soloist which I was working towards, though couched within a somewhat austere harmonic language. Two contemporary works for piano and ensemble came closer to my ideal of a highly coloured, metamorphosing, dramatic narrative. *Concerto Conciso* (1998) by Adès, originally written for BCMG, contains a beguiling, eclectic mix of high-tension writing for strings and brass in their upper registers, juxtaposed with almost jazzy writing for saxophone and clarinet. The piano writing is skillfully pitted against that of the ensemble; the piano sometimes appears to act as an *agent provocateur* in relation to the extrovert workings of the ensemble, fuelling discourse (and, at times, dissent) within the ensemble, creating thereby a unique symbiosis between soloist and ensemble. The *Piano Concerto* of Frederic Rzewski (2013) is similarly scored for a smaller, almost classical ensemble (including double winds and strings). He creates a distinctive web of sound using sinewy, almost neo-classical textures; the soloist avoids dominating (perhaps as soloist at the 2013 Proms premiere, he wished to spare himself too much exposure). He wrote of the work "mostly [the piano] is just one of the band [...] it's pretty much there all the time",¹⁶ an understatement, but the work comes across as an intriguing, perhaps at times "tongue in cheek" attempt to side-step both 19th century associations and overt modernism.

Virtuosity and the development of the 'bariolage' piano figuration.

¹⁶ Frederic Rzewski writing in the 2013 program for the late-night Prom premiere

Part of my investigations involved the search for a type of piano figuration which could be adapted to the needs of solo writing and of accompanimental writing in support of other instruments. The *bariolage* string technique originated in the Baroque era and refers to a bowing device of alternating notes on adjacent strings, one of which is usually an open string. The *Praeludio* of the 6th Cello Suite in D major by Bach, BWV 1012 opens with such a device and it is widely used by Italian Baroque composers such as Tartini in the *Devil's Trill* Sonata and Vivaldi in the *Four Seasons*. There are also instances in Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Transferred into piano figuration it consists of chords or octaves in rapid alternation between the two hands, achieving a brilliance in delivery. One could draw a comparison with the pointilliste technique, specifically Georges Seurat (1859-1929), of further enhancing the vividness of compound colours by juxtaposing dots of primary colours rather than mixing the colours before applying them to the canvas. For the pianist, there is a satisfying physicality to the device, in that the weight of the arms is rapidly transferred from one hand to the other. The technique came into prominence with the rise of virtuoso piano writing from the mid-19th century, featuring strongly in Liszt's *Piano Concerto in E-flat*, S.124, as well as in concertos by Ravel, Rachmaninov and Bartók. The striking bitonal effect of the combination of C- and F-sharp chords in *Petrouchka* is enhanced by their rapid alternation in the 2nd and 3rd Tableaux. Similar bariolage writing features prominently in Prokofiev's Toccata op. 11, generating an irresistible, propulsive motoric energy.

I first deployed the bariolage piano figuration in my *Praeludium* (1993) (see bar 34 ff of Score 14 in Appendix 3), then later in *Rhapsodie Macabre* and in *Skylla and Charybdis*. *Rhapsodie Macabre* opens with this figuration, alternating notes of a *quasi-e*-minor triad (without the 5th), with chromatically displaced *acciachiaturas* (see Ex. 3.1). Bach uses similar writing for the harpsichord in 'Goldberg Variations'.



Ex. 3.1: *Rhapsodie Macabre*, bar 1, pf, bariolage technique

As rehearsals continued, however, I was advised by the pianist that the moderate speed of alternating hands was uncomfortable and ungainly and that the figuration only really worked at a higher speed. The pianist kept trying to push the movement on to a faster tempo. I subsequently used the bariolage figuration only at faster speeds. In *Skylla and Charybdis* I used the bariolage technique for textural purposes. During a few select passages (e.g. bar 177 in *Skylla and Charybdis*, see Ex. 2.7 from previous chapter) the device is used in conjunction with the strings to emulate the rise and fall of a surging wave. Strings and piano maintain rhythmic independence - the strings in 16th triplets against the regular 16th notes in the piano. In this example the piano plays black notes in the left hand, white notes in the right, similar to the passage referred to in *Petrouchka*, albeit using all five black notes, not just those of the F-sharp major triad. As will be seen in the next chapter, this figuration also played a role in *Incantations*, in this case to enhance the virtuosic element of the piano writing.

***Rhapsodie Macabre* Piano Quintet (2011)**

A commission for a Piano Quintet for a Liszt Festival in 2011 led to my first attempt at a *concertante* chamber work. Bearing in mind the principal work for piano and ensemble (at this stage the nature of the work was yet unclear), the resolve was to write a miniature concerto in which the piano would play a *concertante* role but with reduced ensemble. Precursors from the past include the *Jeunehomme* concerto of Mozart, K. 271, equally playable with piano and string quartet; Schumann's *Piano Concerto* op. 54, which existed in a contemporary version for piano and string quartet, Joachim Raff's *Piano Quartet* in c minor op. 202/2 (1876), which was generated from the piano part to such a degree, that it approximates in all but name to a scaled-down piano concerto. Janacek's *Concertino*

(1925), as the name suggests, is essentially a piano concerto with a drastically reduced orchestra.

Schumann's dictum for his own piano concerto, "midway between symphony, concerto, sonata" remained in mind during work on *Rhapsodie Macabre*. Liszt's Piano Sonata in b minor contains hybrid elements, and since *Rhapsodie Macabre* was to be a work in honour of the *Weimarer Meister*, both the spirit of Liszt's piano writing as well as some of his attitudes to harmony and cyclical form, whether consciously or subconsciously, pervaded the work. The symphonic aspect was manifested in its five-movement arch-form - fast, fast, slow, fast, fast; the concerto aspect in its confrontational style of writing for piano and strings; the sonata element in the juxtaposition, contrasting and development of themes from a common "basic material" (a prominent part of which was the 'dies irae' theme). I also wished to attempt a narrative form, avoiding breaks between movements and creating the rhapsodic feel to the way in which the work unfolded. A critic writing in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*¹⁷ compared the music to a "ghostly, dreamlike ride through surreal territories, full of surprising events and turns", almost pre-empting the narrative aspect of the piece.

The piano writing is characterized by extremes of high and low tessitura, grand gestures sweeping across the entire range of the instrument. At the opening of the *Rhapsodie Macabre* the piano clearly leads, the strings' role restricted to punctuating the irregular phrases of the piano. By bar 14 the piano figuration is fragmented and by bar 22 roles have reversed and the piano assumes a supportive role to the strings. The four 16th note upbeat of the strings grows in importance and by the end of the movement it vies for supremacy (bar 75 ff). As the work progresses, the initial idea of a miniature concerto is neglected and the piece unfolds with a greater sense of dialogue between piano and strings. By the second movement the work has basically become a piano quintet in the

¹⁷ Reinhard Palmer in a *Süddeutsche Zeitung* dating from 13th February 2012, reviewing a performance of *Rhapsodie Macabre* in Gilching, near Munich, in an article entitled "Frisch und Wild".

accustomed, chamber music sense. Among the many roles for the pianist are i) performing a *bel canto* melodic line over sustained string chords (bar 187), ii) strengthening and elaborating inner parts (bar 144), a technique used by Stravinsky, for instance in *Capriccio*, iii) providing momentum and harmonic impetus (see Ex. 3.2).

Ex. 3.2: *Rhapsodie Macabre*, bars 210-214, piano providing rhythmic and harmonic impetus

In the next example the piano provides a harmonic and textural backbone for the entire edifice, like a grotesque, all-consuming Alberti-bass (see Ex. 3.3).

Ex. 3.3: *Rhapsodie Macabre*, bars 324-325, piano providing harmonic and textural background

Retrospectively, my initial indecision between concerto and piano quintet appears uneasy; roles are insufficiently defined, as was hinted at in rehearsal, when opinions of pianist and first violinist sometimes clashed. The piece may have benefitted through a more rigid adherence to the original intention of writing a reduced piano concerto.

***Skylla and Charybdis* for Piano Quartet (2014)**

The second of the piano chamber music works is the piano quartet *Skylla and Charibdis*. The slow introduction germinates from a low, gently oscillating piano-figuration, which spreads through cello and viola to violin, leading to a high-point, before receding to the depths of the lowest register of the piano. This pulsating figure, a superimposed diminished fifth and perfect fifth encompasses a minor 9th (augmented octave) and this interval colours the tense harmonic language for most of the work. The ensuing faster section (from bar 89, see Ex. 2.23 from earlier) begins with rapid, restless writing for strings alone, soon to be taken up by piano, developed into a vigorous argument, string trio and piano each vying for supremacy.

***Concerto da Camera* for cello and instrumental ensemble (2011)**

The preparatory work closest to *Incantations* is *Concerto da Camera*, for cello and ensemble (2011). The work was meant as a “narrative concerto” - episodic and at times almost improvisatory. The form was nominally suggested by the plot of the historical novel by Theodor Storm, *Der Schimmelreiter* (Paetel, Berlin, 1888). This dour narrative, set on the German, flood-prone coastline of the North Sea, was the point of departure. There was to be a sense of the gradual unfolding of a tragic drama, coloured by the opposites of stark, fifths-based harmonies against more limpid, chromatic harmonies. Reference to the novel is suppressed in the title, since the piece is non-programmatic and the Storm novel is used as a point of departure.

There were issues of balance between soloist and ensemble yet to be solved. One lesson learned was that the ensemble should not be assigned too complex a role while the soloist is playing, for risk of overloading the texture and detracting from the soloist's autonomy. Unresolved questions of balance arising from the performance of this work were a contributing factor to selecting piano as the solo instrument of choice for my principal work.

The two main musical climaxes are defined by the ensemble, against which the cello plays an astringent, harmonic inner voice (in a strong, tenor register of the instrument). The transparent scoring enhances the clarity of the cello part within the orchestral web. The ensemble sometimes augments and expands the intervals (mainly fifths) of the cello, creating a kind of “meta-cello” in an analogous way to Mozart’s apparent treatment of the orchestra as an extension of the piano in his piano concertos. The role of soloist is often that of an *obligato* instrumentalist, weaving its own line in and around the orchestral web, a style of writing which commonly features in the *sinfonia concertante* style as used by Prokofiev or by Szymanowski.

***Pas de Quatre* for Oboe Quartet (2011)**

Written as a companion piece to earlier ensemble works for piccolo and string quartet as well as for bassoon and string quartet, this piece features the oboe both as protagonist and antagonist. By virtue of its special sonority, the oboist’s sound prevails, but also integrates into the polyphonic web as *primus inter pares*. Formally the work divides into five connected sections, played without a break. There is elaborate motivic development within the sections, but only minimal cross-referencing between the sections. As with Britten’s *Phantasy Quartet* op. 4, the strings sometimes play alone to afford the oboist opportunity to regain breath and to create a greater impact when oboe and strings are combined. In retrospect these strings-only passages might have been at greater length. Use is made of rapid, *quasi*-minimalist successions of parallel triads; tonal connotations are blurred by chromatically displaced *acciacciaturos* – a technique achieved with the bariolage technique in *Incantations*. Through rhythmic modulation the continuous line of repeated semiquavers re-groups into patterns of ever changing bar-lengths. There is a suggested tonal point of departure and return, though once again without use of a key in the traditional sense. Approach to the root is often by semitone (as in the Phrygian scale), avoiding associations of the perfect cadence.

Manifestation of three subsidiary parameters in Mozart K 466, 1st movement

1) dialogue 2) rhythmic independence 3) shifting registers.

Three subsidiary parameters are exemplified in the passage from Mozart's *Concerto K. 466* referred to in Appendix 1. After identifying them in the Mozart movement, they are examined in respect of the two works of piano chamber music.

The **dialogue** aspect is in evidence from bar 108, where the melodic line of the piano's upper chords is taken over first by the wind instruments, then by the full orchestra, like interlocutors joining a discussion. The dialogue aspect becomes more pronounced later in the work (from bar 115).

The right hand of the piano maintains **rhythmic independence** throughout the entire passage in its fluid 16th note writing, first providing an effective counterpoint to the syncopated string figures, then turning into a melodic cell which gradually assumes supremacy over the orchestra. At bar 112 is the 16th note movement continued by the violas. The right-hand crotchet rhythm in bar 110 also maintains independence, remaining undoubled by any orchestral instrument.

The **shifting register** occurs throughout the entire passage from the piano's first entry in bar 95 in the tenor register, as it gradually ascends to the final right-hand chords in bar 108 two octaves higher. The ascent runs parallel with the metamorphosing role of the piano, as it transforms from an accompanimental role to one of domination. The grand, sweeping gesture of a pianistic figure surging up through the seven-octave range of the piano has continued to be irresistible to composers through the generations; In *Rhapsodie Macabre* the alternating 16th note figure starts as a quasi-bass line and threatens to engulf the texture as it rises through the octaves (see Ex. 3.4).

(Con moto giusto $\text{♩} = 88$)

f *marcatiss. il tema del Dies Irae!*

f *marcatiss. il tema del Dies Irae!*

(Con moto giusto $\text{♩} = 88$)

f

(8)

Ex. 3.4: *Rhapsodie Macabre*, bars 407-409, ascending piano part engulfing strings

The examples listed below relate to the Piano Quintet and the Piano Quartet.

1) Dialogue

Dialogue is central to any musical discourse which thrives on the exchange of ideas or themes. In high level chamber music performance, one experiences a palpable sense of dialogue between members of the ensemble as the music unfolds. The same applies to performances with soloist and ensemble. Instruments may even appear to be momentarily personified, as they interact with each other. The conversational aspect is close to the sensibilities of a chamber musician, whose musical routine, both in rehearsal and in concert, consists of dialogue, both on a verbal and on a musical level.

Just as an interlocutor sometimes broaches an argument, or, alternatively, opts for a more conciliatory stance, so the role of a performer shifts between dominant and passive participation. The parallels extend to those who are head of an organisation or even a family, where circumstances may call for forthright leadership, or for a more conciliatory approach. Hans Erik Deckert refers to “ein Geben und Nehmen in einem kontinuierlichen Strom – ein ‘Pingpong’ auf musikalischer Ebene. Wieder ein charakteristisches Spiegelbild menschlichen Zusammenwirkens“ (Hans Erik Deckert, 2016, page 114). This could be translated as “a give and take in a continuous flow – a ‘ping-pong’ on a musical level. Once again a parallel for human co-existence”.

The following three examples of dialogue in a chamber ensemble are drawn from my Piano Quintet.

- i) In Ex. 3.5 the ascending 8th notes in the piano left hand are taken over by the strings; the ostinato inner parts of the 2nd violin and viola are continued by the piano, while the descending arpeggio-figure in the piano left-hand is taken over first by the cello, then by the viola, then once again by the piano.

(Presto inquieto ♩=144)

pp dolce

pizz.

(Presto inquieto ♩=144)

p dolce

quasi pizz.

Ex. 3.5: *Rhapsodie Macabre*, bars 93-98, dialogue between parts

- ii) In Ex. 3.6 the violin I plays rhythmical interjections between the long, drawn-out notes of the piano melody, in the manner of two speakers, who reinforce each other's ideas. The violin passages are marked *dialogo con il pianoforte*. The sense of dialogue pre-supposes a sensitive pianist, who can play the embellished and sustained melody in such a flexible and transparent way as to accommodate the filigree commentaries of the violin.

(Lento e liberamente ♩=46)

p

8^{va}.1

Ex. 3.6: *Rhapsodie Macabre*, bars 191-192, dialogue between piano and violin I

The following examples are drawn from *Skylla and Charybdis*, which aims for a close-knit exchange of musical ideas.

- i) In Ex. 3.7 the piano is in dialogue with the strings, who play in rhythmic unison. The figure of two alternating 16th notes is exchanged between piano and strings at irregular intervals in a vigorous discourse, as if each side were vying with the other to assert its own dominance. The interjections of the strings give an impression of interrupting.

(Allegro demonico $\text{♩} = 124$)

mf *f*

(Allegro demonico $\text{♩} = 124$)

mf *f*

Ex. 3.7: *Sylla and Charybdis*, bars 108-110, dialogue between piano and strings

- ii) Bar 129 ff. The exchange between piano and strings is at very close quarters. The same alternating 16th pattern from the previous example is thrown back and forth with increased speed as if the altercations were increasing in urgency.

The idea of such rapid altercation between piano and ensemble, which later manifests itself in *Incantations*, was prompted partly by such passages in the *Piano Concerto* of Ligeti (see Ex.3.8), in which wind, piano and strings alternate in quick succession. In this instance, the orchestra is marked quietly, while the piano plays forcefully, causing a restless, unpredictable exchange, almost as if the piano were beating the orchestra into submission.

The image displays a page of a musical score for Ligeti's *Piano Concerto*, specifically bars 22 through 26. The score is arranged in a multi-staff format, with various instruments and the piano/fortepiano (Pianoforte solo) parts.

Instrumentation and Dynamics:

- Fl. picc.** (Flute piccolo): *pp* (pianissimo) to *mf* (mezzo-forte).
- Oit.** (Oboe): *mp* (mezzo-piano) to *f* (forte) to *p* (piano) to *ppp* (pianississimo).
- Cl.** (Clarinet): *pp* (pianissimo) to *mf* (mezzo-forte) to *ppp* (pianississimo) to *pp* (piano) to *ppp* (pianississimo).
- Eg.** (Euphonium): *p* (piano) to *mp* (mezzo-piano) to *pp* (pianissimo).
- Cr.** (Cornet): *senza sord.* (without mutes), *p* (piano) to *pp* (pianissimo) to *mp* (mezzo-piano) to *pp* (piano) to *ppp* (pianississimo).
- Tr.** (Trumpet): *p* (piano) to *pp* (pianissimo) to *mp* (mezzo-piano) to *ppp* (pianississimo).
- Trb.** (Trombone): *con sord. (cardboard)* (with cardboard mutes), *p* (piano) to *mf* (mezzo-forte) to *pp* (pianissimo).
- Pianoforte solo**: *f* (forte) to *ff* (fortissimo) to *mf* (mezzo-forte) to *ff* (fortissimo) to *fff* (fortississimo). Includes a *ped.* (pedal) marking.
- VI. I** (Violin I): *pp* (pianissimo) to *p* (piano) to *pp* (pianissimo).
- VI. II** (Violin II): *pp* (pianissimo) to *p* (piano) to *pp* (pianissimo).
- Va.** (Viola): *pp* (pianissimo) to *p* (piano) to *pp* (pianissimo).
- Vc.** (Violoncello): *pp* (pianissimo) to *p* (piano) to *pp* (pianissimo).
- Cb.** (Contrabasso): *p* (piano) to *pp* (pianissimo).

The score features complex rhythmic patterns, including triplets and sixteenth notes, and dynamic markings that indicate a delicate and intricate exchange of sound between the piano and the orchestral instruments.

Ex. 3.8: Ligeti, *Piano Concerto*, bars 22-26, exchange between piano and orchestra

Dialogue in *Der Werwolf* for Cello and Speaking Voice (2010)

The final example is taken from *Der Werwolf* (see Ex. 3.9), a work further discussed in the chapter 4, *Extended techniques*.

Ex. 3.9: *Der Werwolf*, bars 47-50, dialogue between voice and cello

The poem by Christian Morgenstern contains dialogue between the werewolf and the village school-teacher. The challenge was to represent this with a single player and speaker. Through my experience of performing, I devised a means of using a *verzerrte* (slightly distorted) *sul ponticello* timbre to accompany the werewolf, and a *naturale* sound for the school-teacher in order better to characterize the respective locutors. In the extract shown, the werewolf requests the teacher to decline the plural of “wer”. The teacher replies that he is regrettably unable to fulfil this request, since “who” exists only in the singular. The impassioned plea by the wolf is accompanied by florid interjections and *tremolandi* figures in the tenor register of the cello, heightening the urgency of his request, whilst the matter-of-fact answer of the teacher is accompanied in *recitativo secco* style, with low *pizzicato* chords, or sustained natural harmonics. The two protagonists are set apart through contrast in the accompaniment, which tries to characterise as vividly as possible their different attitudes and behaviour.

2) Superimposed rhythmic figurations

Due to the different means of producing sound on piano and on strings and due to their discrepancies of balance, care must be exercised when combining them. Strings may

vary timbre and nuance with great subtlety, but pianos possess a wider dynamic range and more incisive articulation. The differences in sound render multi-layered writing easier to follow; combined rhythmical elements can achieve greater clarity with an ensemble of strings and piano than with an ensemble of similar instruments.

The following examples aim to show a heightened sense of rhythmic independence between piano and strings. The first examples are from Piano Quintet *Rhapsodie Macabre*.

- i) In the closing bars of the first movement there is a combination of interlocking 16th notes between the two hands in the piano, with sixteenths, sextuplets and thirty-seconds in the strings. The piano ascends, changing chord every half-beat, while the strings have a more rapid ascent in dove-tailing scalic passages (Ex. 3.10).

Ex. 3:10: *Rhapsodie Macabre*, bars 79-82), superimposed rhythmic patterns

- ii) In Ex. 3.3 the piano has a figuration in quintuplet 16th notes against the strings' rigid 16th note patterns. A well-known use of piano quintuplets as harmonic patterns in an accompanimental role is in Schumann's Piano Concerto op. 54 from bar 19. The quintuplet figurations in the *Rhapsodie Macabre* maintain their independence as only the first 16th note of each quintuplet beat aligns with the 16th notes in the strings. The piano figuration has equally a melodic function, the first two notes of the quintuplet providing

a harmonic anchor point on c and c sharp, the latter three notes outlining the contours of the “dies irae” *Leitmotiv*.

The following examples are drawn from the Piano Quartet.

- i) In the following passage there are six different layers of rhythmic polyphony – three in the piano and one each in the three strings. The middle part of the piano and viola overlap, but all the other lines are rhythmically different. The piano plays triplets, whilst the strings have various constellations of 16th note or of quarter note figurations, the latter syncopated at an interval of an 8th note. As a result, there is a heightened sophistication in the rhythmic polyphony at play (Ex. 3.11).

Ex. 3:11: *Skylla and Charybdis*, bars 30-31, combination of different rhythms

- ii) In this passage there is a quasi-aleatoric style of writing inspired by the chanting of the Aka pygmy tribe of central Africa. Multiple voices begin in a chaos of uncoordinated entries, gradually finding their way to a communal resting note. The three strings here play the same chant-like theme in unison, but non-aligned vertically. The curious effect is of non-aligned phrases sounding in an echo chamber, or in a time-warp. Though a simple device, a curiously archaic and otherworldly effect is achieved, in keeping with the ancient mythological scene from which the piece takes its title. Even though the effect was to sound aleatoric and freely improvised, I opted to notate the rhythmic overlapping accurately in a heterphonic/canonic

manner. A similar device is used in the opening of Judith Weir's Piano quartet, *Distance and Enchantment* (1988) written for the *Domus* Ensemble, though with less rhythmic diversity in the superimposed phrases. Despite achieving the required effect in *Skylla and Charybdis*, I decided against using such a device in *Incantations*. Within the latter's concise time-span, I considered it would excessively have interrupted the rhythmic flow and disrupted the continuity.

(Adagio doloroso ♩ = 56)

pp *lusingando*

pp *lusingando*

pp *arco*

pp *lusingando*

ricochet

Ex. 3.12: *Skylla and Charybdis*, bars 208-212, strings, heterophonic/canonic effect

3) Shifting Registers

The piano's wide range invites exploitation in a *concertante* situation and much traditional virtuosic writing relies for its effect on the contrast of registers, which, as on strings, has a visual aspect with regard to the pianist's physical displacement between the high and low ends of the instrument. In the following extracts I attempt to use the contrast of registers as an expressive or dramatic feature of the piano writing.

Examples from the Piano Quintet:

- i) Bars 66-69 The piano plays a sweeping ascending arpeggio from bass register, through the string register, up to a high tremolo, during which the strings mirror the gesture in contrary motion.

Ex. 3.13: *Rhapsodie Macabre*, bars 66-69, changes of register

- ii) As the Quintet draws to its conclusion the piano writing becomes denser and the gestures more radical. At this point (Ex. 3.4, bar 407 ff) the “dies irae” theme appears canonically in the lower strings, and simultaneously the theme from bar 118 from the 2nd movement appears canonically in the upper strings. The dense polyphony is heightened by the piano’s ascending cascade of fourths/fifths in both hands. Bartók uses a similar technique in his second piano concerto at bar 295 to bring the first movement to a thundering conclusion. He uses an ascending scale of diatonic triads, accompanying single brass lines. In the *Rhapsodie Macabre* the piano reinforces the contours of the string polyphony, whilst taking care not to obscure them.

The following examples are drawn from *Skylla and Charybdis*

- i) Bar 52 ff. The left hand of the piano and the cello jump between high and low registers, while the upper strings and piano right hand each inhabit their own octave in the upper reaches. The relatively static nature of the writing for violin and viola throws into relief the acrobatic leaps of the cello and piano left hand.
- ii) In this example (Ex. 3.14) of contrary motion, the piano descends from the top of its range to the depths in a sextuplet figuration over the two hands,

whilst the strings wend their way up from the very lowest register to the highest in tremolo 16th notes, symbolically fathoming the precipitous heights of the straits of Messina, inhabited by the mythological sea monsters.

36 (Più mosso $\text{♩} = 60$)
ff rivido

(Più mosso $\text{♩} = 60$)
ffz

Ex. 3.14: *Skylla and Charybdis*, bars 55-58, contrary motion

- iii) In bar 369 (see Ex. 3.15) the piano provides a harmonic and rhythmic backdrop, intoning the characteristic three note motive of the opening, a diminished fifth and a minor ninth. Spread over 4 octaves the piano figure acts variously as a bass-sonority to the polyphonic writing in the strings.

34 Pochiss. meno mosso
pp sul pont.

Pochiss. meno mosso
pp con una corda

Ex. 3.15: *Skylla and Charybdis*, bars 369-372, shifting registers of piano part

Conclusion

Concertante writing is potentially one of the most varied, interactive means of combining instruments. The inherent aspects of competition/fighting on the one hand;

joining/weaving together run through all my attempts at *concertante* writing. The other source of inspiration was the movement of the jagged light-beams over the strata-scarred rock face, as experienced swimming in the mountain lake. In composing the works discussed above and in addressing those aspects of dialogue, rhythm and register, I tried to develop a more differentiated *concertante* style, speculating on the degree to which the instrumentalists' functions could alternate more fluidly between cooperation and opposition. A lively, changing textural web, suggested by those shafts of light on the lakeside, are indispensable for differentiated and engaging *concertante* writing, and the developments through the piano chamber music were to assist with tackling the *Incantations* project.

Some of the exchanges may have become somewhat contrived and self-conscious - like a staged debate, rather than spontaneous in nature. Musical discourse should naturally arise out of the unfolding of the musical argument, without being a goal itself. I had to learn that convincing musical dialogue arises more from a composing mindset, than from the conscious decision to construct dialogue during the composition process.

I also discovered that the dynamic virtues of *concertante* writing could apply to combinations and genres not immediately associated with soloist and ensemble, for instance in string quartet writing, in writing for solo instruments, perhaps, by extension, even in vocal music. Differentiated *concertante* writing can be of relevance to all manner of instrumental works and is one I'd wish to pursue and develop in future projects, not least in the hypothetical Piano Concerto, the very reason for embarking on the research project in the first place.

Chapter 4: Extended Techniques

This chapter deals mainly with the following works:

Der Werwolf for cello and speaking voice (2010)

Le Loup Garou for cello and speaking voice (2014)

Red Champion for clarinet solo (2014)

Extended techniques may be understood as unorthodox or unusual ways of creating sounds on an instrument in order to widen its sonic spectrum. In the constant quest for heightening the expressive means of instruments, composers particularly in 20th and 21st centuries have searched for new sonorities and effects. The purpose of the above works was primarily to test their use in the context of a musical work. In the case of *Le Loup-garou* there was also the wish to explore new techniques and sonorities (and devise the means of notating them), with a view to using them in other works. Vivaldi's use of *sul ponticello* describes perfectly an icy scenario in *Winter* from 'The Seasons'. Berlioz's demand for *col legno* in the 'Witches Sabbath' also fits entirely appositely the description of rattling of bones in *Symphonie-fantastique*. Both enhance the musical imagery beyond what standard playing techniques of their respective ages could achieve, justifying their application.

Often at the forefront of the quest for ways to widen the palette of sounds on conventional instruments are composer-performers. Figures as diverse as Boccherini, Paganini, Ysaÿe and Holliger are among those composer-performers who experimented with, discovered, refined, codified and put into practice new techniques on their respective instruments. Contemporary performers such as Globokar, Mack and Widmann have devised entirely new techniques, born out of a deep understanding for their instruments and a wide experience of performing. Many of these techniques have since passed into the *linuga franca* for the benefit of future generations of composers and performers.

Participation in performances of *Vor der Erstarrung* by Lachenmann and of *Alax* by Xenakis with Ensemble Modern left strong impressions of the radical use of extended techniques. Both works depend almost exclusively for their impact on unorthodox and strikingly new ways of playing, several of which were devised by their respective composers for the works in question. Both come across as wholly convincing manifestations of the use of extended techniques within a work for an ensemble of soloists.

In the Lachenmann work the cellist, for instance, employs such techniques as 1) scraping the bow up the string towards the scroll, causing a grating, jarring sound like a grasshopper, 2) bouncing the bow, *col legno*, down the string in a 'jetée' fashion towards the bridge, giving an exotic glissando-ricochet sound. These are combined with a myriad of other techniques in wind, brass and percussion, creating a surreal, other-worldly musical experience. Despite the almost overwhelming plethora of unconventional sounds, the work's structure remains clear, relying on the traditional parameters of contrast, repetition, tension and release. Outlandish techniques such as bowing the tuning pegs or the ribs (i.e. the side) of the cello create merely a visual, quasi-theatrical effect, for these actions cause no distinctive sound (the results in both cases a barely audible hiss).

Above all, it is solo works employing extended techniques that give an impression of individual players transcending their instrumental techniques to enter new and uncharted realms of expression in sound. In my performing and listening experience this has proved by far the most effective context for extended techniques. The impact of works such as Lachenmann's *Pression* for cello, B. A. Zimmermann's *Vier Kurze Studien*, Penderecki's *Capriccio per Siegfried Palm*, each of them strongly featuring extended techniques, can, when expertly played, be quite overwhelming. When a larger number of players are employed, there is a danger of diminishing returns. Unorthodox techniques which bring diversity, colour and a new perspective to a solo line, may appear unfocused and blurred within a larger string section. In a rehearsal of Lachenmann's *Ausklang* with

the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra, several of the same techniques from *Vor der Erstarrung* were in evidence. The results in an orchestral context were nowhere near as convincing as within the ensemble work. En masse they seemed abstruse and contrived and were occasionally met by some of the orchestral players with a mixture of suspicion and derision. Caution is called for in the deployment of extended techniques. If used, then at best in a situation where they can be clearly recognized and heard. Sound effects merely for their own sake easily become tiresome, or divert attention away from the work itself.

Experience has shown that musicians are more receptive and open to new techniques if they serve a specific, dramatic purpose within the piece. The use of *tremolando sul ponticello* at the end of 'Enthauptung' serves to heighten the tension before the erupting wrath of 'Die Kreuze' in Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*. The extreme *sul ponticello* slowly transforming to *ordinario* on the viola and cello in the opening bar of *Skylla and Charybdis* (Ex. 4.1) sets an atmosphere of dread and suspense.

Ex. 4.1: *Skylla and Charybdis*, bars 1-2, vla, vc, *tonlos* - *ordinario*

In an interview, Siegfried Palm, the late, distinguished German cellist, maintained that there was “no difference in listening to a Beethoven Symphony or a piece by Penderecki; whether or not an effect was artistic or not depended upon what the composer did with it”.¹⁸ This suggests that it is up to the composer to show skill in using new sonorities only where the music demands it within a meaningful dramatic or instrumental context.

¹⁸ Interview with Tim Janof for the Internet Cello Society (1999)

Whilst *Vor der Erstarrung* by Lachenmann consists entirely of extended techniques, the settings of *Der Werwolf* and *Le Loup-garou* use techniques within the context of *ordinario* playing, as deviations from standard techniques of playing, whether *col arco* or *pizzicato*. My choice of poems to set for cello and voice was Morgenstern's *Der Werwolf*, and *Le Loup-garou* (the same poem as *Der Werwolf*, but translated into French), poems rich in imagery and with wide potential for musical colouration.

The first unusual technique in *Der Werwolf* and *Le Loup-garou* is the combination of the cello part with a rhythmicised, spoken text, creating a two-part counterpoint. The vocal part can be declaimed by an additional performer, but the original idea was that the cellist perform both parts, creating a two-part polyphony similar to a pianist performing a two-part invention (see Ex. 3.9).

***Der Werwolf* for cello and speaking voice**

The poem *Der Werwolf* by the celebrated German anthropologist, Christian Morgenstern, written in 1907/1908, is one of a somewhat rare genre in an otherwise rich field of German poetry – that of the nonsense poem. The linguistic *raison d'être* of the poem is the feeble word-play on 'Werwolf', its conjugations contrived as 1) the genitive "Weswolf" ("whose-wolf") 2) the dative "Wemwolf" ("to whom-wolf") 3) the accusative "Wenwolf" (whom-wolf). Set in a country grave-yard, the poem describes a nocturnal encounter between a werewolf and a deceased village teacher. Certain extended techniques are associated with the protagonists throughout the piece, in a similar way to the associations of instruments with leitmotifs in a Wagner opera. For instance, *sul ponticello* is used predominantly to accompany the dialogue of the werewolf, thereby distinguishing his speech from that of the schoolmaster, for whom *modo ordinario* is mainly used. The piece opens with a single, drawn out tremolando on a low "A", varying in timbre between *sul tasto* and *ponticello*, between rapid and slower bow-strokes. This aims to conjure an atmosphere of foreboding and mystery. The *sul ponticello* "A" transforms seamlessly via pitchless "white sound", played literally on the bridge of the instrument, into a *bisbigliando*

(whispering) glissando of string-crossing harmonics on the highest reaches of the upper A and D strings. There is a similar instance in Klaus Huber's *Transpositio ad Infinitum* where the tremolo proceeds from *ordinario* via *sul pont.* to behind the bridge. In the opening passage of *Der Werwolf* the hiatus in the pitched tremolo serves to connect two different registers of the instrument. In the high-altitude passages of harmonics. The strings are half-stopped, rendering a brittle, "broken glass" sonority, where the harmonic overtones are hinted at, but distorted through excessive finger-pressure. Sciarrino uses high, scale-like passages of standard, natural harmonics in his 2nd Piano Trio, but the intended effect in *Der Werwolf* is more aleatoric than melodic, creating a vertiginous, cascading impression. This technique arose through experimentation at the instrument, whilst searching for a distinctive, ghostly glissando / tremolando sonority over the entire length of the finger-board. One recalls Cassado's habit of finding new solutions for certain passages in the course of concert-giving. Curiously, it is indeed during performance that one strikes upon ideas which remain otherwise elusive in the course of normal practice. Just as Cassado took several years before his *Requiebras* reached its final version (as testified by the many different editions), so these settings for cello and voice developed over repeated performances.

The single, highly expressive word "tränenblind" (blinded by tears), describing the height of the rage and desperation of the werewolf (see Ex. 4.2)



Ex. 4.2: *Der Werwolf*, bar 6, *sul ponticello* to describe desperation of werewolf

is also coloured by a *tremolando* chord played *sul ponticello*. The work closes with the same *bisbigliando* and low tremolo "A" of the opening (in reverse order here) bringing the action full circle back to the lonely, other-worldly nocturnal scene of the opening of the poem, as the werewolf disappears into the night.

***Le Loup-garou* for cello and speaking voice**

Whereas *Der Werwolf* uses mainly traditional extended techniques, the setting of the same poem in French, entitled *Le Loup-garou*, (translated from the German by R. Platteau) inhabits a new sound world, much as was the case with *Vor der Erstarrung*. The cello is played without a bow for the entire duration of the piece using percussive and *pizzicato* techniques associated with the guitar, both acoustic and electric varieties. Among the techniques used are 1) *pizzicato* and “thumping” (a percussive, *battuto* sound with pitch achieved by a forceful tapping of the left-hand finger onto the string)

2) the invention “flickering” (a rapid oscillating motion of either hand over one or more of the open strings). This can be used with two individual impulses (thumb, 2nd/3rd fingers in the r.h.) or as a continuous tremolo, as at the opening, mirroring the bowed tremolando of *Der Werwolf* (see Ex. 4.3)

Adagio

PPP
(light, flickering stroke,
between thumb and 3rd finger;
approximate relative pitches shown)

Ex. 4.3: *Le Loup-garou*, bars 1-2, newly devised notation to describe r.h. flickering stroke

3) knocking on the body of the instrument with the knuckles, e.g. towards the end of the piece, where repeated knocking on the buffs (side) of the cello describe the loup-garou trotting off into the gloom.

This work is notated using one staff for the right-hand, another for the left. Together with the vocal line, this makes three staves which must be read concurrently by the player. In *Foxfire I* by Helmuth Oehring (1993) two staves represent two hands, though the five line staff is used for both hands to notate a fairly limited range of *pizzicato* / thumping techniques. Zoe Martlew’s *Stir* (Schott 2013) also uses a variety of “non-bowed percussive and melodic elements” (as stated in the preface to the publication), even

combining the performer's pitched voice and an almost inaudible stirring sound produced by the circular movement of the finger-tips on the body of the instrument. At times Martlew creates an impression of several different instruments playing concurrently, given the multiple layers of *pizzicato* tapping, scraping, inhaling noises and humming, but there is no sense of interacting polyphonic lines. By contrast, there is in my Morgenstern settings *Der Werwolf* and *Le Loup-garou*, a clear sense of two-part counterpoint between voice and the cello-part. The aim was to create two-part counterpoint on an otherwise monodic instrument.

In *Le Loup-garou* rapid passage-work is achieved through alternation of thumping, left-hand *pizzicato* and regular *pizzicato*, (Ex. 4.4)

Ex. 4.4: *Le Loup-garou*, bar 81, alternate thumping and l.h. *pizzicato*

Similar instances of which can be found in Variation 9 of Paganini's *24th Caprice* for violin. The notation for the newly devised "flickering" technique proved elusive, since the relative pitch position on the finger board (extending to behind the bridge) as well as the particular strings being struck, both needed specifying. The original notation of r.h. flickering was on the five line staff, but was subsequently changed to a three line stave for greater ease of reading. The idea for this was thanks partly to the Taiwanese-American composer Wei-Chieh Lin, who referred me to Berio's *Sequenza XIV* for cello, which similarly uses two systems, the lower of them alternating between three and five lines (see Ex. 4.5).

Sequenza XIV accordatura, sempre
 per violoncello (2002)

♩ = 92 ca. mormorando e flessibile

m.s.
 m.d.

Ex. 4.5: Berio, *Sequenza XIV* for cello, three-line staff-notation

Other techniques include series of *pizzicati glissandi* over the four strings (see Ex. 4.6)

meno mosso
 pizz. ord. gliss.
p

laissez vibrer

Ex. 4.6: *Le Loup-garou*, bars 33-34, *pizzicato glissandi*

creating exotic, rather far-Eastern sounding timbres, setting the text “le digne phantom au regard sévère”.

Paul Tortelier refers in his cello tutor *How I play, How I Teach* (Chester 1975, p. 78) to different types of pizzicato including “pischenetto” (flicking the string) and “onglizzato” (strumming with the nail of the middle finger or with the middle finger nail), both reminiscent of Spanish guitar techniques. A flamenco-like effect of rapidly alternation *up-pizz.* and *down-pizz.* is used in *Le Loup Garou* from bar 50 (see Ex. 4.7), signifying the declination of the word “Loup-garou”, the linguistic crux of the poem. Pitched notes are notated with the traditional oval note-head, unspecified pitched notes with a cross.

Meno mosso

p

Ex. 4.7: *Le Loup-garou*, bar 50, strumming, “flamenco” *pizzicato* technique

The piece relies heavily upon imaginative and vivid performance, characterising the rhythms and words and assuming different shades of voice according to the figures speaking and the sentiments being expressed. The melodic interest is secondary, hence

reliance upon rhythmic and dramatic parameters. There is an element here of what Gunter Pretzel of the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra calls 'offene Musik', or 'open music' (as described in conversation in 2017), which depends for its effect as much upon the skill and inventiveness of the performer as of the composer. In much of the jazz world, the notated piece of music is only the starting point for a sophisticated performance. It falls to the composer to decide to which degree of accuracy the many shades of execution be notated; whether to be highly detailed in writing intentions or whether to leave an element of spontaneous invention on the part of the performer. In *Le loup-garou* I began with rather vague notation, but became more specific and demonstrative as work on the piece proceeded and as it became clear which sounds and techniques were needed. Even with a more fastidious notation, the bare lines and repetitive rhythms of *Le Loup-garou* still rely heavily upon the performer to bring them and the piece as a whole to life.

Red Champion for Clarinet

The third work composed with extended techniques initially in mind was *Red Champion* for clarinet in B flat, written for Emma Johnson and first performed by her at the Stratford Music Festival in Summer 2012. The piece describes the delicate and slender flower out in the wild, subjected to the elements, buffeted by rain and wind. Even though the intention was initially to explore extended techniques of the clarinet, I was persuaded by Markus Schoen, an experienced clarinettist colleague in Munich, that the expression would be the stronger by letting the pitches, note values and dynamics carry the musical expression. There is extensive use of grace notes over throbbing, repeated notes of irregular rhythmic groupings (representing the swaying of the plant in the breeze) (see Ex. 4.8), of note repetitions with subtly differing articulation, as well as of crescendi and diminuendi upon a single note, the dynamics ranging from almost inaudible to very loud.



Ex. 4.8: *Red Champion* for clarinet in B-flat, bars 11-12

The rapid, breathy grace-notes border on extended techniques without crossing the line into the realm of overblowing, distorted or special breathing effects. Clarinetist Markus Schoen told me during the writing of the piece that such effects could come across as contrived if clumsily used. Emma Johnson's atmospheric first performance caused critic Christopher Morley from the Birmingham Post to write, "[*Red Champion*] drew a huge range of dynamic control from Johnson during the climb to the highest of registers, nature-awakening flutterings growing out of long notes in a reminder of Messiaen" (Birmingham Post, 14th October 2012). The latter reference presumably to the 3rd movement, 'Abîme des Oiseaux' from the *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*. Subsequent performances of *Red Champion* by Markus Schoen (Bavarian State Orchestra) and Marco Thomas (Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra) confirm the extraordinarily expressive potential of the clarinet as a solo instrument.

***Alcatraz* for string quartet**

The first movement of the quartet *Alcatraz*, entitled 'The Rock' conveys impressions of the small, craggy island in the Bay of San Francisco, originally a habitat for birds before being taken over first by the indigenous Indians, later used as a stronghold in the Civil War, and in the mid-20th century to house the infamous prison. The upper strings play cluster-like string crossing figures, whilst the cello plays the "lock and key" motive which begins the whole work, glissandos up to the highest reaches on a tremolando "E", representing the twittering birds (Ex. 4.9).

(Adagio ♩=58)

ff

ff

ff

ff

gliss.

ff

Ex. 4.9: *Alcatraz*, bars 27-28, extended techniques in cello part

Extended techniques include slapping the strings, in imitation of the clanking sound of locking the metal doors to the prison cells, which, according to contemporary prisoners' reports ('Alcatraz, the story from the inside' Davis and Hicks, San Francisco 1937), was a daily ritual sound as familiar to inmates as the omnipresent twittering of birds. The latter sound is imitated by an irregular, high 'e' tremolo in 2nd violin, sliding around irregularly around the pitch, varying it and bending the sound. The cello is called upon to combine the high e with string slapping done by the thumb of the left-hand (see Ex. 2.13). The previously described technique from *Der Werwolf* of passing seamlessly from a low tremolo to a very high tremolo via a pitchless *sul ponticello* is used once again here in bars 202-204 (Ex. 4.10), this time with three instruments in parallel.

The experiences from Lachenmann's orchestral works suggested the avoidance of the repetition of techniques simultaneously on several instruments. After trying this passage out in rehearsal, the metamorphosis from *ordinario* to soundless *sul ponticello* back to *ordinario* (Ex. 4.10) was deemed to work well with three instruments in parallel. This may have been due to the atmospheric nature of the sound, which blended well, as opposed to articulated, staccato sonorities which were unconvincing when doubled.

Chapter 5: *Incantations*

Incantations, a chamber concerto for piano solo and ensemble, principal work of this thesis, was composed between November 2014 and March 2015. The first performance took place on 26th March 2015 at a studio concert before an invited audience in the CBSO centre in Birmingham with soloist Huw Watkins and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG), conducted by Richard Baker. The first public performance took place on 4th October 2015 at the *Allerheilige Hofkirche* in Munich, Germany, with the Austrian pianist Michael Schöch and the Munich-based Ensemble BlauerReiter, conducted by Armando Merino.

It was the wish to write a piano concerto as successor to my *Cello Concerto* which initially led me to this research. When, during the initial stages, the opportunity arose to write a work for the distinguished pianist Huw Watkins and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG), I designated this as the principal work in my thesis. The *Concerto da Camera* for Cello and Ensemble, *Skylla and Charybdis* for Piano Quartet, *Alcatraz* and *Le Loup-garou* were all subsequently written with the *Incantations* project in mind. Through working on the supporting works, my central aim crystallized – the search for a *concertante* style for the final work encompassing the characteristics both of concerto writing and of piano chamber music.

The following chapter starts by considering the role of the visual stimuli in writing *Incantations*. There then follows a discussion of parameters discussed in the previous chapters (form/harmony, *concertante* writing and extended techniques) in respect of *Incantations*. Other aspects of *Incantations* discussed are the use of the ‘dies irae’ motive, the use of bariolage technique, instrumentation, the journey from sketch to score and practical considerations from performance.

The second visual stimulus for the work was *Totentanz*, a wood-cut dating from 1493 entitled *Tanz der Gerippe* (dance of the skeletons) by the Nuremberg-born artist Michael Wolgemut (1434-1519) (see Ex. 5.2).



Ex. 5.2: *Totentanz*, Michael Wolgemut (1493)

The image is depicted in Hartman Schedel's *Weltchronik*, and on display at the *Germanisches Nationalmuseum* in Nuremberg. A similar, 16th century source was the starting point of Thomas Adès' *Totentanz* for soprano, baritone and orchestra (2013). In Wolgemut's image, a group of five skeletal figures is depicted, one playing a shawm-like woodwind instrument, three of them dancing a *Totentanz* and one reclining in the foreground. The mocking, sarcastic treatment of such a morbid subject matter draws parallels with the Rosa painting. The wood-cut's clearly etched lines, the vigorous movements of the dancing figures silhouetted against the sky, suggested musical parallels in terms of articulation and musical drive. The five spectral figures could even be interpreted as allegorical for the instrumentation of *Incantations*. The soloist

(shawm-player) dominates the proceedings; the accompanying figures (the three interacting dancers representing woodwind, brass and strings) dance to his tune, though maintaining their own lively, independent expressions; the gesticulating, conducting figure below (marimba and harp), holds the entire rhythmic structure together. One senses an inter-dependence between the figures, each aware of the others, yet autonomous in demeanour. In musical terms, this suggested the independence and self-sufficiency of each instrumental line, each idiomatically formed for its respective instrument, yet combining to a euphonious whole.

Aspects of Form

Incantations subdivides into four Cantos, each of which is nominally based upon one of Rosa's vignettes surrounding the central figures of his painting. The layout is slow-fast-slow-fast, corresponding to that of an Italian *Concerto grosso*, though the work is through-composed. As with *Skylla and Charybdis*, narrative plays a role. Just as Rosa's painting combines several individual miniature scenarios within the larger canvas, so too *Incantations* unites contrasting movements, independent in expression yet connected thematically.

I tried to direct the flow of energy to specific points within each Canto, giving both performer and listener clear points of reference.

Ex. 5.3: *Incantations*, bars 31-32, brass, first *Höhepunkt*

The brass passage in Canto 1 (Ex. 5.3) was accurately identified by the conductor at the initial run-through as the first *Höhepunkt*, a 'telling, a significant moment'.¹⁹ In Canto

¹⁹ He advised marking it up from mf to f to clarify this function

2, the apotheosis is reached at bar 148, at which point the exchanges between ensemble and soloist are at their most astringent (see Ex. 5.4).

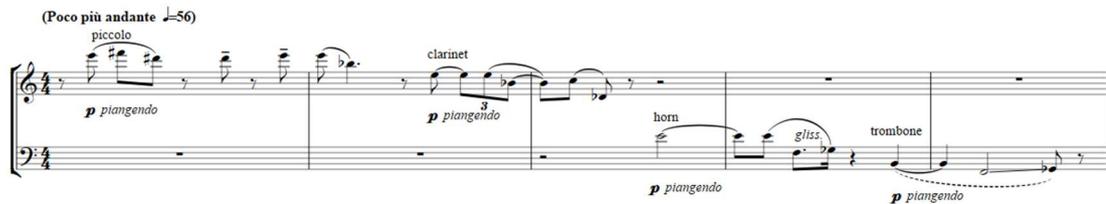
The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Incantations', specifically bars 148-150. The score is arranged in a system with ten staves, each representing a different instrument or section: Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Horn (Hrn.), Trombone (Tbn.), Maracas (Mar.), Harp (Hp.), Piano (Pf.), Violin (Vln.), and Viola (Vc.). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings (e.g., *f*). The score shows a complex interplay of sounds, with some instruments playing melodic lines while others provide harmonic support or rhythmic patterns. The overall texture is dense and astringent, characteristic of the 'apotheosis' mentioned in the text.

Ex. 5.4: *Incantations*, bars 148-150, *Höhepunkt* of Canto 2

This marks the point of the movement's golden section, from which the music winds down to the end of the Canto. The need for a clear *Höhepunkt*, for a point of maximum tension, was influenced partly by my orchestral work with Celibidache, who would insist on a communally perceived "high-point" within an extended symphonic movement, in order to apportion the distribution of intensity and energy.

In *Incantations* the music's coherence and forward momentum depend largely upon the traditional parameters of thematic development, modulation and recapitulation. The theme from bar 102 in Canto 2, for instance, recurs in bar 269 in Canto 4. The opening version of the 'dies irae' theme in widely spaced chords in the piano (bars 8-

9) are recapitulated at the end of the work (bar 320) a minor third higher (similarly to the recapitulation in the first movement of the *Sonata Ebraica*). The recurrence of the ‘dies irae’ theme at bar 320 represents the *Höhepunkt* of the entire work. Following this, the material is fragmented, short phrases appearing successively on each of the wind instruments, as if paying homage one last time to the timeless ‘dies irae’ theme, before the music disintegrates into silence (see Ex. 5.5).



Ex. 5.5: *Incantations* bars 342-326, disintegration of ‘dies irae’ motive

Ligeti writes of form ‘like a vegetation, like a tropical tree, whose wildly growing aerial roots grow downwards back into the soil’ (Ligeti, 1983, p.42). In this striking image the motive progenerates rather according to the unrestrained laws of nature, than to any calculated strictures of traditional form. Related to this is the concept of “developing variation”, as espoused by Schoenberg in his essay, ‘Brahms the Progressive’ (Schoenberg, 1951, p. 73 ff), where the motive is in a perpetual state of flux. The ‘dies irae’ motive is used throughout and undergoes continuous transformation, enhancing the sense of a work unfolding like an organic force of nature. In terms of the lake-side vision, the ‘dies irae’ motive in the piece is in perpetual metamorphosis, in the same way that the shafts of reflected light are in continuous movement, instantly changing position, intensity and breadth.

Discussing the ‘Dies irae’ section of his Requiem (1961), Ligeti states, ‘I saw the sequence as a colourful picture-book, with new images conjured up all the time... my aim was a virtually visual representation’. (Ligeti 1983, p. 49). In *Incantations* the musical depictions are not as literally contrived as with some of those ‘Breughel-land’ characters found in *Le Grand Macabre*, but the idea of a picture book in sound was an appealing one. Rosa’s images became starting points for musical flights of the

imagination. Having sparked an initial idea, the music tended to unfold subsequently under its own momentum, the alternating harmonic tension and release instrumental in driving forward the music. The angular positions of some of Rosa's human figures, as well as of Wolgemut's skeletal figures inspired some of the jagged musical lines, for instance the apotheosis of the main theme of Canto 4. Furthermore, Rosa's digressions between light and shade, whimsical and severe, grotesque and exquisite may have influenced the frequent and abrupt changes of mood and sentiment within the short time-span of the work. In his *Ode to the West Wind* for cello and orchestra, Henze took Shelley's eponymous poem as a starting point for the work, generating music through imaginary settings of the lines of the poem to music.²⁰ In *Incantations*, the extra-musical associations of my sources were vital to setting the composition processes in motion, but it was the musical material and its working out which ultimately informed the unfolding of the structure. Adés stated the dichotomy between pre-determined and spontaneous form rather drastically (Adés, 2012, p. 123). He advocates "form arising from content, not 'let's have a structure', which is dilettantish". Earlier mistrustful of not having the form worked out ahead of time, I now see the parallels to a narrative tale, in which one may follow one of several possible paths.

Aspects of Harmony

Incantations begins with the juxtaposition of different interval-types. The opening flourish of ascending broken chords in the piano part is in perfect and augmented fourths (see Ex. 5.6).

²⁰ Henze also stated that the music should be listened to without reference to Shelley

Canto I - Moderato e maestoso ♩ = 72

Ex. 5.6: *Incantations*, bar 1, piano, chords of fourths

So are the leaping chords which first introduce the “dies irae” theme (Ex. 5.7).

Ex. 5.7: *Incantations*, bars 8-9, use of fourths

The connecting passages in marimba and harp are built on chords of thirds (see Ex. 5.8), creating a moment of harmonic respite between the highly charged versions of the “dies irae” theme.

Ex. 5.8: *Incantations*, marimba and harp, bars 10-11

In a passage at the opening of Canto 2, the up-beat is built of fifths (based on the open strings of the cello and violin); the succeeding bariolage figuration is characterised mainly by alternating diminished fifths with perfect fourths, embedding the ‘dies irae’ theme (see Ex. 5.9).

(Allegro mosso ♩ = 118)

The image shows a musical score for 'Incantations' bars 46-47. The score is for a full orchestra and piano. The tempo is marked '(Allegro mosso ♩ = 118)'. The instruments shown are Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Horn (Hn.), Trombone (Tbn.), Maracas (Mar.), Harp (Hp.), Piano (Pf.), Violin (Vln.), and Cello (Vc.). The piano part is marked '(senza ped.)'. The woodwinds and strings play a 'dies irae' theme, and the piano part features arpeggiated passages.

Ex. 5.9: Incantations bars 46-47, 'dies irae' theme embedded within piano part

The connecting woodwind and harp arpeggio passages in bars 50-51 and in bars 56-57 are once again built mainly of thirds.

Schoenberg defines different sections of his *Kammersinfonie op. 9*, through the recurrent use of certain intervals. The work famously opens with a rising arpeggio of fourths in the horn, and similar passages consisting of the interval of the fourth recur throughout the piece, often to demarcate a new section. A short extract from the cello part at figure 61 (see Ex. 5.10) demonstrates within a short space this kind of "intervallic" writing. Here Schoenberg uses successively fifths/octaves, descending fourths and ascending thirds to characterize the writing.



Ex. 5.10: Schoenberg *Kammersymphonie Nr. 1*, Op. 9, use of different intervals

Concertante aspects

It was a challenge to write for such a soloist as Huw Watkins, with his eclectic repertoire. His wide experience of performing as soloist and as chamber musician works by such composers as Goehr, Turnage, Woolrich besides Delius, Bantock and Foulds bears witness to an exceptionally broad range of interpretative skills.

Whilst working on the piano chamber music a key objective was to expand and develop the role of the piano within the ensemble. The lakeside vision in mind, the piano was to appear in as wide an array of guises as possible, metaphorically spread over the score with the same diversity and flexibility as those fluorescent beams generated by the ripples on the lake.

In *Incantations* I continued to examine the way in which a middle path might be realised between piano concerto and chamber music. Amphibian-like, the pianist was to negotiate a path between the opposites of soloist and accompanist.



Ex. 5.11: *Incantations*, bars 58-61, virtuosic piano part over static harmony

Virtuosity in the piano played a significant role (see Ex 5.11); the soloist weaves ornamental figurations around a static harmonic pattern in the accompanying

ensemble, a device often used in 19th century concertos (see Moszkowski Ex. 1.1 in chapter 1). Such decoration around sustained notes in the strings highlights the brittle, percussive nature of the piano's articulation.

Ex. 5.12: *Incantations*, bars 148-150

In passages such as Ex. 5.12, there is quick-fire alternation between soloist and ensemble. The phrase-lengths may be successively foreshortened, as in a fugal *stretto*, to increase tension.

In bars 188-192 of *Incantations* the piano initially assumes the role of a continuo, enunciating the chords above which the woodwind and strings weave their interactive figurations. In bars 189 and 190 more varied piano-writing gradually emerges, like one of Rosa's beasts awakening out of slumber, gradually overpowering the high figurations in violin and flute, before launching into a high-energy marimba-like passage, marking the start of Canto 4 at bar 191. Later in the same Canto, the piano-writing undergoes a similar mutation, from the *accompagnando* passage supporting

the two brass instruments (bars 290-298) abruptly into a bravura passage, which drives the ensemble on to its next *tutti* outburst. In bars 124 to 132 the piano wends its way up through the registers, initially with a triplet figure doubling the low clarinet. The rhythmic pattern tightens as it ascends, by means of successive note-value reduction, eventually playing septuplets, by which point it dominates the texture. Subconsciously I had in mind the grand ascent of Mozart's right-hand semi-quaver passage-work in his *Piano Concerto K. 466* (see Appendix 1), where between bars 95 and 108 the piano rises incrementally over nearly 4 octaves from accompanimental patterns in the tenor register to the commanding, melodic figuration high in the treble clef 12 bars later.

In Canto 3, the latter part of which is akin to a written-out cadenza, the piano writing shifts from elaborate, polyphonic, multi-layered chordal writing to a purely accompanimental writing in the shortest space of time (bars 184-188).



Ex. 5.13: *Incantations*, bars 214-217, exuberant piano writing

In Ex 5.13 there is an exuberance in the piano writing, where the instrument's full force is pitted against the ensemble playing at maximum strength. The lakeside vision in mind, reflected beams not only covered the entire limestone face, but varied in intensity and brightness. By association, the piano part spans the entire tessitura, as well as covering a multitude of functions, switching between a supporting, *sotto voce* role to the blatant heroism of the 19th century concerto tradition.

Use of extended techniques

BCMG is renowned for the eclecticism of its first performances and recordings over the last 25 years or so. It was at once compositionally daunting and liberating that there

were no limits to the scope of writing. The available forces for the *Incantations* project I perceived as a kind of *carte blanche*, the musicians for whom I would be writing being capable of realising anything they were presented with. My initial impulse was to grasp the challenge of devising a score full of sophisticated techniques, to make optimum use of both the soloist's and the BCMG's legendary expertise in New Music. Two supporting works, *Red Champion* for clarinet and *Le Loup-garou* for cello were written with a view to testing the use of extended techniques and to widen the palette of sounds at my disposal. My investigations showed that extended techniques worked more convincingly with solo instruments or where there was a specific expressive requirement. I eventually decided against an ostentatious or speculative use of extended techniques in *Incantations*. There are occasional uses of unusual sound production to mark special moments, such as at bar 229 in Canto 4 (see Ex. 5.14), where the harp plays a glissando played with the triangle beater to achieve a grating, metallic effect. This marks the end of a section and ushers in the new.

(Vivace assai subito ♩ = 100)

f rasping
"metallic" gliss with triangle stick

f gliss. (l.v.)

Ex. 5:14: *Incantations*, bars 229-230, extended techniques to mark end of section

In the same bar, the trombone plays a rasping, guttural low 'f' adding to the abstruse sonorities of this bar. However, *Incantations* was guided more by purely musical criteria – in this case the traditional approach to the instruments taking the upper hand over an approach involving the wider use of experimental and extended techniques.

'Dies irae' Motive

Following on from *Rhapsodie Macabre*, extensive use is made of the 'dies irae' motive in *Incantations*. Just as the universal pre-occupation with death and the underworld may be regarded in diverse ways, so too the 'dies irae' theme, a symbol of death,

appears in a vast array of guises, contexts and inversions (see Appendix 2 for thematic derivations). Whilst composers such as Berlioz, Liszt and Rachmaninov quoted the 'dies irae' as a surreal element or *deus ex machina*, in *Incantations*, the 'dies irae' theme provides the melodic material for much of the work. Its instantly recognisable contours of major and minor seconds and thirds curling back on themselves and sequentially descending are subject to extensive development and variation. The motive is used in all four Cantos to achieve a degree of unity, otherwise so disparate and varied in expression. I was taken by Eimert's statement, 'the method is to avoid being methodical, to let the line grow in endless variation' (Eimert 1959, pg 14). In *Incantations* the 'dies irae' theme similarly undergoes continuous variation, re-inventing itself in a wide variety of different guises, including in inversion, according to the musical context and the expression required. The thematic derivations of the "dies irae" theme, including those of the inversion, are listed in tabular form (see Appendix 2), following the example of Herbert Eimert, whose thematic analysis of *Jeux* by Debussy is laid out in a similar table (Eimert, 1959, p. 15).

Use of *Bariolage*

In common with *Rhapsodie Macabre*, *Incantations* opens almost at once with a tremolando *bariolage* device in the piano to create a brilliant-sounding, highly charged sonority, asserting at once the dominance of the piano.

The opening of Canto 2 also uses *bariolage*, in this instance embedding the 'dies irae' theme within, doubled by the marimba for heightened clarity (see Ex. 5.9). The dissonant, accentuated, *acciaccaturas* on the beat in the left hand put the 'dies irae' motive (here in inversion) into clearer perspective, as well as veiling its modal nature.



Ex. 5.15: *Incantations*, bars 81-84, quasi-bitonal bariolage

In Ex. 5.15 use is made of the juxtaposition of black and white notes in alternating hands, creating a vivid, quasi-bitonal harmonic colour, reminiscent, as has been pointed out earlier, of the technique used by the French *pointillistes* of mixing colours by juxtaposing dots of primary colours to create new compound colours. Canto 4 opens with a virtuosic *bariolage* passage almost of the velocity of the drum-roll connecting the Tableaux 1 and 2 in *Petrouchka* by Stravinsky, emphatically establishing the new 6/8 pulse following the slow, cadenza-like music of Canto 3.

Instrumentation

Incantations is scored for piano solo, pairs each of wood-wind (flute, doubling piccolo, and clarinet), brass (horn and trombone), strings (violin, cello), percussion (one player; marimba, antique cymbals, doubling other un-tuned percussion) and harp. This *Soldier's Tale*-like arrangement of high and low pairs of each instrument-type, the core instrumentation of BCMG, encompasses the broadest span of timbre, tessitura and articulation with a minimum number of players. A subsidiary aim of *Incantations* was to reflect the wide tonal spectrum within these forces. Listening to the BCMG recordings of John Woolrich's *Bitter Fruit*, or, say, to the recording of Britten's music for films, one may be struck by the degree to which this constellation of eight players of wind, strings, brass and percussion has the potential to combine with the impact and breadth of colour of an entire symphony orchestra. This is due in part to each player's expertise in gauging and combining sonorities. Despite the reduced size of the ensemble, the grand gestures associated with an orchestral canvas remained within reach. The dramatic potential of the *tutti* passages proved in no way compromised by the size of the ensemble. The grittier, sinewy textures of the individual instruments added an

urgency and a unique tonal quality to the whole. Harp and marimba added a brittle, harder-edged sonority to the piano part (e.g. bars 313-314), instruments which could also be used to outline the contours of the embedded “dies irae” theme in the piano (see Ex. 5.9.)

Writing for full ensemble, particularly within Cantos 2 and 4, the scoring attempts to recreate the impact of full orchestra, using homophonic writing doubled with percussion, see for instance bars 204-206. At other times, the writing is more horizontally conceived, its contrapuntal textures more akin to that of piano chamber music, for example in bars 113-119.

Journey from sketch to full score

The work on *Incantations* began soon after completion of the *Skylla and Charybdis*. When I first saw the Rosa painting in the National Gallery and read its title I knew at once it could provide the impetus to start work on the piece. Just as Schoenberg wrote out his note rows in different transpositions and inversions before starting work on his Wind Quintet, so I initially devised a list of thematic transformations for the ‘dies irae’ motifs, which would become my principal source of motivic material. As with Stravinsky’s sketches for the *Rite of Spring*, the musical material was collected in short, mostly unconnected phrases and only expanded and woven together at a later stage. *Incantations* was finished in pencil short score about 2 months after commencing work and the instrumentation took an additional 4 weeks.

Practical considerations arising from performance

Aware that there would be limited time for rehearsal and performance for *Incantations*, the need for well-prepared material was evident. Having completed the score, further preparations involved working out a ‘choreography’ for the percussion part so that it could be mastered by a single player, ensuring sufficient time for selecting sticks or beaters, or for switching instruments. A professional colleague in Munich, the

percussionist Franz Lachmayr offered valuable advice in this respect. The harp part also needed editing, mainly for pedal changes and fingering. I failed to find a local harpist in Munich ahead of the first recording session in Birmingham and, following the recording session, was advised by the BCMG harpist to re-write certain passages for future performances. The main issue was the impracticability of fingering groups of more than four notes. Mention was also made of stating the requirement for triangle beaters on the first page of the score. The BCMG trombonist urged a more vocal way of approaching writing for his instrument, preferring narrower intervals, similar to those of the human voice. The flautist advised against using the lower register in a doubling capacity, saying that the sound would be completely lost and advised octave transposition of certain passages. The violinist took issue with a passage of string-crossing harmonics, stating that it was harder to shift the finger over strings for consecutive harmonics on violin than on cello. The composer Wolfgang-Andreas Schultz (lecturer in composition at Hamburg Musikhochschule) advised marking the dynamics for the brass lower than that of the other instruments to ensure at once a better balance without reliance upon conductor and extra rehearsal time. The composer Violeta Dinescu advised against certain time changes, e.g. from 4/4 to 2/4, preferring to maintain 6/8 rather than switch to 3/4 when there was a hemiola effect. This was borne out in performance, the conductor Richard Baker commenting upon the same point.

These issues were taken into consideration for the second performance in Munich, as were minor details of orchestration, articulation and dynamics. Experience shows that there is much that can be learned regarding scoring, balance, voice-leading and editing following the first hearing of a work. The conductor Richard Baker's reaction after the recording session was that it was 'quite a difficult piece, but in a good way'. This I interpreted as meaning that, despite the textural and rhythmic complexities, the work's grounding in the received values of *concertante* chamber music made learning and performing of it a viable task within the allotted time.

Following the recording in Birmingham the piece was taken up for further performance in Munich, albeit not with the original soloist as initially hoped. The publishers Robert Lienau Musikverlag, Frankfurt accepted the work for publication. Having merged with Schotts in Mainz, this has been delayed, but the contract is signed. At the time of writing, a further performance with the Munich-based Ensemble BlauerReiter and the soloist Michael Schöch is planned, possibly linked to a CD recording. The British pianist Charles Owen has expressed interest in performing the work, as has the Italian pianist, Ricardo Maricelli.

Conclusions

In retrospect, the Chamber Concerto genre proved an ideal medium for developing certain formal and instrumental aspects of my writing. The abrasive nature of the discourse between *tutti* and solo provided a viable context for testing some of those aspects of composition I had wished to advance. The inherent double meaning of the word 'concertante' signifying both conflict and bringing together provided a useful starting point and symbolised in my mind the dichotomy of traditional and progressive issues facing composers in approaching this genre. Ultimately one must search for one's own position between the two apparent opposites.

Among traditional elements I found useful was the phenomenon of virtuoso instrumental writing as a means of purveying a musical idea. Following initial scepticism when I began the piece, virtuosity proved indispensable for maintaining momentum and involvement in the piece. A further traditional element I found to be useful was 'cross-germination' of material between soloist and ensemble, such as takes place within a longer time-scale in exposition and double exposition of a traditional concerto. Perhaps this element of interplay is particularly relevant for the sensibilities of a practising chamber musician, whose very music-making depends upon careful listening to and reacting with colleagues.

Among the progressive elements is the soloist's swift changing between leading and subsidiary roles, according to the musical context. The solo instrument, also the instruments of the ensemble, are deployed in the widest range of capacities between soloistic and accompanimental. The knife-edge balance between *concertante* music and chamber music and symphonic music calls for heightened reaction of the musicians within the ensemble, in addition to the usual dependence upon the conductor. Once again, there lies herein a parallel with the mind-set of the cellist-instrumentalist, whose own instrument, especially in 20th and 21st century repertoire, is constantly called upon to fulfil the widest range of musical tasks, from bass to coloratura.

Sometimes the desire to include too much material or too wide a variety of textures in a confined space may have led to a slightly overloaded composition, particularly when trying to accommodate too many fragments and sketches into a limited framework. Looking back, I tried in *Incantations* to cover the most diverse possible musical journey within a confined time-span. In the first rehearsals I experienced a slight sense of congestion, as if the work needed a broader time-scale to justify the amount of material. In the Munich performance, however, and with a greater detachment from the piece this negative aspect was not apparent. I still feel the need to learn a sense of balance between the proportions and the material, guarding against over-burdening the musical form. Whether or not this turns out to be a weakness of *Incantations* piece will be determined, so one hopes, in future performances.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

When in 2011 I embarked on this research project, it was impossible to foresee in which direction it would lead. My goals were broadly to expand my formal and harmonic thinking and explore a greater integration of extended techniques in my compositional style through the composition of a Piano Concerto. Just as the performing musician may benefit from advice at certain stages of a musical career, so, as a composer, I was speculating with a re-appraisal and critical re-examination of aspects of my compositional technique.

The supporting works and the principal work, *Incantations*, were all written as a result of commissions or concert opportunities arising since starting the project.²¹ Composition projects relating in some way to the *concertante* aspect of the central question were the ones favoured most.²² A wide range of instrumental combinations was covered, embracing piano chamber music, string quartets, a sonata, solos, 2 concerti da camera. Looking back, I perceive a parallel development in terms of harmonic vocabulary and formal sophistication.

Aspects of Form and Harmony

Where my earlier works tended either to comply with traditional forms or avoid them altogether, veering towards the improvisatory, I have since discovered a middle path. It proves possible to take the principles of contrast, development and return of material but not necessarily within the strictures of established forms. A bird's eye view of the work is indispensable, yet the specific workings of the form should remain flexible. There should also be a careful balance of material for the proportions of the work. Too much musical

²¹ *Chinese Whispers* was begun just before beginning the research project

²² Other works written since embarking on the research project have included *Carpe Diem* a cantata, *The Vasty Deep* an orchestral tone-poem, *Bells of Beyond* for piano trio, works for cello and piano

diversity within a relatively brief time-span leads to a sense of overload. The discovery of extended forms, with their spontaneous unfolding of musical ideas according to a literary or visual sources, has opened new paths since starting the project, which I shall pursue in the future. In respect of a harmonic language, a flexibility of approach is called for, depending upon the material and the way one wishes to develop it. Consistency is paramount, but the interchange between dissonance and concord remains a powerful means of expression and can enhance the dynamism of a piece.

Aspects of *concertante* writing

The lesson learned is that virtuosity shall no longer be confined to instrumental prowess, but extended to the flexibility in transforming roles, from soloistic to accompanimental, with all the degrees between. This calls for adeptness in both composing and in execution and this double-edged virtuosity can be one of the most engaging aspects of concerto performance. I was conscious of creating a solo part for *Incantations* challenging enough both technically and musically for the capabilities of the designated piano soloist. Whether or not this was accomplished will surely influence the future of the work.

Deployment of extended instrumental techniques

I sense scope for widening my spectrum of sound, especially regarding non-stringed instruments. With an increased range of tone colour *à disposition* there is also capacity for using this parameter to structural ends, i.e. the deployment of a specific timbre to demarcate a new formal section, replacing a function traditionally fulfilled by a tonal centre. How much more satisfying is the deployment of new timbres when their use arises naturally out of the essence of the musical expression. A parallel may be drawn with performance - instrumental technique should elucidate and bring to life the music being played, rather than used as an end in itself.

Questions of style

Most composers up to the end of the 19th century tended to develop a particular style, within the conventions of the day, then work within it. A more recent weltanschauung for many composers is that style is a fluid phenomenon and is re-invented for each composition. It was a significant discovery for me that a musical language may be assessed anew for each successive piece. I no longer perceive a discontinuity of thought between, say, the 2nd movement of *Chinese Whispers* with its modal, 'white-note' harmonic language, and *Le Loup-garou* with its otherworldly sound world, in which harmonic considerations are hardly even relevant. The pluralistic age in which we now live allows not only for wide differences of approach between composers of different generations and countries, but also within individuals' oeuvres. This can be a liberating thought and potentially free one from the persistent demands by public and by some critics to voice in which musical style one works in, or to which musical aesthetic one belongs. This question confronting composers can now be answered by the assertion that it is the newly-invented material for each piece which comes first.

Approach to tonality

Before the research project I suffered from a self-conscious attitude to functional, key-based tonality, finding myself either embracing it (to a greater or lesser degree), or outrightly rejecting it. In the course of working on this thesis, I discovered that approaches to tonality may be wide-ranging, and not restricted merely to the functional harmonic thinking between ca 1600 – 1900. As Wolfgang-Andreas Schultz, former Assistant to Ligeti in Hamburg Musikhochschule pointed out,²³ tonality is a 'complex phenomenon, in which scales, central tones, relations of dissonance to consonance, syntax and even metre and rhythm combine'. The somewhat dogmatic schools of thought of the 1960s Darmstadt generation, which tended to promote a methodical and structured approach to composition, espousing the principles of serialism as the way forward, have been

²³ Quoted from *Tonalität bei Enescu – Wege ihrer Weiterentwicklung*, an unpublished manuscript of a lecture held on 19.10.2011 in Delmenhorst, placed at the author's disposal

largely superceded, though there remains a deep-rooted suspicion of diatonic/consonant writing in some circles especially in Germany and Switzerland, where a committed sense of modernism pervades the mind-sets of musicians, public and promoters of New Music.

Composer/performer

In the age of the specialist, not just in music, but in many other professions too (e.g. the medical), the composer/performer has become quite a rare breed. There are, notwithstanding, musicians such as Jörg Widmann, Heinz Holliger and Thomas Demenga who have successfully combined both disciplines and are recognized figures in both traditional concert-giving and New Music circles. As performer, my own associations with string quartet- and piano trio-formations, as well as with ensembles for New Music, has proved an advantage for introducing new works to concert programs. I have found myself involved in the performance of all the works in this portfolio with the exception of *Sonata Ebraica* and *Red Campion* for clarinet. The interaction with colleagues and public has been conducive to my own creative efforts and nowhere have I been better able to assess achievements and failings in a new work, than in the physical midst of a performance with fine colleagues in a concert situation. *Rhapsodie Macabre* and *Alcatraz* have benefitted from revision following the premiere.²⁴

Extra-musical imagery

During work on this thesis I discovered anew how a non-musical idea could provide the decisive impulse in setting off a train of musical thought. Whether it be an ancient myth (Skylia and Charybdis), thoughts of a historic place (Alcatraz), a nonsense poem (Le Loup-garou), or a painting (Witches at their Incantations), such associations can trigger off thought-processes, leading the way into remoter musical worlds of the imagination. Where in earlier pieces I would try to stick quite closely to the associations of the original literary or visual image, in later works I realised that having been shown the way into a

²⁴ Revisions have been mostly quite minor. The cellist/composer Gaspar Cassado (1897-1966) needed 15 years of performing *Requiebro*s before he arrived at the definitive published version

new work, its logical unfolding from a motivic and formal perspective was of greater importance than strict adherence to the source of the inspiration. Hans Krieger, a distinguished, retired journalist and music critic for the *Bayrische Staatszeitung*, Munich, mentioned in conversation that the path towards a new work having been set in motion, one could then 'burn the bridges' which got one there.²⁵ The bridges' function having been fulfilled, they were no longer of direct relevance. One learns of Messiaen using the slender piping of a bird-call (for instance that of a warbler) on which to base the contours for a motive. This may end up massively scored for multiple brass; the original source is distorted out of recognition and would appear to be no longer relevant .

Future plans

Among forthcoming projects are a flute concerto, a bassoon concerto, a CD production with piano chamber music (to include *Skylla and Charybdis*), a new string quartet for performance in Winter 2018/2019 and an orchestral piece to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Chief Conductor of the Nizhnij Novgorod Symphony Orchestra. The idea of writing a piano concerto with full orchestra remains a vision, but one I am determined to realise some day. Equipped with the experience gained in writing *Incantations*, this is a project I would now feel greater confidence in approaching. As an instrumentalist performing before the public, I can only control nerves secure in the thought that preparation has been sufficient. A composer may experience reticence in tackling a larger-scale project, but must trust his experience and self-confidence in being able to carry it through. Just as the instrumentalist practises exercises or etudes which are more technically demanding than the pieces being studied, the tri-athlete trains in distances beyond those called for in competition, so the composer may tackle complex works to gain confidence for works of greater proportions. *Incantations* felt like a baptism by fire and I hope and trust that the optimism gained from this experience carries over into future projects.

²⁵ In conversation, following a concert performance of *Skylla and Charybdis*

One compositional procedure I wish to develop is trying to sketch material in such a way as to achieve longer compositional spans, writing broader stretches of short score longer than the brief fragments, which need a time-intensive fitting together like a mosaic. Further, I would try to imagine earlier on in the creative process the overall sound, rather than thinking in layers or in terms of a partcell, to be instrumentated at a later stage. I recognise that the greater the extent of working out one does in one's mind (rather than on paper), the better the compositional results. Traditionally, the instrumentalist fastidiously plans an interpretation in advance and reproduces it in concert. The more widely spread method in today's concert circuits is to "leave behind one's luggage" (Sergiu Celibidache), i.e. forget what one has consciously learned in rehearsal and perform from one's spontaneous concept of the music as it unfolds. The parallel for the contemporary composer is to be aware of position and standing in musical history, i.e. to be aware of the best traditions of harmony, voice-leading and form and yet be sufficiently free in mind to let musical instinct dictate the course of events in a new piece as they unfold.

In Germany there is an ongoing commitment to the post-modern tendencies, still favouring composers of certain aesthetic preferences. However, with burgeoning 'composer-in-residence' schemes for ensembles, orchestras, radio stations, the boundaries of stylistic acceptance are widening. In Munich, where I live, one encounters a divide between the public which attends the New Music Festivals such as 'Musica Viva' (founded by Hartmann) and the 'Biennale' (founded by Henze) as opposed to the subscription clientele for the Munich Philharmonic Orchestra. It is a legitimate aim for a practising musician to try to narrow that gap, thereby bringing together listeners and indeed players with apparently disparate musical tastes. In Germany, a pragmatic, pluralistic approach to composition and indeed to programming still leaves scope for development. In my work both as composer and as instrumentalist, I remain dedicated to harnessing and uniting aspects of both traditional and progressive ways of musical

thought. It is tempting to think that pre-occupation with the duality of concertante writing, with the double protagonists of soloist and tutti, has at least partly shown the way to some progress in this regard.

Fine (S.D.G.)

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