Anubis:
An Orchestral Triptych

Analytical Commentary

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Abstract

The aim of my research is to develop a compositional style of orchestral writing that is rich in polarities. This will be achieved through practice-based research using a range of compositional techniques as springboards to create a highly-charged symphonic language, contextualised by a discussion of the influence of stimuli on the compositional process. This thesis comprises a portfolio of seven musical works with supporting commentary documenting the research process and providing contextual and analytical detail. Using a range of influences such as myth and nature as springboards, my research consists of the development of an individual compositional language in which texture plays an important part. Central to this approach is the role of dialogue between polarities such as rhythmical versus timeless, calm and ethereal versus agitated and aggressive, polyphonic density and textural mass versus clarity of line. The research culminates in a triptych of orchestral pieces collectively entitled *Anubis* (entitled 'Anubis', 'Isis' and 'Ammit' respectively). Each piece forms a movement of *Anubis* yet can be performed in a stand-alone form. Also included in the portfolio are a number of supporting works that serve as experiments in the use of texture, structure and narrative, as well as exploring how stimuli can be a powerful tool in the creation of striking sonic textures, which then function within complex compositional structures in the main work. The commentary documents the research journey, charting the evolution of my musical language from piece to piece whilst explaining the relationship between source stimuli and resulting compositional response. The completed work, *Anubis*, comprises three movements exploring a range of textural polarities within a cohesive and consistent sound-world.

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My thanks also go to Joe Cutler who has continually supported my journey from the early experimental pieces to the final orchestral project. His hard work has produced a thriving composition department that enables students to immerse themselves in all aspects of music, from philosophical discussions to live performances of their own, and other compositional works. This support network has made performances of my own pieces possible. I would particularly like to thank Jenni Hogan and other Conservatoire students of the Composer's Orchestra and percussion department, plus the visiting ensemble CHROMA for their work on my pieces.

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My last acknowledgement is to my family who have patiently accepted the isolation I have needed to complete this project.

Contents of Portfolio

Vol. I - *Ring a Ring O'Roses* (2008) for B-flat clarinet, B-flat trumpet, tenor trombone, piano and violin.

Vol. II - *Spryte* (2008) for solo flute

Vol. III - *Déjà vu* (2009) for B-flat clarinet, viola, violoncello and piano

Vol. IV - *Off the Rails* (2011) for percussion quartet

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- *Isis* (2011) for orchestra

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   Recorded live on 24th January, 2013 in the Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire

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'You could see art, artistic creation, as a soup constantly simmering in a cauldron. The taste of the soup depends on what you have put in it; the broth simmering over the fire is the artist's potential and what you put into it are the experiences. Ligeti' (Harvey, 1999, 37)

This submission consists of a composition portfolio of the orchestral triptych *Anubis* with C.D. recordings of 'Anubis' and 'Isis', scores for four supporting works with a C.D. of recordings of *Ring a Ring O'Roses*, *Spryte*, *Déjà vu* and *Off the Rails*, and a written commentary setting out the research context and charting the development of the project from its outset to the completion of the main work.

The first chapter of the commentary sets out the research background and questions that are addressed in the project; the second chapter discusses the musical development of the supporting works; the third explores the musical elements used to create musical polarities in the main three orchestral pieces of the *Anubis* triptych, whilst the last chapter considers issues relating to the composition of intense sound-worlds and examines performance issues.

CHAPTER ONE

My research project explores external stimuli as a tool in the creation of a polarised compositional language and focuses on the use of textures to produce contradictory sound-worlds.

This chapter describes my early compositional experiences and journey towards forming an individual musical language, as well as the questions that arose concerning the impact stimuli had on the creative process. It contains a discussion of composers who have used different techniques to create textures that relate to this project, and explains my compositional approach.

1.1 Early Compositional Background

The early stages of my musical background had a tremendous impact on my approach to composition. Having studied piano, flute, and voice, I knew the music of the classical tradition, but when I first began to compose I became interested in composers from the early to late twentieth century. I studied the music of a wide range of composers, such as Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), Bela Bartók (1881-1945), John Cage (1912-1992), Benjamin Britten (1913-1976), György Ligeti (1923-2006), Sir Peter Maxwell Davies (b. 1934), George Crumb (b. 1929), Sir Harrison Birtwistle (b. 1934), Steve Reich (b. 1936) and Philip Glass (b. 1937). In hindsight, this wide variety may have influenced my own search for a musical language of extremes. Studying this diversity, I felt like a child in a sweet shop, and began to assess what I might take from the experience.

I abandoned the familiar ways of structuring a piece, such as using binary, ternary and sonata form within key relationships, and moved away from what I had learnt about traditional harmony from studying Bach chorales, to begin pursuing a style of composition based entirely on personal choice. Experimentation led to the exploration of serial techniques used by composers such as Schoenberg and Webern, but this method was unsatisfactory as the processes created a rigidity that I rejected in favour of freedom. During this time I wrote several exploratory pieces, of the kind that Boulez describes as the composer's:

> … periods of conquest and discovery … the exploration of new possibilities in every field – will lead him to write a number of 'chaotic' works that are less confident, and may well be less polished, than others, but will have a powerful effect in destroying routine. (Boulez, 1986, 78)

During my undergraduate studies I experimented with the use of natural phenomena and fictional otherworldly ideas as stimuli to produce a particular characteristic; for example, my piece for flute and piano entitled *Windhover* represented the movements of a kestrel that drifted through quiet harmonics of a bewitching quality toward a louder, more concrete and robust musical language. The unworldly sound was influenced by George Crumb's techniques in the flute part of *Vox Balaenae*, predominantly the employment of harmonics and singing whilst playing, and as a flautist I was able to try out these techniques first. This unworldly, timeless idea was explored further in a three-movement ensemble piece entitled *Kaleido*. By adding extended techniques and overlapping barlines I explored musical colours and created a sense of timelessness. The third movement explored rhythms to produce alternative textures, along with the use of a rumbling piano to suggest a darker sound-world. Both the rumbling piano and three-movement structure were used in my later works. In two orchestral pieces, *Black Hole* and *Primeval Being*, I was inspired by the idea of other worlds in the form of gravitational fields in space and a prehistoric planet. Throughout the research there has been a continued interest in using the stimulus of other-worldly ideas in the production of a particular mood.

1.2 Forming an Individual Style

Gradually an individual musical language emerged in which I discovered a new-found boldness in exploring contrasts of pitch, dynamics and textures, an approach that produced instability within the structure. As I developed as a composer I was able to expand the depiction of light, ethereal, and calm, or dark, foreboding, and restless material to create textures that were bolder and more diverse. In *The Contemporary Composer* Hall outlines Birtwistle's aesthetic position:

> Birtwistle says that to be any good a composer must go to extremes. He must be positive; he must project ideas with such boldness and clarity no one could possibly mistake his meaning. (Hall, 1984, 3)

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This statement reflects the importance of clearly communicating one's musical language. There is an evident connection between musical extremes and expressionism. Adorno says 'it is this polarisation upon which the total world of form of the mature Schoenberg - and of Webern as well - depends.' (Adorno, 1973, 42) A response to expressionism in music can be found in Peter Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King* (1969), a dramatic work of music theatre which calls for a vast range of disparate musical material and emotional extremes: 'the Schoenberg-Davies violence is of a violence of strain within culture.' (Griffiths, 1995, 178) Musical extremes can be connected to expressionism, influenced by individual judgement and personal experiences. In his book *Music and Inspiration* Jonathan Harvey says that:

> …a serious artist does not, of course, simply 'express' his experience in his work in the same form as that in which he found it .... Rather, experience is filtered through the composer's mind, both at a conscious and unconscious level: only forms of experience that have a particular resonance for him will contribute to the creative process. (Harvey, 1999, 39)

The musical connection with expressionism is evident when formulating ideas I consider to be climactic or passionate, because the inner-self, or psyche, inspires the compositional material. The technical question is how to implement this passion in a musical language.

1.3 The Impact of Stimuli on a Musical Composition

I began this project with the intention of exploring how natural phenomena might be used as stimuli to develop a flexible and versatile musical language. I was initially interested in how aspects of natural phenomena, such as light and tidal movement, might be expressed compositionally in an orchestral work. However, during the composition of the first piece, entitled *Burnt Earth*, I began to become absorbed in other external stimuli, most notably Egyptian mythology. I was increasingly drawn to the exploration of a musical language that took as its starting point the metaphor of a timeless, unknown world, serving as an analogy for a dark and foreboding intangible concept, as a stimulus to fuel my imagination when choosing the textures I wished to portray. I recognised that musical qualities in *Burnt Earth* could be construed as being timeless, unworldly, foreboding and agitated and thus paralleled the morphology of the life and beliefs of ancient Egyptians and natural phenomena. Hence the first movement, *Burnt Earth*, became 'Anubis', and the second and third movements were

entitled 'Isis' and 'Ammit'. The Egyptian god Anubis seemed fitting as he was the 'inventor of mummification and guardian of cemeteries' (Pinch, 3004, 35) a shadowy task that paralleled the dark textures of the first orchestral piece. The mysterious duties of this jackal-headed deity metaphorically linked to my own musical language. The ethereal textures of the second movement paralleled 'Isis' as a caring mother figure, and the aggressive, rhythmical textures of the third movement connected to the barbaric duties of 'Ammit': the annihilator of souls. This perception evoked the aspiration to produce an individual composition, creating a musical language that I considered reflected music of the past, used techniques of the present and reached for new ideas.

My desire to produce an impalpable sound-world was not directly linked to Egyptian myth, but rather to the idea of an unknown world. Such an approach has been used by other composers: Jonathan Harvey states that 'the nominal source of a piece's inspiration is of less importance than the echoes it evokes for the musician' and quotes an example from Ravel who wrote in relation to *Daphnis and Chloe* that he was 'less concerned with archaism than with the Greece of my dreams'. (Harvey, 1999, 40)

Other composers have written about the way in which they find musical ideas. Whilst the conscious mind might be seen as conceiving the chosen musical language and material, subliminal influences often formulate the ideas. Jonathan Harvey describes inspiration as 'profound, other-worldly, sometimes unsettling' and says that 'inspiration is often the result of a collaboration between unconscious and conscious mind, or between the internal workings of the composer's mind and outside influences upon him.' (Harvey, 1999, 4) On the other hand, connection with the conscious mind is described as 'decision-making' by Harrison Birtwistle. In *The Contemporary Composer*, he says that one should 'preserve decision-making only for high level matters'. Composition, he says:

> …is concerned with taking decisions, but if a composer has to take decisions about everything that happens in music he will seize up and rapidly come to a halt. To circumvent the problem a composer must find ways and means of allowing music to write itself. (Hall, 1984, 10)

1.4 Other Compositional Influences

There is a multitude of possibilities open to a composer when generating material; as well as working instinctively to strive for a particular mood that responds to an external stimulus (e.g.

visual, narrative) there is the option to compose music that has no reference to anything but itself. Pierre Boulez questions:

> What in fact is the stimulus to compose? Well it may be an entirely abstract formal idea, quite divorced from any 'content', in which case the intermediary processes needed for its realisation will gradually present themselves to the composer's mind, so that the original overall plan will reshape itself by means of a number of subsidiary 'local' discoveries. (Boulez, 1986, 76)

Another way of considering the compositional process is to compare it to painting, involving foreground, middle-ground and background textures, colours, shades, light and form. Boulez is of the opinion that 'art, science and craftsmanship are indissolubly linked in a single, complex unit.' (Boulez, 1986, 33) In exploring the interconnectivity between music and art, a composer might perceive his manuscript as a canvas or be influenced by art during the compositional process. For example, an engraving by Pieter Brueghel entitled *The Triumph of Time* proved the source of inspiration for Birtwistle's orchestral piece of the same title (1972). The engraving depicts a procession of allegorical figures and similarly the music suggests a slow procession of repeated events with English horn and soprano saxophone providing the foreground melodic material. Simultaneously Birtwistle provides a background of recurring but slowly transforming textural ideas, thereby metaphorically linking the Dutch landscape to the inexorable passing of time. He describes *The Triumph of Time* as being:

> a piece of music as the sum of musical objects, unrelated to each other, apart from one's decision to juxtapose them in space and time. (Hall, 1984, 83)

Contrary to Birtwistle's inspiration from an engraving and his consideration that his musical material comprised unrelated objects, my own composition connects to the metaphor of a timeless unknown world and grows organically. Despite this difference the apprehensive, foreboding atmosphere that Birtwistle portrays in the *Triumph of Time* compares to my own perception of an imaginary dark and ominous sound, subjectively connecting to the duties of 'Anubis', and the shadowy undercurrents of deep water.

The connection between art and composition can be seen in George Benjamin's *At First Light* (1982) a three-movement work for small orchestra that derives its motivic material and some aspects of structure from a consideration of colours and textures in Turner's painting 'Norham Castle, Sunrise'. The musical language is subjectively light, the opposite to Birtwistle's *Triumph of Time*, and is a contemplation of dawn, with fanfares that burst into

hazy textures with abrupt changes in mood and musical colour. These differences flow freely within wide changes in pitch, dynamics and texture, glowing and fluctuating, for example between high solo, fast, rising figures and rich vibrating chords. Despite this polarisation clarity remains throughout the complex movement of sound, in a manner that was a source of interest to me as I strove to achieve the same in my own work. Benjamin is interested in combining different characteristics and says he has 'been fascinated by ideas of instability and, above all, the relation between simplicity and complexity'. (Benjamin, 1997, 24) Throughout this project I endeavoured to write with unrestrained freedom, clarity within a dialogue of polarities, juxtaposing different textures in a coherent and unbroken form. George Benjamin is of the opinion that 'a really organic form is not constrained by breaks, it flows over them. Structure is the passage of material through time.' (Benjamin, 1997, 24)

This approach of comparing a composition to a canvas was very important to my own orchestral triptych. Although not directly relating to a visual art form, my evolving scores acted as a canvas to assess the material I had written in order to maintain organic growth. As an artist can view a developing picture to determine the shades of foreground, middle-ground and background material I used my evolving composition to assist with decisions concerning the overall structure, instrumental sonority, textural thickness and musical colours. Using this visual aid to assist my aural perception was easier to implement with the instrumental variety of an orchestral medium to create musical colours, and a hand-written score as a form of canvas.

I continually explored techniques that would produce a particular texture such as light (ethereal and calm) versus dark (agitated and aggressive) whilst maintaining a sense of coherence in the resulting work. I relate the mood of Birtwistle's *Earth Dances* (1986) to my own perception of dark musical material. His piece depicts an unrelenting and ritualistic world that is built on layers of sound. The three most important layers are built over six octaves as lower, middle and upper parts. The lowest hierarchy of intervals is predominantly fourths and fifths, the middle register thirds and the higher sixths, sevenths and ninths. The opening is a cluster of dark, slow, threatening chords that gradually move towards more rhythmical material. The opening to 'Anubis' similarly begins with the use of low and foreboding chords, but in contrast to Birtwistle's conscious layering of intervals the pitches and chords I chose to depict an imaginative idea were intuitive and not systematically linked to pitch relationships. In his programme notes for *Earth Dances* Birtwistle likens the different angles the music takes to:

a traveller in a big city who moves around seeing familiar landmarks in different contexts and perspectives, and gradually building up an idea of the city as a whole, although he can never grasp the entire plan in a single view. (Hall, 1998, 41)

A further observation made by Birtwistle is that the music is:

a giant labyrinth, whose formal units appear nearly identical, but wherever you are inside it, whichever corner you turn, there is some new aspect or perspective. (Hall, 1998, 41)

In *Anubis*, a certain texture or melodic idea will often re-appear in a transformed way as if being viewed from different angles. For example, when repeating musical material in my own work I will often alter the repeat or add different background textures. In 'Isis' an adjustment is made to the opening glissandi by adding a background of overlapped strings to the repeat material. This has the effect of organically transforming the material as it moves to the next idea.

As I started work on this project two clear research questions emerged. The first was to use external stimuli as springboards, in a similar manner to the composers discussed above, to create an atmosphere that took as its starting point the metaphor of a timeless, unknown world. The second was to produce a compositional language of musical contradictions, focussing on the use of texture in a heightened structural capacity to create a dialogue of polarities.

1.5 Technical Development

Within the portfolio I explore a range of compositional techniques in order to create different characteristics and moods. In my compositional research I developed textures to generate a sense of ethereal calm through the use of extended techniques and polyphony; these were manipulated to establish an environment that was unfamiliar and ambiguous. Complex overlapping of individual parts produces intangible shifts in the vertical harmonic structure that György Ligeti describes as:

different speeds which glimmer through, superimpose themselves on one another and produce an imaginary perspective through all sorts of refraction and reflection. It reveals itself gradually to the listener, as though he were going into a dark room from bright sunlight and little by little becoming aware of colours and contours. (Varnai, Hausler, Samuel, Ligeti, 1983, 83)

The effect of Ligeti's method of composing using linear intertwining is to produce a homogenous texture, rather than drawing attention to individual lines; he says, 'we hear not the polyphony itself, but its result.' (Varnai, Hausler, Samuel, Ligeti, 1983, 101) This polyphonic density is evident in Ligeti's *Atmosphères* (1961) with an unusual orchestral scoring including fifty-six string players, predominantly on individual lines. This one-movement work was inspired by a childhood dream:

> As a small child I once had a dream that I could not get to my cot, to my safe haven, because the whole room was filled with a dense confused tangle of fine filaments. It looked like the web I had seen silkworms fill their box with as they change into pupas. I was caught up in this immense web …………..Every time a beetle or a moth moved, the entire web started shaking so that the big, heavy pillows were swinging about, which, in turn, made the web rock harder. (Varnai, Hausler, Samuel, Ligeti, 1983, 25)

Ligeti saw an association between the mass of sound he was creating and his childhood dream, a polyphonic texture of shifting tone-colours that depicts both calm and hostile moods. The piece begins with an almost imperceptible entry of long held notes on woodwind and strings, notated without bars or barlines, and builds toward a high-pitched climax before dropping to the other end of the spectrum with a dense textural bubbling. The majority of the harmony is built on semitones, and as a result the mood fluctuates from trepidation to a sense of being restless and hostile. In conversation Ligeti explains how he conceived this musical language:

> I first began to think about a kind of static music you find in *Atmosphères* and *Apparitions* in 1950; music wholly enclosed within itself, free of tunes, in which there are separate parts but they are not discernable, music that would change through gradual transformation almost as if it changed its colour from the inside. (Varnai, Hausler, Samuel, Ligeti, 1983, 33)

The extreme musical language of *Atmosphères* was of interest to my own compositional exploration of polarisation. I was interested in the effect of overlapping several lines to produce shifting tone-colours, and the dark textures that produced a bubbling effect with extreme pitch ranges to create a climax.

A number of composers have used extended techniques in order to create a new sound-world. George Crumb wrote a three-movement work entitled *Vox Balaenae* (1972) for electric flute, cello and piano based on the songs of a humpback whale, where the fantasy is acted out by amplified instruments employing a number of extended techniques; for instance the flautist

sings and plays simultaneously, and the pianist uses pizzicato piano strings. The predominantly linear writing uses the instrumentation to depict different characteristics. The rhythms are precisely notated but no barlines are used, creating a sense of freedom in performance. After the solo flute introduction, the instruments interact with one another as if in conversation, with the occasional converging of all three in harmony. I was interested in the sense of freedom and the ethereal atmosphere that was created by the techniques that Crumb used in this piece and as a consequence experimented with omitting barlines and employing sing-tone in one of my supporting works, *Spryte*. I also experimented with the interaction of different instruments to create alternative timbres throughout the portfolio.

Similarly, Kaija Saariaho uses the violoncello to portray passionately musical colours by using a wide selection of extended techniques in her work *Notes on Light* (2006) for violoncello and orchestra. This is a five-movement work dominated by a hauntingly unworldly violoncello line, a source of light that is reflected and absorbed by the orchestral sounds. Each of the movements depicts an imaginary scene and explores different aspects of the relationship between violoncello and orchestra by frequent use of extended techniques that show the full musical colours of the instrument. In order to produce a more ambiguous result in my own work I combined extended techniques within the polyphony such as harmonics, glissandi, scratch-tone, and vibrato as a way of breaking distinct pitches and blurring them. The effect was an extension of musical colours that I expanded further to include sounds that were to me unworldly and ritualistic, such as singing, clapping and the tapping of instruments. As a consequence of having studied *Notes on Light* I incorporated a solo violoncello in 'Anubis'.

Saariaho also wrote an orchestral piece entitled *Orion* (2002) based on Orion, the hunter of Greek mythology, who begins life on earth, is murdered and placed in the sky as a constellation by Zeus. The three-movement work creates contrasts between a sense of propulsive power and immobility to depict the duality of Orion, who was both an active, unruly, earthly being and an ethereal heavenly body. The musical language is a duality between unworldly and earthly, stasis and imbalance. This is particularly evident in the first movement that gradually builds with a predominantly consistent pattern of time signatures toward a raucous climactic ending. I always write time signatures freely and instinctively but when I heard the effectiveness of a consistent pattern in Saariaho's first movement of *Orion* I set out to explore this approach when composing the climactic ending of my first orchestral piece.

Throughout the research I explored ways of extending and enhancing musical colours to depict an ethereal, unworldly mood on the one hand, and a dark, foreboding and volatile effect on the other, often linked to the analogy of the reflection of sun on rippling water that contains dark, turbulent undercurrents, or the strange Egyptian duties and myths of Anubis, Isis and Ammit as a stimulus to generate musical material and techniques, not programmatically or as a direct link, but to fuel my imagination.

During the early stages of this project the musical language that I associated with the ethereal tended to lean towards using polyphony, and I strove to move beyond my natural inclinations in order to produce polarised contrasts. To evoke an agitated and aggressive texture I approached composition from a different angle. Whereas ethereal, unworldly music was subjectively light and calm, restless and forceful music was dark and unpredictable. Considering the approach of other composers proved a useful way of gaining a sense of how I might create these contrasts. For me, a way of creating ethereal calm is by a timeless overlapping of material or freedom in timing, whilst unsettled or goal-driven music needed anchoring in bars and tempo. Both Ligeti and Crumb created a sense of timelessness by omitting barlines and I used the same technique in my solo supporting work *Spryte*, but found that for larger ensembles it was more practical to include barlines and overlap them to create a similar effect. In comparison I anchored goal-driven textures in bars and barlines in a manner similar to Birtwistle's approach in *Earth Dances*.

Challenging questions arose as to the technical implementation of a dark alternative approach and how I might retain overall transparency within these contradictory musical sounds, in the same way that George Benjamin accomplishes in his piece *At First Light*. I used an array of techniques to create a dark imaginary sound-world, such as long, low notes or bubbling interjections of short, fast rhythmical passages, depending upon the musical context. I developed compositional strategies to unsettle polyphonic sections, such as the interruption of downbeat chords, or a slow, steady, unrelenting crotchet beat, and created impetus through the use of rising arpeggiated figures. Overlaying of melodic lines onto static texture instilled a sense of purpose, the catalyst for this idea being the recurring three-note soprano saxophone in Birtwistle's *The Triumph of Time*. This juxtaposition of different musical material to produce a volatile outcome is of interest to George Benjamin who states that he has 'been fascinated by ideas of instability and, above all, the relation between simplicity and complexity.' (Benjamin, 1997, 24)

With a natural leaning toward the overlapping of lines to produce textures, the challenge to compose rhythmic or goal-orientated passages was enormous. Short experimental rhythms

had developed to unsettle or drive textures forward but climaxes required a more prolonged duration of aggressive material to be effective in communicating tension. The first climax in my main work 'Anubis' was created by staggering tutti chords, and the last gradually built on linear polyphonic blurring of textures that evolved into a distinct anchorage of beats within bars and tempo. Through expansion of ideas and techniques during the composition of the first two movements, 'Anubis' and 'Isis', I approached the challenge of a predominantly more rhythmical, volatile third to contrast with their characteristics. *Ionisation* by Edgard Varèse (1934), scored for percussion ensemble of 13 players, was a compositional model that I related to for its strange primordial sounds, being a one-movement primitive piece with rhythmical cells that varied, interacted and expanded into erratic syncopation that is performed by almost entirely un-pitched percussion. Whilst I did not directly imitate Varèse's use of rhythms or instrumentation, the piece served as a model of how rhythms might be used to create contrasting moods within *Anubis*.

1.6 The Creative Process

I always begin a composition with a pencil, blank sheet of paper and the use of a piano. The next step is to imagine the atmosphere I wish to portray and this is often a simple analogy of a dark, restless, and brooding or light, ethereal, and calm sound. There are then several options open to generate the desired material, for example sketching out a graphic score to determine an idea visually, using descriptive words to illustrate the mood, forming a plan to decide the overall structure, choosing chords and rhythms that can be used or drafting out a spontaneous short score. These ideas are then considered and the pitches determined by improvising on piano before committing them to paper. Any structural planning involves the organisation of different concepts of musical ideas relating to thickness in texture, dynamic extremes, light or dark sounds, relaxed or turbulent elements, descriptive words to interpret a particular depiction, and the recurrence of material from a different view-point. I always through-compose and orchestrate directly onto the full score which then acts as a visual aid in the multiple decisions and assessments made once the score organically enfolds. Compositional techniques and ideas are intuitively added to the music as it takes shape on the paper. When composing I consider the plans and sketches I have made but also allow the music to take shape naturally, which becomes easier once the material has been generated initially. This way of assessing the path and shape the music is taking helps to link the previous bars to the next ones as they grow, often in unexpected directions.

The journey to create a highly-charged compositional language rich in polarities that is inspired by external stimuli has taken six years to complete. This process included writing a number of smaller instrumental works to examine and explore polarised musical contrasts in order that this approach might be developed when composing *Anubis*, which was completed in August 2014. Chapter 2 demonstrates the gradual development of techniques that I used in the supporting works, Chapter 3 describes how these techniques were employed in the main project, and Chapter 4 is a reflection on the final portfolio.

CHAPTER TWO:
SUPPORTING WORKS

2.1 Developing a Musical Language Rich in Polarities

This chapter discusses the supporting works included in the portfolio, demonstrating how each served as a small study for aspects that were then developed more fully in *Anubis*. The compositional process for these studies involved improvising at the piano to choose pitch intervals and chords according to the mood I was creating. The chords determined the opening harmonic structure, and the pitch intervals were chosen for the linear aspects such as melody and motif. Once the opening material had been established, it was expanded by instinctively altering and transforming the musical elements until a natural break occurred which enabled me to introduce new ideas, pitches and chords and a different section. I initially created textures by overlapping lines and gradually expanded this technique to make more use of harmony. The studies are presented in the order in which they were composed, demonstrating the way in which my compositional language developed throughout the project.

2.2 *Ring a Ring O'R*oses (2008) (B-flat clarinet, B-flat trumpet, tenor trombone, piano and violin)

In my first supporting work I explored how to depict light and colourful moods in opposition to loud and forthright passages in a cohesive structure. Polyphonic writing features, with the intention of creating a dark and restless musical world. In contrast to the treatment of linear writing full of musical colours explored in my early works I experimented with louder volume markings to create a more pronounced, robust language.
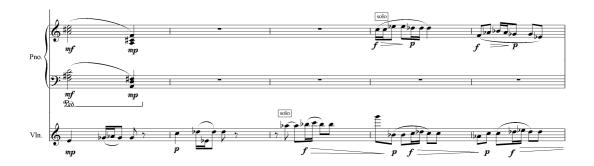
The stimulus for the material came from the commissioning of a piece by the Ekaterinburgh Philharmonic Orchestral players who requested the inclusion of motivic elements from Tatyana Kaluzhnikovoj's book *The Acoustic Text of the Child* (Kaluzhnikoja, 2004) for a concert based on the theme of children. Kaluzhnikovoj had recorded the different vocal sounds that children make and transformed them into musical notation for her book. I chose a particularly long pitch element from Kaluzhnikovoj's book, shown as number 154 (Example 2.1).

Example 2.1: Tatyana Kaluzhnikovoj, *The Acoustic Text of the Child*, no. 154, page 476

From these pitches I experimented with compositional techniques such as using them in transposition and retrograde; for example, the violin melody begins in retrograde a twelfth higher at bar 14. The piano interacts with the violin in conversation at bar 15 (Example 2.2) starting on the eighth note of the original order of pitch elements, transposed an octave higher.

Example 2.2: *Ring a Ring O'Roses*, bar 14: first melody depicts happiness

This was a progression in compositional techniques toward clarity of solo lines. The second melody, introduced at bar 8 by the trumpet (Example 2.3), and re-appearing at bar 42 on the trombone (Example 2.4), is based on an old English nursery rhythm *Ring a Ring O'Roses*, and depicts a dark reminder of the plague of London in 1665. These two melodies were contrasts in emotion; in simple terms that from Tatyana Kaluzhnikovoj portrays a sound of happiness, whilst the English nursery rhythm suggests sadness.

Example 2.3: *Ring a Ring O'Roses*, bar 8: second melody on trumpet depicts sadness

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Example 2.4: *Ring a Ring O'Roses*, **bar 42: second melody on trombone depicts sadness**

I included a rumbling piano first used in my early ensemble piece *Kaleido*, and explored a new idea of a short, fast crescendo on a rising motivic gesture on clarinet and trumpet whilst the trombone is in contrary motion (Example 2.5). The effect of this was to briefly interrupt the music before moving on.

Example 2.5: *Ring a Ring O'Roses*, **bar 28: motivic gesture in contrary motion**

I explored giving greater prominence to melodic lines and made more frequent use of both block chords (b. 80) and arpeggios (b. 90); the first were primarily on piano and the latter were used to herald the move to the final section, an idea that was expanded and used to create unsettled passages and drive the music forward in *Anubis*.

The structural plan was sketched out using descriptive words as stimuli to generate material and the completed work consisted of one movement in six sections (Table 1).

Table 1: *Ring a Ring O'Roses*: plan of completed structure using descriptive words:

Section	Descriptive words
One	Introduction, starts with a low 'rumbling' piano and introduces both themes
Two	'softer' and the piano starts with a higher register
Three	'busier'
Four	a 'combination' of one, two and three sections
Five	folk song is 'distorted' and leads to a climax
Six	'soft' and introduces 'new' with Dies Irae.

After the performance of *Ring a Ring O'Roses* I decided that the structure worked well and I would consider taking this approach when planning future pieces. Rehearsals highlighted the need for a conductor to accommodate the changing time signatures and the violinist and piano to be at the front of the stage, away from the woodwind and brass instruments in order to be heard over the louder volume markings. The work was well-received and considered by the Ekaterinburg Philharmonic Orchestral performers to be the best piece in the concert. The musical language was foreboding, bold and agitated and became an important finger-print in my compositional expansion, whilst the use of prominent brass and woodwind lines increased my interest in the use of this instrumentation for melodic interjections within *Anubis*. The techniques of a rumbling piano and new ideas such as short, fast, rising motifs, exploration of repeated altered motifs and arpeggiated figures were all important developments that were expanded further in the main work.

2.3 *Spryte* (2008) (for amplified solo flute)

The second supporting work, *Spryte*, is an important development in the continued expansion of my interest in using extended techniques and creating a timeless effect alongside aggressive, agitated material. After initially experimenting with the use of sing-tone (simultaneously playing and singing) and harmonics in an earlier piece for flute and piano,

Windhover, the opportunity arose to workshop a solo flute piece and I set out to expand on those initial ideas.

Spryte was through-composed instinctively and organically grew into three sections: Introduction, Section A and Section B, without the need for an original structural plan to generate material, a method I found much easier to implement when writing for a solo instrument. The analogy of a light and unworldly sound continued from *Windhover* and, like the earlier piece, I also incorporated extended techniques, the omission of barlines and the use of pauses to allow time for the flute sounds to echo. Example 2.6 shows the use of simultaneously playing and singing (sing-tone) and the lack of barlines at the opening and introduction of the piece:

Example 2.6: *Spryte*, opening introduction: simultaneously playing and singing (sing-tone)

In contrast to the ethereal introduction the A section is goal-driven, agitated and aggressive with loud polarised pitches, which was a new approach to instil passion and tension within the music (see Example 2.7).

Example 2.7: *Spryte*, section A: loud polarised pitches

This example shows a bolder application of rhythmical changes and pitch extremes when creating a more passionate approach, a compositional progression that I continued to explore in order to develop techniques for the juxtaposition of different characteristics within the main work.

I was pleased with the workshop and later performance of this piece, as I felt it depicted the intangible unworldly analogy that I was aiming for. I therefore incorporated fragments of the melodic line into the first movement of 'Anubis'.

2.4 *Déjà vu* (2009) (B-flat clarinet, piano, viola, violoncello)

The foreboding musical language of *Ring a Ring O'Roses* was the initial stimulus for *Déjà vu*. However, here it was used differently by submerging the individual lines within a thick polyphonic texture that inadvertently produced an edgier result and became a personal fingerprint when I wanted to depict trepidation. I then juxtaposed this characteristic against a softer, thinner texture and continued the clarity of line I had used in *Ring a Ring O'Roses*. To generate musical material for this piece I drafted out the chords and choice of instruments for the antiphonal opening. The through-composed structure was in five sections upon completion. At the opening of the piece the antiphonal melodic writing explored in *Ring a Ring O'Roses* continued but the clarity of individual lines was lost, immersed within the harmonies. Polyphony appears from the beginning, with the clarinet, viola and violoncello lines interacting as if in conversation (Example 2.8)

Example 2.8: *Déjà vu*, **bar 1: a web of foreboding polyphony**

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The use of held chords, introduced in *Ring a Ring O'Roses*, developed to become important announcements of a change in section or texture, for example at the opening of the A Section (b. 17) and before the softer B section (b. 33). The viola line changes from melodic interaction (b. 16) to triplet semiquavers (b. 31) that drive the music forward towards the B Section. This technique of using triplet semiquavers to create impetus was explored further in *Anubis*.

In keeping with my research aim of maintaining a coherent structure of polarised textures, I created a definitive change in the character of the music at B (b. 35) to provide a respite from the intensity of the opening section through a calmer, more ethereal sound-world of a thinner texture. This was in keeping with my intention to juxtapose different characteristics within a single structure. However, when I heard it in performance I felt that this ethereal section was too short, and did not create as much contrast with the harsher, thicker texture as might have, thereby causing an imbalance in the overall structure.

During rehearsals the thick, integrated texture caused extra practice for the individual players but the final performance, at the Birmingham Conservatoire by the CHROMA ensemble, was successful and accurately depicted the juxtaposition of musical characteristics that I had envisaged. This inspired further pursuit in the expansion of both dense polyphony and thin, linear textures; the juxtaposition of dark and light; the use of held chords; triplet semiquavers, and an ending that became the inspiration for the tense climactic conclusion of 'Anubis'. The categorising of texture into background, middle-ground and foreground material was a technique that I used continuously throughout the research.

2.5 *Off the Rails* (2011) (percussion quartet)

The final supporting work was written after the first movement of the *Anubis* triptych was completed and performed, and influenced my thinking for the second and third movements. Whilst writing 'Anubis' I had intentionally depicted calm and ethereal, or agitated and aggressive through linear and textural combinations, but in the next piece I investigated using rhythm to create a sense of difference. Percussive rhythms were initially explored in the third movement of my early ensemble piece *Kaleido* and acted as a sounding board for rhythmical experimentation in this fourth supporting work.

One difficulty posed by this work was how to continue the theme of a combined light ethereal and dark agitated environment in a percussive piece. To do justice to the instrumental forces I felt the piece should be predominantly rhythmical, but up until now I had always used

bold rhythms to create more aggressive and goal-driven material. This would work for the darker mood but not the ethereal. I realised that rhythms might also be perceived as being ritualistic and unworldly, and used this as the stimulus for formulating ideas and sounds for the opening. I continued the unfamiliar, unworldly, and timelessness explored in *Spryte* and approached the idea from a different angle to produce a more foreboding (rather than ethereal) musical language by using clapping; vocal murmurs; timpani glissandi, and tremolando on suspended cymbal and drum. The opening appeared as a timeless interjection of sounds broken by the intermittent overlaying of a melodic vibraphone, whilst the vocal murmurs derived from the 'murmuring' strings in 'Anubis' (see Example 2.9).

Example 2.9: *Off the Rails*, **bar 1: the use of vocal murmurs, clapping and glissandi as a timeless interjection of sounds**

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Once the opening had been established, the next compositional stage was to juxtapose this calmer musical language with a predominantly rhythmical alternative in a coherent structure. The solution was the brief introduction of a rhythmical passage (b. 55) before the opening returns, altered and transformed. Repeating the material (b. 73) in an altered way gave more interest to the textures. When comparing the repeated material with the opening the mood and tempo are similar, although the repeat is a little more rhythmically restless, but the compositional approach is different; for example, maracas replace hand-claps with more predominant rhythms; sleigh bells are introduced, and vocal sounds become loud whisperings of alternative vowel sounds. The varied repeat is sufficiently similar that the opening is

recognisable, sounding like the same material approached from a different angle. I was inspired by the freedom of movement in the middle section of Varèse's *Ionisation* to stretch my own compositional boundaries in order to produce an alternative rhythmically unsettled idea.

Although there are two distinct characteristics – the music is either calm, or erratic and goal-driven – the through-composed structure is treated as being homogenous, an idea that builds and transforms without sectionalisation, in order to keep continuity from the opening to the ending. The strange and ambiguous opening acted as the impetus for further ideas as the musical material instinctively progressed from one bar to the next. With no preconceived ideas of pitches, chords or construction, I chose to through-compose, acting purely on impulse and allowing structural and rhythmical freedom to prevail.

The first rehearsal by students from Birmingham Conservatoire reflected the drive I had anticipated, but tempo changes that were made to slow the opening from quaver = 112 to quaver = 96 caused a sectional effect and loss of momentum in performance. The use of a string drum proved impractical and was replaced by a small gong for ease of fluidity. I preferred the original rehearsal speed and would choose to compromise on the amount of instrumental changes for any future performance. Ideas within this piece proved the catalyst for expansion of techniques such as clapping and vocal murmurs in the second movement of *Anubis* and a predominantly rhythmical third movement.

CHAPTER THREE:

Anubis: A Triptych of Orchestral Pieces

In this chapter I demonstrate how the musical language and techniques explored in the supporting works were incorporated into the *Anubis* triptych. I was inspired by external stimuli such as natural phenomena and Egyptian myth to imagine different moods in order to create a particular texture. The compositional process for each movement began by deciding the opening mood and determining how this would be produced texturally. To create the musical atmosphere, I improvised at the piano choosing chords for the bass material and pitch intervals for the musical elements. From these choices I solidified ideas by instinctively composing the opening texture onto an orchestral template until satisfied that the techniques and instrumentation depicted the required mood. Once the first texture came to fruition the musical elements were extended, altered, or transformed organically. Further advancement was made by gradually adding new material or techniques to this changing texture culminating in an end to the section. The same compositional process was undertaken each time a new mood or section was introduced, and particularly complex textures were sketched out before adding to the score. Different textures were then juxtaposed in order to create coherent and balanced structures that were rich in polarity. The three movements of the triptych are entitled 'Anubis', 'Isis' and 'Ammit'.

3.1 An Individual Sound-World

I initially set out to create a one-movement work that juxtaposed contrasting sound-worlds whilst being influenced by external stimuli. However, when I had the opportunity to enter 'Anubis' into a competition, I had to shorten it to seven minutes in order to meet the requirements. The resulting work was not long enough to create sufficient contrasts in textures, with the ethereal middle section being rather short. This was resolved by extending one movement to three in order to accommodate a calmer second movement, whilst completing the overall structure with a rhythmical third. Recurring musical ideas create a sense of continuity throughout the overall work.

The larger orchestral forces of 'Anubis' provided more possibilities than the solo and ensemble pieces written as supporting works. Textures could be presented alone or combined; musical colours expanded; foreground, middle-ground and background material more clearly interpreted, and a greater diversity of pitch ranges explored with a larger selection of instruments. This allowed me to explore a wider range of ideas to create a polarised musical language.

As I began the first movement I provisionally entitled it *Burnt Earth*, drawing on my interest in natural phenomena; for instance the depiction of colourful sounds was more vividly interpreted by imagining light reflecting on water, whereas the cracking of earth conjured up darker, more turbulent ideas. This interest in stimuli expanded whilst on a trip to Egypt visiting the ancient tombs in the Valley of the Kings and Queens, and the temples of Karnak, Luxor and Hatshepsut. I was struck by the life and beliefs of an ancient world that was far removed from today's perceptions. Several attempts were made before settling on the opening of a piece. Ideas were drafted, drawing on stimuli. For example, when creating ethereal sounds, imagining the reflection of light would inspire musical colours, whereas foreboding or dark textures could be prompted by contemplating ancient Egyptian myths to create an unworldly outcome. The actual source of inspiration was used purely as a tool to generate ideas for a particular musical language. Characterising the music as either light, dark or restless material was an important consideration.

The opening characteristics and texture were taken as a starting point, from which the piece would evolve into the next contrasting mood. These textures were the foundation of the structure, for example in 'Anubis' the opening texture of low chords is introduced as the most important feature. The challenge of juxtaposing different ideas coherently was resolved by disturbing and altering the material in order to move to the next section. To unsettle a texture I would use alternative musical material, such as a gradually rising pitch element, changing harmonies or the introduction of a repeated arpeggiated figure. These transitionary passages grew out of the main sections and are important factors in creating a homogenous structure. In particular there was a focus on textures evolving and transforming, often altered to give the impression of being seen from a different angle. This method reinforced the overall structure and maintained interest as ideas continually transform until they are so tightly woven it becomes difficult to discern the individual sections.

Ligeti's *Atmosphères* was a model for the homogonous polyphony that I developed. Rather than the small intervallic changes within the lines that Ligeti used to reflect different timbres I applied extended techniques to produce musical colours and used wider intervallic

changes. Whilst barlines are omitted in *Atmosphères* to create a sense of freedom, here the barlines are blurred by overlapping them to produce a similar effect.

3.2: First Movement: 'Anubis'

Introduction

'Anubis' was written after I had completed *Ring a Ring O'Roses, Spryte and Déjà vu* and drew on the different techniques I had acquired. Using what I had learnt from the earlier pieces, I was able to create a volatile, diverse musical language inspired by natural phenomena. For example, the eruption of volcanoes, rotating tornadoes and meteorite impacts were used as inspiration for more extreme, turbulent ideas when composing an erratic and aggressive mood. The visual imagery of these events was of less importance than the feelings they evoked, with the ultimate goal being the production of a particular atmosphere rather than a musical description of events.

3.3 Structure

I was happy with the structural plan of *Ring a Ring O'Roses* and decided to follow a similar process of through-composition, creating seven sections with a climax in the fourth for 'Anubis'. However, upon completion the structure was in eight sections with two climaxes: the first in the fourth section and second in the eighth. The catalyst for the climax was the short climactic ending of *Déjà vu* that I wanted to expand further.

The structure of the eight sections is depicted (Table 2 below) according to the general effects and sound-world upon completion of the piece. After the foreboding and restless introduction the musical language relaxes until the end of section B (b. 64) where the textures become erratic and drive towards the first climax. Following this, sections D and E (bb. 87-101) are less volatile and reference earlier musical material before a change in mood at F (b. 115), in anticipation of the climactic ending at G (b. 127).

Table 2: 'Anubis': structural plan with a description of effects and sound-world of the completed piece:

Section	General effects and sound-world
Introduction	foreboding, restless, powerful, raw
A	forceful to relaxed,
B	static and gentle advancement, unsettled briefly,
C	erratic, goal-driven, unrelenting, intense, volatile, climax
D	transitional, unsettled
E	Reminiscent, unsettled, foreboding
F	anticipatory, foreboding, purposeful and restless
G	soft to loud toward an aggressive, climactic ending

3.4 Musical Material

Textures were an important part of the structure that grew from an imaginary idea and developed into individual characteristics. 'Anubis' was intended to be a dark, foreboding and volatile movement and for this reason the inclusion of calm, ethereal or timeless characteristics was comparatively limited. Tables 3 and 4 (below) describe the textural moods within the work:

Table 3: 'Anubis': sections and bars of dark textural moods:

Section	Bar	Mood and effect
Introduction	1 - 23	'dark', foreboding, restless,
	24 - 27	transitional, agitated
B	64 - 66	transitional, unsettled, brooding, agitated
C	67 - 86	erratic, goal-driven, unrelenting, intense, volatile, climactic
E	101 - 114	reminiscent, unsettled, foreboding, brooding,
F	115 - 126	anticipatory, foreboding, purposeful, restless
G	127 - 159	Relaxed to goal driven, aggressive, climactic

Table 4: 'Anubis': sections and bars of light textural moods

Section	Bar	Mood and effect
A	40 - 42	transitional, shimmering
B	43 - 63	soft, static and gentle advancement, briefly unsettled

The softer moods are predominantly seen in the A and B sections, although the latter still shows signs of being unsettled. Ethereal or lighter musical material is applied throughout the structure but often in a subsidiary role to enhance or lift the more foreboding moods. This method of combining different characteristics created waves of sound within 'Anubis' and became a fingerprint of my musical style. For example, in the opening a dark, ominous and restless mood is created by low, sustained chords in the double bass, violoncello, brass and woodwind (Example 3.1). This mood is then lifted by a chord of higher pitches in the viola and violin and the interjection of an ethereal flute fragment. This fragmented flute melody was taken directly from my supporting work *Spryte* (see Example 2.6) and appears regularly in 'Anubis'.

Example 3.1: 'Anubis', bar 1, introduction: texture of dark chords in woodwind and brass instruments

Strings are used to lift the mood here, whereas a cluster of woodwind motifs are used to lighten the music at bar 18, and indicate that the music is transforming (Example 3.2).

Example 3.2: 'Anubis', bar 18, introduction: texture of clustered woodwind motifs

The agitated music shifts from one idea to the next with piano block chords and low rumblings (both used in *Ring a Ring O'Roses*), tremolando in viola, timpani and marimba, triplet semiquaver conga drums and a recurring interjection of a trumpet motif. These connecting passages between sections were an important part of the overall structure.

The B section (bb. 43-52) contains the most ethereal musical material in the movement. The texture is thin, with soft woodwind chords, motivic overlaying of flutes and the introduction of a solo violin. This calm, homogenous texture gently advances with regular crotchets in the harp. The only motif to unsettle the mood is repeated loudly on the trombones initially at bar 45: a figure that was later included in 'Ammit' to unify the two movements.

At bar 53 a string passage begins that is described in the score as 'murmurings' (these murmuring strings inspired the inclusion of a murmuring voice in *Off the Rails*). The model of Ligeti's *Atmosphères* came to mind when writing this texture, as I wished to create a homogenous polyphonic texture that continually moved surreptitiously. In order to devise my own approach, I planned out the pitches giving each string line two notes, starting with violoncello on low D and E, with a modal cluster gradually building from the bass to the top. Five rhythmic patterns and a longer note were then added to the pitch cluster, alternating the rhythm between the strings so that they were constantly overlapping with one other. The effect of this quiet modal murmuring at bar 53 was to create a background of musical colours, overridden by the motivic interjections, which served to briefly unsettle the music. On the return of the murmuring string texture for a second time at bar 64 the rhythms are shorter, the lower strings remain modal, the violins alter to a chromatic pitch cluster and the volume becomes louder. This creates a sense of greater tension and urgency to disrupt the overall texture in a transitional passage leading to section C (see Example 3.3).

Example 3.3: 'Anubis', bar 64, section B: texture of murmuring strings

Section C (bb. 67-86) incorporates the first climax in the movement: a tense, forthright passage of staggered woodwind, brass, percussion and harp chords that appears for the first time at bar 71, recurring later with altered instrumentation. The second appearance of staggered chords, at bar 76, is scored for the majority of the orchestra with different harmonies. At its third appearance (b. 84) it is extended to three bars, to intensify this sense of boldness. At this point the musical language is driven forward by trombones marked 'in rilievo', an arpeggiated piano (initially a technique used in *Ring a Ring O'Roses*), and repeated rhythmic timpani and conga drum. The majority of the brass section and lower woodwind are tacet to allow this texture to be heard. The climax is created by violins playing long held notes that rise to high pitches. Throughout this section time signatures are unpredictable and there are references to previous musical ideas, for example tutti strings with a down and up-bow chord from bar 28 and the solo violin melody from bar 49, altered and integrated within new material to homogenise the overall structure (in bars 71 and 79 respectively). Whilst a more erratic, goal-driven and volatile sound-world is created in this climax, this is developed more fully in the longer climax that appears at the end of the piece.

As part of my approach of juxtaposing musical polarities sections D (bb. 87-100) and E (bb. 101-114) are more relaxed; the high strings remain, keeping continuity between sections D and E, but at a quieter dynamic as they take on a more subsidiary role. The reiteration of musical characteristics continues and is expanded to include low sustained chords, clustered motivic woodwind and murmuring strings from the introduction and B section. These techniques released the tension, homogenised the overall structure of 'Anubis' and created an unsettled, foreboding and brooding environment in preparation for the gradual move to a new idea in section F (bb. 115-126).

Section F is introduced by a string tremolando that begins the advance towards the second and final climax and the ending of the piece settling into a 4/4, 6/4 pattern of time signatures inspired by Kaija Saariaho's *Orion*. After each repeat of the 6/4 time signature I introduced a different idea. The first is the viola's repeated rising crotchet motif whilst brass and woodwind intertwine linearly at bar 120. This creates a regular pulse, assisted by oboe, trumpet and harps, whilst the thin-textured polyphony overlaps the barlines, a quiet passage of anticipation that creates a foreboding mood.

Example 3.4: 'Anubis', bar 121, section F: texture of relaxed and anchored musical material

From this material comes the climax at bar 141, with falling pitches in the woodwind, string tremolando and a rumbling piano. This free-time piano motif drives the music to the last bar, in an aggressive and goal-driven manner reinforced by a repeated rhythm in the timpani, trumpet, and trombone.

Textures were an important part of this movement's integrated and dense musical language. They were enhanced by over-laying and interjecting melodic ideas such as the fragmented *Spryte* melody that recurs throughout the A and B section, the cor anglais melody that is performed in unison with the violin at bar 36, a solo violin melody at bars 49, 80, and a trombone melody at bar 85.

Motifs were also added for interest or used to punctuate the texture; for example, a short motivic interaction between violoncello and trumpet can be seen at bar 22 where the instruments are in conversation, and a loud, recurring, grotesque trombone motif (Example 3.5) interjects in bars 43, 45, 53, 56, 63, 66, and 78. The latter reappears in 'Ammit' to connect the two outer movements of the triptych.

Example 3.5: 'Anubis', bar 43, section B: grotesque trombone motif

Gestures were used to interrupt the material or herald a new idea; for example, a clarinet gesture at bar 53 announces a different textural mood, and gestural woodwind, first used in *Ring a Ring O'Roses* (Example 2.5), interrupt the texture at bar 15. This fast rising woodwind element heralds a new idea at bars 27 and 39. A rising viola crotchet figure (b.120) is used to keep momentum and the sense of a regular pulse.

3.5 Summary

Textures form an important part of 'Anubis' where they are used to create different moods that are juxtaposed, resulting in a dialogue of polarities. These textures fluctuate and organically grow from one idea to the next. The structure includes characteristics ranging

from calm and ethereal to aggressive and agitated, and textures that move from dense to thin and undulating. The inspiration for this musical material came from ideas and techniques developed in the supporting works, combined with the external stimuli of natural phenomena and ancient Egyptian myths to enhance the creation of light and dark sounds.

'Anubis' expands and develops several techniques that were used in the supporting works, such as held chords from *Ring a Ring O'Roses* (b. 80) that became chords in down and up-bow strings, and staggering climactic material. Polyphony is expanded in different ways through the use of motivic clusters in the woodwind (Example 3.2), murmuring strings (Example 3.3) and musical material that is anchored in time signatures but overlaps bars and barlines for freedom (Example 3.4). The integration of polarised textures matured and was overlaid by melodies such as the flute solo of *Spryte* (Example 2.6) and gestures that interrupt, for example a rising woodwind gesture first used in *Ring a Ring O'Roses* (this piece was also the catalyst for interacting motifs as if in conversation). As well as expanding on the techniques I had learned in the supporting works, I introduced new ideas such as the long held low chords and a time signature pattern for the second climax. Polarised textures were more successfully integrated to create a coherent structure and transforming passages became an important part of the musical language. These techniques created a volatile sound-world and produced ideas that were used in the second and third movements.

I was very pleased with the final performance of 'Anubis' by students of the Birmingham Conservatoire Orchestra and surprised that the juxtaposition of different textures caused wave-like motions in the structure, something that has become a finger-print of my individual style. It was the first time I had heard my orchestral work live and felt that it was probably the best piece I had written, creating the impetus to write the second and third movement.

3.6 Second Movement: 'Isis'

Introduction

Having initially envisaged 'Anubis' as a standalone work, I went on to add a second and third movement, building on my experience of using compositional techniques to create a dialogue of polarities, similarly inspired by external stimuli. As an alternative approach to 'Anubis' I decided to compose an atmosphere that was calmer and more colourful. At first I found it difficult to decide on the material for this more ethereal approach, but after writing *Off the*

Rails I realised I had created textures here similar to that for which I was searching for 'Isis', and thus incorporated some ideas from this percussion piece, such as the opening vocal murmuring. Surprisingly, I had chosen a more foreboding than ethereal musical language to create an unworldly environment. I decided to give the violin and 'cellos more variety and therefore split them into four lines each. This gave me a wider scope to expand the musical colours by giving each of the lines different characteristics, rhythms and pitches.

The decision to use the title of the Egyptian god Anubis for the triptych became the catalyst for the subtitles of the second and third movements. After completing the second movement I chose to name it after the goddess Isis. In her book the *Egyptian Myth*, Geraldine Pinch describes her as a mother who:

> gave birth to Horus in the marshes. When she leaves him to find food he becomes very ill. The distraught Isis summons the marsh people to help her. A local wise woman suggests that baby Horus has been bitten by a snake. Isis shrieks over and over again "Horus has been bitten!". Her cries stop the boat of Ra as it crosses the heavens. Thoth comes down from the Sun boat to see what has happened. Isis complains that her innocent son has been poisoned. Thoth saves the future of the divine order by healing Horus with the 'breath of life'. (Pinch, 2004, p 17)

The myth describes the caring side of Isis as a mother, connecting with the quieter textures of this second movement. She was also believed to be the patroness of nature and magic, which corresponds to the more foreboding and volatile aspects of the music, described by Pinch as 'Widow of Osiris, mother of Horus and Mistress of Magic'. (Pinch, 2004, p 35)

3.7 Structure

Before beginning the piece I briefly planned seven sections for the overall structure, as I had with both *Ring a Ring O'Roses* and 'Anubis'. Structural planning was used as a guide and stimulus to instinctively generate ideas. On completion the structure was in eight sections rather than seven. Table 5 (below) describes the general effects and sound-world for each section.

Table 5: 'Isis': structural plan with a description of effects and sound-world of the completed piece:

Section	General effect and sound-world
A	timeless, unworldly, primitive, foreboding, drifting, restless
B	unsettled, mysterious, foreboding, transforming
C	ethereal, light, musically colourful
D	ethereal, light with foreboding inflections
E	relaxed, musically colourful, with dark inflections
F	timeless, drifting, unworldly, mysterious, ethereal with foreboding inflections
G	unsettled, animated, volatile, anticipatory, tension and release
H	goal-driven, unrelenting, aggressive, powerful, punctuating, dark, bubbling, swirling, ends suddenly; softly reminiscent

The overall musical language is not as volatile as 'Anubis' and there is less emphasis on changing ideas until the climax at the end of the piece. I had intended to compose a second movement that was ethereal and calm throughout, but whilst composing decided that the structure needed further interest should the piece be performed as a stand-alone movement and therefore added a climax.

3.8 Musical Material

Textures remained an important part of my compositional approach and were the 'building blocks' to create a particular effect and sound-world. 'Isis' depicts a soporific undulating sound-world of musical colours for the majority of the movement with surreptitious textural changes. In the following tables I have described the mood and effects within the sections.

Table 6: 'Isis': sections and bars of foreboding and restless textural moods:

Section	Bar	Mood and effect
A	1 - 21	timeless, unworldly, primitive, foreboding, drifting, restless
B	22 - 34	unsettled, mysterious, foreboding, transforming

Table 7: 'Isis': sections and bars of light musically colourful textural moods:

Section	Bar	Mood and effect
C	35 - 45	ethereal, light, musically colourful
D	46 - 69	ethereal, light with foreboding inflections
E	70 - 88	relaxed, musically colourful, with dark inflections
F	89 - 122	timeless, drifting, unworldly, mysterious, ethereal with foreboding inflections

Table 8: 'Isis': section and bars of dark aggressive textural moods:

Section	Bar	Mood and effect
G	123 - 154	unsettled, animated, volatile, anticipatory, tension and release
H	155 - 180	goal-driven, unrelenting, aggressive, powerful, punctuating, dark, bubbling, swirling

Whilst I had initially intended to create a light atmosphere, I felt that this needed to be balanced by darker material, resulting in a mood that is more accurately described as foreboding. Throughout the majority of the structure the textures are soft and quiet with an underlying unsettling effect that creates the waves of sound initially heard in 'Anubis'.

At the opening of 'Isis' I expanded the glissandi first used in *Off the Rails* (Example 2.8) to other instruments, for instance the violoncello, cymbal, gong and bass-drum, and included pause bars (first introduced in *Déjà vu*) to create a sense of timelessness. A new idea

of a recurring melodic bass clarinet was added as a pedal point throughout sections A-E. The thin texture is formed by an interjection of separate ideas to create a homogenous sound-world that grows increasingly restless in the connecting passage between A and B sections (bb. 15-21).

There is a brief return to a calmer section at B (b. 22) with overlapping violin chords creating a back-drop for the melodic cor anglais and flute (the flute echoing the fragmented *Spryte* melody from 'Anubis'). The overall timeless impression remains, but is transformed by adding different ideas and instrumentation to the base material. For example, the opening glissandi from bar 1 are now found in the violoncello and timpani parts, and the homogenous texture formed initially by the interjection of separate ideas now includes a background of overlapping strings. The unsettling string tremolandi used in the A section continue to disturb in the connecting passage between sections B and C (bb. 27-34) this time the viola starts with a short semitone motif that swaps to violoncello and double bass in order to travel to lower pitches, before being lifted by the higher-pitched violins at bar 30. This technique of lifting dark textures was used at the opening of 'Anubis'. The following example (Example 3.6) shows this transformation of material from bar 27:

Example 3.6: 'Isis', bar 27: an unsettled, foreboding textural mood

This fluctuation between polarised pitches and textural material created a wave-like motion in the overall effect. The rising crotchet violoncello gesture (Example 3.6) at bar 30 was first included in 'Anubis' in the violas (b. 120) to keep the momentum of a regular pulse and here it is used to stabilise the music and connects the two movements.

In comparison to the first two sections, which are foreboding and restless, sections C-F (bb. 35-122) are calm and musically colourful. The musical language is light and textures are thin, quietly transforming. These textures are overlaid by melodies that come to the fore on violins, cor anglais, horns, crotales and trumpet and a solo melody on the violoncello. The initial idea for employing the violoncello as a solo instrument came from Saariaho's *Notes on Light*, although the extended techniques found in that work are not used in *Anubis*.

Also in this section is the technique of strings moving from scratch-tone to wide vibrato that I introduced in 'Anubis' and described as 'shimmering' strings. A further point of

interest is the sparing use of a tubular bell to complete one idea and announce new material at the end of section D and in section E (bb. 60-88). Throughout sections C to F (bb. 35-122) the strings create musical colours that are overlaid by melodies:

Example 3.7: 'Isis', bar 93: a light musically colourful textural mood

Further ideas were added to this base material to add interest and movement to the relatively static texture, such as an altered quintuplet quaver motif that alternates between marimba, celesta and piano from bar 94 onwards.

The calm mood of F is interrupted by a repeated quaver and rest pattern on viola, violin and violoncello (b. 119) that moves the music forward, leading to the goal-driven sections G to H (bb. 123-180). The technique of creating impetus by repeating quavers followed by a rest was first implemented with semiquavers on viola in *Déjà vu* (b. 31). At G this repeated pattern spreads through the strings, rising to woodwind and brass before a 3/8 pause bar. In table 8 I have described this effect as 'tension and release' in the context of a dark, aggressive textural mood. The tension is created by the driving quaver pattern and rising pitches, then released by a woodwind motivic cluster, sliding bass trombone and pause at bar 135. This idea occurs three times, each time transformed, whilst in the background low brass and strings

punctuate, preparing the way for a more prominent use of this low bubbling effect in section H. The trombones play an important part in adding further impetus to this section by regularly interjecting short motifs to drive the textures forward. The texture is erratic and fluctuates between goal-driven quaver patterns and timeless overlapping material.

The trombones become a dominant feature in the final section, driving the music forward and anchoring the ideas in bars (from b. 155). The environment is dark, aggressive and powerful, suggestive of the goddess Isis in her role as patroness of magic. This dark texture is created by using low woodwind, brass, strings and percussion to punctuate a regular quaver pattern that is syncopated in horns, and bubbling quavers that are overlaid by arpeggiated strings in bar 161. The arpeggios create a swirling effect, a different textural layer to overlap the anchored barlines; initially used in *Ring a Ring O'Roses*, these arpeggios are developed and expanded for this climactic section. This aggressive, goal-driven passage ends (b. 175) by applying earlier release techniques and an echoing horn reiterating an earlier trumpet melody from bar 93.

Textures were depicted in different ways according to the atmosphere I wished to create. From sections A-F these textures are foreboding or musically colourful, timeless and unworldly, whilst G-H has an erratic sense of tension and release that develops into an aggressive, goal-driven piece, anchored in bars and barlines.

Melodies that would not have been audible in loud, aggressive passages were employed within the quietly transforming textures of sections A-F. These melodies provided the foreground to the textures and created further interest and purpose to the relatively static sections, in a similar manner to Birtwistle's *Triumph of Time*. The melodies in 'Isis' often interact with one another, for example the violins at bar 6 are answered by a cor anglais in bar 7, a solo violin in bar 50 is followed by a solo violoncello in bar 52, and a melodic horn in bar 62 by crotales in bar 67. This antiphony is similar to the use of instruments in George Crumb's *Vox Balaenae*, where they appear to be in conversation.

Motifs, that appear as woodwind clusters in 'Anubis' (Example 3.2), are similarly used in 'Isis'. A motivic woodwind cluster connects the material between sections D to E (b. 69) and releases the tension in section G (b. 135). Motifs were used to add interest and purpose to relatively static textures, to drive the music forward in more goal-driven sections and to transfer pitches from high to low.

The gestures that were used to interrupt, or herald a new idea in 'Anubis' played a less prominent role in this movement as I intended the textures to transform gradually in the quieter sections. The most significant gestures in 'Isis' are a descending piano figure at the

opening that is repeated throughout the movement, and a rising crotchet gesture (b. 30) that was first heard in 'Anubis' (b. 120).

3.9 Summary

The intention in 'Isis' was to create a more ethereal, calm and light movement to contrast with the dark characteristics of 'Anubis'. Influenced by the sound-world and techniques I had used in *Off the Rails* I created an opening mood that was more foreboding than light, in the form of an unworldly atmosphere that slowly settles into quietly transforming textures. The models of Ligeti's *Atmosphères* and Crumb's *Vox Balaenae* had initially served as stimuli when creating a sense of timeless overlapping of lines and extension of musical colours, and as I developed my own approach to composing an ethereal and light musical language I drew on the concept of an imaginary unknown world as a stimulus to produce the required result. The strings played an important part in this movement and therefore I expanded them to give each line different characteristics and musical colours within the textures. The overlapping of strings created glimmers of light that are particularly evident in section F, where they predominantly play alone. Whilst I originally intended to compose an entirely ethereal and calm movement, the inclusion of a climactic ending not only made the music more interesting, were 'Isis' to be performed as a standalone work, but also continued my research into the juxtaposition of polarised textures. The climax was inspired by the approach taken at the end of 'Anubis' but with additional ideas such as bubbling low quavers and arpeggiated strings. I drew on techniques as they developed from one piece to the next such as a rising crotchet gesture and fragmented flute melody initially used in 'Anubis' that were also incorporated into 'Isis'.

I was pleased with the performance of the piece by students from Birmingham Conservatoire. An array of ideas and musical colours were depicted, despite the initial tentative approach by the string players, due to the division of string sections into several different lines. This expansion worked well for the ethereal sections of 'Isis' but would be less appropriate for the third movement, which is predominantly rhythmical. I observed that motifs were very important in this piece, with those in the horns being particularly effective, but on occasion the lower pitches from instruments such as the piano, harps and contrabassoon were not always heard.

3.10 Third Movement: 'Ammit'

Introduction

In keeping with my intention to create polarised textures for the triptych of orchestral pieces, the final movement is volatile, aggressive, rhythmical and dark. Having completed 'Anubis' and 'Isis', and drawing on my experience of writing *Off the Rails*, my approach had developed, particularly with regards to exploring rhythms. The difference between this movement and the first two is the concentration of volatile textures. Whereas 'Anubis' fluctuates between rhythmical and calm sounds and 'Isis' quietly transforms ideas until the goal-driven ending, 'Ammit' remains rhythmical throughout. The only release from this continuity is during the foreboding C section when glimmers of light musical material appear. The technique of sustaining rhythmical characteristics for the majority of the movement was a new approach, in comparison to the juxtaposition of different textural ideas found in the first two movements. This creates a sense of musical polarities between the calmer 'Isis' and more volatile 'Ammit' and extends the tension of the triptych's overall ending. The musical material at the opening of 'Ammit' is echoed throughout the movement by varying, altering and overlaying ideas that transform into short climaxes, acting as transitional passages that became an important part of the sections within the overall structure.

Whilst both the process of exploring rhythmical ideas in *Off the Rails* and the experience of writing aggressive climaxes within 'Anubis' and 'Isis' were important, it was still necessary to draw on the imagination of an unworldly view in order to create 'Ammit'. Drawing on the darker aspects of natural phenomena such as turbulent undercurrents of deep water or the barbaric duties of the Egyptian gods fuelled the imagination to create a more volatile and unworldly atmosphere. These served as stimuli in the compositional process.

To continue the theme of Egyptian gods I chose Ammit as being appropriate for the third movement, connecting her funereal duties to my dark textures. Both Ammit and Anubis worked in the Hall of the Two Truths, thereby creating a link between the first and third movements. George Hart describes Ammit as an:

> underworld goddess whose name, 'Devouress of the Dead', aptly conveys her grim
> role as annihilator of those who have led wicked lives on earth. In funerary papyri she
> is frequently depicted in the vignette showing the dead person's heart in the Hall of
> the Two Truths…….. Her head is mainly a crocodile, her front legs and middle

represent a lion or leopard and her back legs become the ample rear of a hippopotamus. (Hart, 1986, 157-158)

The barbaric duties of this goddess connected to the aggressive and volatile environment that I had created in 'Ammit'.

3.11 Structure

As an alternative to planning the structure of this movement in sections I drafted out short-scores as a form of stimulus to create ideas for the opening. The final piece is in five sections, whereas 'Anubis' and 'Isis' each have eight. In 'Ammit' the same textural ideas recur frequently, which worked better with fewer sections. Table 9 (below) gives a description of the general effects and sound-world for each section within the overall structure.

Table 9: 'Ammit': structural plan with a description of effects and sound-world of the completed piece:

Section	General effect and sound-world
A	rhythmical, aggressive, agitated, erratic, 'dark' and 'foreboding' – to goal-driven, climactic
B	'foreboding' unsettled – to directional
C	unsettled, 'foreboding' sound-world with 'light' material glimmering through – to rhythmical, aggressive, agitated, goal-driven, climactic 'dark'
D	rhythmical, aggressive, agitated, erratic, unrelenting 'dark' – to goal-driven, climactic 'dark' 'bubbling'
E	rhythmical, aggressive, agitated, erratic, unrelenting goal-driven, climactic 'dark' 'bubbling'

3.12 Musical Material

Textures remained an important element in creating an aggressive and volatile atmosphere throughout this movement. The short climactic passages between the sections produced transitional musical material that was sustained and became more relevant to the overall structure. Table 10 demonstrates sections that are dark and aggressive; table 11 is unsettled

and foreboding; and table 12 shows the connecting passages between the sections that are directional and/or climactic.

Table 10: 'Ammit': sections and bars of dark aggressive textural moods:

Section	Bar	Mood and effect
A	1-44	rhythmical, aggressive, agitated, erratic, 'dark' and 'foreboding'
D	165-193	rhythmical, aggressive, agitated, erratic, unrelenting 'dark'
E	225-282	rhythmical, aggressive, agitated, erratic, unrelenting goal-driven, climactic 'dark' 'bubbling'

Table 11: 'Ammit': sections and bars of 'foreboding' and restless with occasional 'light' calm textural moods:

Section	Bar	Mood and effect
B	67-93	'foreboding' unsettled
C	103-134	unsettled and fluctuates between 'foreboding' and 'light'

Table 12: 'Ammit': sections and bars of connecting passages that are directional, climactic textural moods:

Section	Bar	Mood and effect
A	45-66	rhythmical, aggressive, agitated, goal-driven, climactic 'dark'
B	94-102	directional
C	135-164	rhythmical, aggressive, agitated, goal-driven, climactic 'dark'
D	194-224	rhythmical, aggressive, agitated, erratic, goal-driven, climactic 'dark' 'bubbling'

The textures for this movement were often formed from a combination of motifs and rhythms. The opening rhythmical idea grew organically, transformed and was repeated throughout the sections to produce a sense of coherence throughout the movement. The opening is dominated by a triplet quaver announced on trumpet, trombones and timpani (Example 3.8).

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Example 3.8: 'Ammit', bar 1: first idea announced on trumpet, trombone and timpani

The texture surrounding this triplet figure consists of: low notes on contrabassoon, bass trombone, tuba, and double-bass; an interjection of quavers from harps, violoncello and double bass; repeated horns; rumbling piano; gestural flutes and quintuplet violas. All of these aspects, combined with the triplet quaver motif, were designed to create a dark aggressive mood at the outset.

A second idea appears in bar 5, with quavers in woodwind, trombones and percussion, and quintuplet strings, whilst harps continue to interject, joined by double bass. This second idea creates an aggressive and goal-driven effect. (Example 3.9)

Example 3.9: 'Ammit', bar 5: the second idea of quaver woodwind

These two ideas remain throughout the A section (bb. 1-66) and dominate the movement overall, altered and transformed by different instrumentation, pitches or overlaid ideas. For example, in bars 26 to 31 the first idea appears with different instrumentation: triplets in the violins, clarinets and bassoons, whilst quintuplets remain in strings. Low pitched strings play down- and up-bow chords and a pedal note, and woodblocks come to the fore with a new repeated rhythmical pattern. A further point of interest is a reminder of the grotesque motif from 'Anubis' heard on the trumpets in bar 29. The first idea is integrated with the second from bars 32-41 and the two ideas transform into the first climax (b. 45) that ends on repeated notes across 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4 (bb. 64-66). These three bars are approached by high strings, an idea that was first used to create tension in section C of 'Anubis' (bb. 85-86).

Section B of 'Ammit' opens with a nod to the first idea in the form of triplets on trombones and timpani, and a reiteration of the rumbling piano in bar 67. Aspects of the first and second ideas appear throughout this section, altered and transformed by the omission of the earlier woodwind quavers to allow for a less aggressive, more 'foreboding' section to prevail. Different musical material is then added against this, for example: air on flutes, bass trombone and tuba; muted trumpet; low notes on contra-bassoon and double-bass, and glissandi on violoncello, timpani, trombone and melodic horns. These techniques create the effect of an intangible background of musical sounds. There is a short transitional passage toward section C from bar 94 with a mood that is foreboding and restless.

Section C (bb.103-164) remains unsettled and fluctuates between foreboding and light textural moods. Musical features from earlier on in the movement appear in the background, such as triplet quavers, quintuplets and glissandi. The mood continues to fluctuate: melodic woodwind, horns and violins are introduced to create a lighter mood along with sweeping motivic woodwind clusters in bar 112 (a compositional technique used in both 'Anubis' and 'Isis'), considered to be the third textural fingerprint, whilst a gestural dotted-crotchet, quaver, crotchet pattern in the brass and violoncello is integrated into the texture to convey a more apprehensive sound-world. The climax at the end of C is similar to the ending of section A with a merging of the first and second ideas and repeated notes across 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4 (b.162). The repeated notes prepare the way for the D section.

The textural mood for the D section (bb. 165-224) is aggressive, erratic, rhythmical, agitated, and unrelenting, and comprises the fourth textural idea. This musical language is created by loud and low punctuating down-bow violoncello quavers, low triplet harps and swirling string arpeggios interjected by held brass chords and the motif first used in 'Anubis' (Example 3.5) and described as grotesque. String down-bow chords are strengthened at bar

180 with the addition of tuba and marimba. Tremolando glissandi in the strings at bar 183 and a repeat of down and up-bow chords, first used at the opening, become erratic punctuations in the woodwind, brass and low strings in bar 185: techniques that prepare the way for the climactic ending. Tension builds with staggered tutti chords in bar 201, a technique that was first applied in 'Anubis' and that connects the two outer movements. The ending uses the same idea of repeated notes across 2/4, 3/4 and 4/4 that were used at the end of sections A and C but is less dramatic.

Section E (b. 225-282) begins with an amalgamation of ideas from the first, second and third textural ideas. Triplet quavers begin the section and are overlaid by a sweeping motivic woodwind cluster and quintuplet strings, creating a mood that is unsettled, foreboding and dark. The music continues to alter and be transformed through the appearance of these textural ideas, whilst it is overlaid by woodwind, horn and violin melodies from section C. Bar 235 includes the fifth textural idea: loud, low punctuating notes on double bass reinforced by tuba. The tension builds through the interaction of rhythmical violins using broadened pitch ranges, repeated quaver harps, and a gestural descending piano and contrabassoon. This culminates in a dark bubbling effect from a rumbling piano and low punctuating tuba in bar 250. This aggressive texture thickens and is repeated four times from bar 264 before the movement dies away with arpeggiated and tremolandi glissandi strings; long held notes in the woodwind and brass; trumpet and horn valve clicks; air on trombones; tremolando timpani, and low triplet harps. A sense of calm and timelessness is created from these techniques, creating a sense of finality to the aggressive goal-driven textures.

This movement is predominantly rhythmical and goal-driven and therefore melodies were rarely used, aside from in section C where more lyrical passages in the woodwind, horns and violins lighten the foreboding mood, and their repetition at the opening of section E, which functions as a temporary release from the preceding climactic section. The motivic woodwind clusters that featured in 'Anubis' and 'Isis' similarly appear in this movement to create a more relaxed atmosphere, however the majority of motifs were integrated in the overall rhythmical texture, rather than in isolation. The most significant motif used initially in 'Anubis' (Example 3.5) is repeated in 'Ammit' (b. 29), connecting the two outer movements of the triptych.

Throughout the project gestures were used to interrupt the musical material or herald a new idea; the first gesture in 'Ammit' appears in the flutes in bar 3 at the conclusion of the first textural idea and heralding the second. Other gestures include a dotted-crotchet, quaver, crotchet pattern in the brass and violoncello (for example, at bar 116) that disturbs the lighter

mood of the melodic woodwind, and a descending piano and contrabassoon gesture at bar 249 that denotes the start of a dark and bubbling texture.

3.13 Summary

The stimulus for this movement came from the rhythmical sections of *Off the Rails* and the goal-driven climaxes of 'Anubis' and 'Isis'. 'Ammit' concentrates more directly on aggressive, dark textures throughout, to contrast with the ethereal portrayal of 'Isis' and the juxtaposition of different polarised ideas within a single structure found in both 'Anubis' and 'Isis'. The rhythmically aggressive opening ideas are continually reiterated in order to homogenise the overall structure. The only release from this goal-driven musical material is implemented in the more foreboding and unsettled B and C sections. At the opening to C melodies overlay the texture to create a glimmer of light within this ominous environment. Section D introduces low punctuating quavers and swirling arpeggios that expand in section E to include a rumbling and gestural piano and contrabassoon. I would describe this effect as dark and bubbling. A link is created between 'Anubis' and 'Ammit' through the use of a memorable motif and staggered chords. This movement contrasts the moods of 'Anubis' and 'Isis' with musical material that is predominantly rhythmical and aggressive.

3.14 Summary of the *Anubis* Triptych

This triptych of orchestral pieces demonstrates the culmination of the project, with a clear use of juxtaposed moods to create a polarised musical language. Musical textures were used to portray ethereal and timeless, foreboding and unsettled, and dark and volatile moods. 'Anubis' drew on the stimulus of natural phenomena and expanded several techniques used in the supporting works. In 'Isis' these techniques were developed further using the stimulus of the opening to *Off the Rails*. The textures for 'Ammit' came from an amalgamation of ideas and techniques that had developed in the first two movements and the influence of rhythms explored in *Off the Rails*. As well as drawing on techniques and sound-worlds as they developed from piece to piece I used the stimuli of natural phenomena or Egyptian myth to fuel my imagination when creating a particular effect. Each movement represents a different overall characteristic: 'Anubis' is dark, foreboding and volatile, 'Isis' is foreboding with glimmers of light, and 'Ammit' is dark, volatile, aggressive and rhythmical. 'Isis' was initially intended to sound light and ethereal throughout but I felt that it needed to be balanced

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by darker material resulting in a contrasting mood that was foreboding. 'Anubis' and 'Isis' use different ideas to develop contrasts whereas 'Ammit' integrates the first two musical elements throughout the movement. Each textural idea connects to the next by organic growth and transformation that creates important musical material in the overall structure. All three movements explore climaxes: 'Anubis' uses staggered chords for the first and gradually builds the second with a regular time-signature pattern; 'Isis' explores tension and release, a bubbling, low punctuating quaver pattern and swirling strings, and 'Ammit' extends the bubbling, low punctuation and swirling strings further, prolonging the dark and volatile ending to the piece. Techniques and textural moods that were initially used in the supporting works were developed to create the *Anubis* triptych, in which the compositional language of musical contradictions focussed on the use of texture in a heightened structural capacity to create a dialogue of polarities.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.1 Conclusion

When I started this project two clear research questions emerged, firstly concerning the impact that external stimuli had on a composition, and secondly how I could explore this influence and use textures to create a musical language rich in polarities, where contrasting sound-worlds are juxtaposed in a balanced structure.

My project began by focussing on a different mood or texture for each composition. Every piece explored a new idea and drew on musical material and techniques from the preceding work. For example, *Ring a Ring O'Roses* used bold dynamics and clarity of line in antiphonal conversation; *Spryte* omitted barlines and used extended techniques; *Déjà vu* juxtaposed dense polyphony against thin textures and included a climactic ending, and *Off the Rails* explored rhythms within erratic timing and the creation of a ritualistic and unworldly environment. I was initially influenced by my research into the works of a diverse range of composers such as Crumb, Ligeti, Birtwistle, Benjamin and Saariaho. These composers were of interest as models and appealed to my own exploration of a new and individual approach. After experimenting with different ideas from these composers in the supporting works, I then drew on the supporting works when composing *Anubis*. Natural phenomena and Egyptian mythology provided an ideal stimulus because of the range of subject matter: the eruption of a volcano or reflections of light served to produce more intense moods for the creation of alternatively dark and light musical material. As I intended to create a polarised sound-world, this way of thinking was necessary in order to produce extreme textures. Engaging with external stimuli was particularly helpful at the start of a piece, or when I intended to introduce a new idea. As a result, I decided to write the main orchestral piece using the stimuli of natural phenomena and Egyptian mythology to fuel the imagination.

External stimuli played an important role in the genesis of the final orchestral triptych. Whilst the first movement was initially entitled *Burnt Earth* to reflect the idea of natural phenomena, Egyptian mythology soon proved a greater influence, and I re-named the work 'Anubis', with the second and third movements 'Isis' and 'Ammit' respectively. The timeless, other-worldly effect that I envisage in *Anubis* perfectly matched the ideas that I encountered in Egyptian mythology. A further source of inspiration was the visual canvas formed by

writing by hand on manuscript paper for large orchestral forces. This portrayal of musical ideas made it easier to assess the structure, dynamics, textures and musical colours at a particular point in order that the composition might grow organically. The works of other composers were of less interest to *Anubis* than in the supporting works, but still had a bearing on my ideas from time to time. For example, the opening low chords in 'Anubis' were inspired by the dark textures that Birtwistle creates in *Earth Dances*, but instead of Birtwistle's conscious layering of intervals, the pitches and chords I chose were intuitive and not systematically linked to pitch relationships. Saariaho's *Orion* gave me an alternative way of applying my instinctive application of time-signatures, by anchoring them in a regular time-signature pattern.

Anubis drew on techniques used in the supporting works and developed them to create a musical language rich in polarities, focussing on textures to create different contrasts such as: rhythmical versus timeless; calm and ethereal versus agitated, and aggressive, polyphonic density and textural mass versus clarity of line. A timeless and ethereal atmosphere was created by overlapping barlines or blurring lines through polyphonic textures, with musical colours evoked by the use of extended techniques. On the other hand, an agitated alternative was created by erratic time-signatures, changing harmonies and repeated rhythmical patterns, and a sense of aggression suggested by bold, bubbling and goal-driven textures anchored in barlines. Each supporting work contributed to the development of textures within *Anubis*: *Ring a Ring O'Roses* instilled a new-found boldness to create aggressive musical material; *Déjà vu* led to the exploration of polyphony for both dense and thin textures; *Spryte* began an exploration of musical colours, and *Off the Rails* influenced the rhythmical passages and the use of clapping and vocal murmurs. Through an expansion of these ideas new compositional techniques were created; for example, held chords became staggered tutti passages; polyphony produced a murmuring of strings and motivic woodwind clusters, and arpeggios developed to become agitated, swirling strings. The juxtaposition of different textures resulted in connecting passages that became an important part of the structure and required an expansion in new techniques to move from one musical idea to the next. For instance, to move from a relatively static texture to one that is more rhythmical, a repeated triplet semiquaver-quaver pattern would be introduced, harmonies would alter and new musical material added. This development of textures was a gradual progression that matured throughout the triptych as I explored different and new techniques to create a polarised outcome. Through compositional experimentation I developed a new approach to the multi-layering of textures. In *Atmosphères* Ligeti creates a macro texture that is built on lines of

micro elements, comprising small intervallic gestures, rather than melodies or themes. In comparison my polyphonic textures are multi-layered with themes, melodies and rhythms employing varying intervals to create the harmony. Rather than using one idea for the majority of the structure I create several textures, according to the musical language I wish to portray, and then juxtapose, superimpose and alter them to produce a polarity of textures in one movement. In *The Triumph of Time* and *Earth Dances* Birtwistle plans out a series of pitches and rhythms and then superimposes them on top of one another to create different textures and sonorities, a method described by Hall as:

> …combining a rotating melodic pattern of a certain length (*color*) with a rotating rhythmic pattern of a different length (*talea*) to produce a long line in which the repetitions are barely discernible. (Hall, 1998, 13)

My own compositional approach differs, as the textures build instinctively and organically from the first idea without a system, and pitches and rhythms chosen according to the effect I intend to depict at that particular point. This intuitive approach creates a subliminal wave-like motion that is a fingerprint of my musical language. In this manner I have explored new methods of creating polarised textures that are juxtaposed within a single structure in a way that moves beyond compositional models such as the works of Ligeti and Birtwistle, resulting in a unique approach.

The process of hearing *Anubis* in rehearsal revealed practical issues that I had not considered when writing the work. In some cases this was to do with legibility at speed, for example in the opening of 'Anubis' the time-signature of 4/2 proved difficult to count, and 4/4 might have been easier to sight-read. In other cases it was to do with the unfamiliarity of the approach, as the string players were initially tentative when playing individual lines, rather than as a section. However, both of these issues were readily solved after practice, and would be unlikely to cause problems for a professional, rather than student, orchestra. In performance, the individual string lines were very effective, and this is something I would consider using in future works. When hearing the work live I noticed that motifs were very important, and particularly effective in the horns, but on occasion the lower-pitched instruments were difficult to discern. In future performances a conductor would need to ensure that the balance was such that these lines were clearly audible. I also became aware of aspects of the music that I had not originally intended; for example, I was surprised at the

subliminal wave-like motions produced that I now consider to be a fingerprint of my musical language.

On reflection, I feel that 'Anubis' and 'Ammit' worked well but that 'Isis' could have been approached differently. The anticipated outcome was ethereal and colourful but it was very time-consuming to produce this result because of the individual lines with different ideas. In future I will explore ways of producing a light and ethereal atmosphere that is simpler to create. I was very pleased with the outcome of climactic material that had expanded and matured throughout the project, and the resulting textures were intense and goal-driven. My experience of writing for orchestra has highlighted an interest in composing for these forces that I wish to explore further in the future, adding voices and producing a compact disc of background sounds to expand the palette further.

This project has taken seven years to complete. Over the course of this period I have used a range of external stimuli, such as myth and nature, to develop a dialogue of musical polarities in an orchestral triptych. In doing so I have created a number of supporting works as well as the final piece, *Anubis*, that explore aspects such as the use of texture, structure and narrative. Ultimately I have reached the point where I have developed an individual sound-world; one that I hope to explore further beyond this project.

Appendix I: Full list of compositions during period of research

Ring a Ring O'Roses (2008) for ensemble, c 7.45 minutes

Spryte (2008) for solo flute with microphone, c 5 minutes

Déjà vu (2009) for ensemble, c 5.30 minutes

Decibel (2010) for ensemble, c 5.30 minutes

The Memorial for the City (2010) for soprano, alto, tenor, bass voices and ensemble, c 7.30 minutes

Anubis (2010) for orchestra, c 8.08 minutes

Off the Rails (2011) for percussion quartet, c 8 minutes

Isis (2011) for orchestra, c 9.20 minutes

Ammit (2015) for orchestra, c 9.30 minutes

Appendix II: Performances and Workshops During Period of Research

1. *Ring a Ring O'Roses* (2008) for B-flat clarinet, B-flat trumpet, tenor trombone, piano and
   violin
   Ekaterinburgh Philharmonic Orchestral Players
   Ekaterinburgh Philharmonic Hall, Russia
   Recorded live on 17th May, 2008

2. *Déjà vu* (2009) for ensemble
   CHROMA
   Stuart King - clarinet
   Rose Redgrave - viola
   Clare O'Connell - violoncello
   Martin Cousin - piano
   Recital Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire
   Recorded live on 24th March, 2009

3. *Spryte* (2008) for solo flute
   Rowland Sutherland - flute
   Birmingham Conservatoire, Lecture Room (workshop)
   Recorded live on 8th December 2008

4. *Anubis* (2008-2009) for orchestra
   Birmingham Conservatoire Composers' Orchestra
   Edwin Roxburgh - conductor
   Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire
   Recorded live on 6th November 2009

5. *Spryte* (2008) for solo flute
   Jenni Hogan - Flute
   Recital Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire
   Recorded live on 22nd February 2010

6. *Decibel* (2010) for ensemble
   Decibel
   Ulrich Mertin - viola
   Neil McGovern - saxophone
   Julian Warburton - percussion
   Fumiko Miyachi - piano
   Gordon Dunn - electric guitar
   Ed Bennett - conductor
   Recital Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire
   Recorded live on 15th March 2010

7. *Memorial for the City* (2010) for vocal ensemble
    The Icarus Vocal ensemble
    SATB 16
    Alexander Webb, Bryn Bowen, Liam Halloran - percussion
    Nicky Cordin, Philip White - oboe
    Sarah Colbert, Theodor Illescu - bassoon
    Daniel Fardon - piano
    Chris Weigl - double bass
    Chi Hoe Mak - conductor
    Recital Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire
    Recorded live on 15th June 2010

8. *Off the Rails* (2011) for percussion quartet
    Bryn Bowen - percussion
    Fang Shi - percussion
    James Tranter - percussion
    Alexander Webb - percussion
    Alonso Mendoza - conductor
    Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire
    Recorded live on 1st April, 2011

9. *Isis* (2011) for orchestra
    Birmingham Conservatoire Composers' Orchestra
    Edwin Roxburgh - conductor
    Adrian Boult Hall, Birmingham Conservatoire
    Recorded live on 24th January, 2013

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Anubis

'Anubis' 'Isis' 'Ammit'

An Orchestral Triptych

Composer:

Susan Cannon

Anubis triptych

S. C. Cannon

instrumentation

Piccolo
2 Flutes
Alto Flute
Oboe
Cor.Anglais
2 B flat clarinets
Bass clarinet
2 Bassoons
Contra bassoon

4 French Horns
2 B flat Trumpets
2 Trombones
Bass Trombone
Tuba

Timpani B flat, F, D, A
Marimba
Vibraphone
Piano
2 harps
Celeste

3 Percussionists:
Tam-tam (38in. or 40 in.)
Gong – large
Suspended cymbal – large
Sizzle Cymbal
Bass Drum
Conga drums – two sizes
Tom-Toms – four sizes
Tenor Drum
Snare Drum
Lion Roar
Crotales
Glockenspiel
Wind Chimes
Tubular bells
Woodblocks – 2 sizes
Antique Cymbals
Maracas
Temple Block
Vibraslap
Triangle
Maracas (small, large)
Tambourine
Whip
Guiro
Voice

1ˢᵗ Violin – 1 & 2
2ⁿᵈ Violin – 1 & 2
Viola – 1 & 2
1ˢᵗ Cello – 1 & 3
2ⁿᵈ Cello – 2 & 4
Double Bass – 1 and 2

Anubis Triptych

S. C. Cannon

Performance notes

The score is in C except for the usual octave transpositions.

*The dynamics are very important in this piece, as the instruments do not always blend
with one another and will often individually overlap or become prominent through the use of dynamics.
An example of this is a motivic phrase on page 4 that is split between the string section by the use of
louder volume. When there are two players to the bar the dynamics apply to both parts unless stated
otherwise.*

All trills to the semi-tone above.

Grace notes to be played before the main note.

Air:- finger the note and blow air only through the instrument without instrumental sound.

*Flute/piccolo - whistle tone:- vary the pitch – whistle tones are extremely delicate and produced by
the performer barely directing a small stream of air into the flute. The sound is like a person whistling
between the teeth.*
split note:- allow note to split for effect when required in preference to perfect pitch.
*vibrato:- can be produced by a pulsation of the air column controlled by the player's stomach
muscles or by repeatedly moving the instrument as it is played, producing a constant disturbance of the
air column.*

Clarinet – multiphonics:- indeterminate multiphonics of two or more simultaneous pitches.

*Brass – random pitches:- play random pitches in such a way as to create a clicking sound using slap-
tongue without instrumental sound.*

Cymbal scrape:- with a metal beater from the centre to the rim.

*Piano – play rapidly and continuously in any order to the arrow:- create a wash of
sound with the written notes, playing them rapidly in any order, at the dynamic levels
indicated.*

*Strings – scratch tone:- place the bow hairs flat against the string, press down into the string
and draw with a continual downward pressure.*

*Strings - murmurings:- the figurations should be prominent, impulsive and louder than the
long held notes within the phrases.*

'Anubis'

'Isis'

S. C. Cannon

Little by little
poco accel.

6
8

'Ammit'

Susan Cannon

Déjà vu

Susan Cannon

Instrumentation:

B flat clarinet
Viola
Cello
Piano

Déjà vu - Susan C. Cannon

Performance notes

The score is in C.
Accidentals are indicated in individual bars. If an accidental is written before a note,
it will apply to that note throughout that bar unless shown otherwise. Some accidentals have been included to avoid doubt.

Trill to the upper semi-tone wherever possible, otherwise trill to the tone above.

Snap pizzicato, calls for the performer to pull the string hard enough to
allow it to snap back against the fingerboard with a percussive thud.

Scratch tone, calls for the performer to place the bow hairs flat against the string, pressing down into the string,
and drawing with a continuing downward pressure.

The piano dynamics and octave transpositions are written separately for the left and right hand.   The cresc. applies to both hands.

Piano cluster on black keys   white keys

At bar 66 the cluster is to incorporate all the black notes from Bflat above the stave (r.h.) to an octave below the low Bflat (l.h.).
The pedal release is shown by a star or bracket.

Deja Vu

S. C. Cannon

Deja`Vu

S. C. Cannon

"Off the Rails" by Susan Cannon

My previous knowledge of including percussion within ensemble and orchestral works was very different from composing purely for a percussion quartet. The experience was both challenging and envigorating. My personal style endeavours to build a structure around several contradictory sound worlds, within a coherent, robust and balanced form. The opening of the work metaphorically reflects a timeless unknown-world that rapidly transforms into a restless, hostile and directional piece.

"Off the Rails"

Percussion Quartet

Composer: Susan Cannon

"Off the Rails"
Percussion Quartet
Susan C Cannon

Instrumentation:
Player 1
Timpani Bflat, D
Tenor drum
Tom-toms x 4 different low pitches
Sleigh bells
Woodblock

Player 2
Bass drum
Suspended cymbal - rake-bow-sticks
Bongos x 2
Castanet
Guiro
Vibraslap

Drum kit:
bass drum with pedal
tom-tom 1 (low)
tom-tom 2 (medium)
high hat

Player 3
Tam-tam
Snare drum
small Gong
Crotales x 4 A, B, C, D
Wind chimes
Tambourine
Voice - with microphone if possible

Player 4
Vibraphone - bow and sticks
Bongos x 2
Woodblocks x 2
Maracas
Temple blocks x 2 different pitches
Handclap

Percussion Quartet
"Off the Rails"

S.C. Cannon

♪ = 112

Timpani

gliss. *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.*

s.st. *mf* > *p* *p* < *mf* > *p* *mf* > *p*

Percussion

Suspended Cymbal Vibraslap To Cym. Cymbal [rake] [circling slowly]

pp *mf* *p* < *mp*

Percussion

small Gong Vocal To gong Gong Vocal

mf > *pp* moo moomm *mf* > *pp* moo moomm

mp < *mf* > *p* *mp* < *mf* > *p*

♪ = 112 [with cupped hands] Vibraphone [maximum vibrato] [fluctuate vibrato by moving motor lever]

Handclap

mf *f* s.st. *f*

Ped. Ped. Ped.

4

32

Ring a Ring O'Roses

Susan Cannon

Ensemble Instrumentation:

Bflat Clarinet
Bflat Trumpet
Tenor Trombone
Piano
Violin

Ring a Ring O' Roses

Susan Cannon

This piece is intended to be a reflection on the innocent and naïve play of children whilst there is an awareness of
Possible danger in an adult world. Motivic elements and a folk tune are used from Tatyana Kaluzhnikovoj's book
"the Acoustic Text of the child" as well as the opening melody of *"Ring a Ring O' Roses"* an old English nursery
rhyme. When composing the music I was reminded of the children that suffered as a result of the Beslan School
Seige in September 2004 and the Great (bubonic) Plague of London in 1665. The *Dies Irae* at the end
of the piece pays homage to the children connected to these events.

Ring a Ring O'Roses

S. C. Cannon

PERFORMANCE NOTES

Stay with the original pulse throughout the piece. The piano is the main instrument on which the other performers rely.
The time-signatures are purely to aid in counting the crochet beats throughout the piece.
Bar lines:- a complete bar line shows an essential timing and entry section
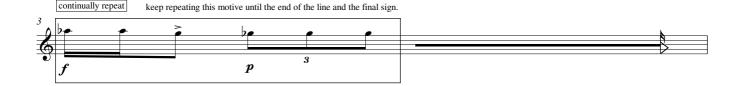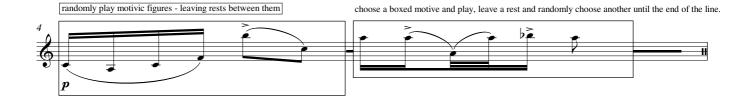   between the lines assists the players on their entries and timing
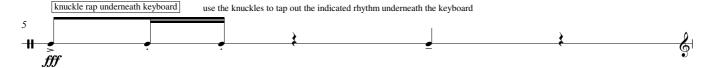   short lines are an indication of where the bar lines are but the timing is less important.
Accidentals - all notes are natural in each bar unless altered and then the accidental applies to the whole of that bar unless cancelled.

fast random key clicks | randomly tap the valves without playing the instrument, at the dynamics indicated, until the end of the line and the sign.

mp

continuously repeat each figure in varying order | play the figures in any order (separated by brackets) and play continuously until the end of the line.

pp   *mf*

continually repeat | keep repeating this motive until the end of the line and the final sign.

f   *p*   3

randomly play motivic figures - leaving rests between them | choose a boxed motive and play, leave a rest and randomly choose another until the end of the line.

p

knuckle rap underneath keyboard | use the knuckles to tap out the indicated rhythm underneath the keyboard

fff

continually repeat in varying ways including octave displacements | play the complete figure, following the dynamics shown until the end of the line, using own ways of performing

p   3   *mf*   *p*

Pizzicatto - play the notes as prominently as possible.

f

air | finger the note and blow air only through the instrument at the given dynamics.

pp   *mf*

play rapidly and continuously in any order | create a wash of sound with these notes, playing them rapidly in any order at the dynamic levels and, where shown, altered speed.

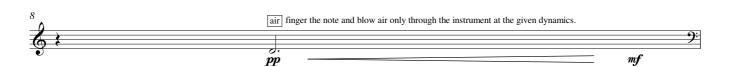tempo change - piano only | rall. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ . accell. _ _ _ _ _ _   rall. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ a tempo
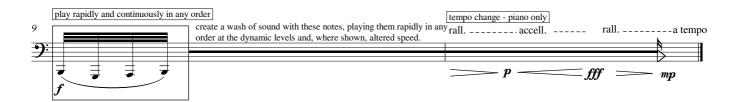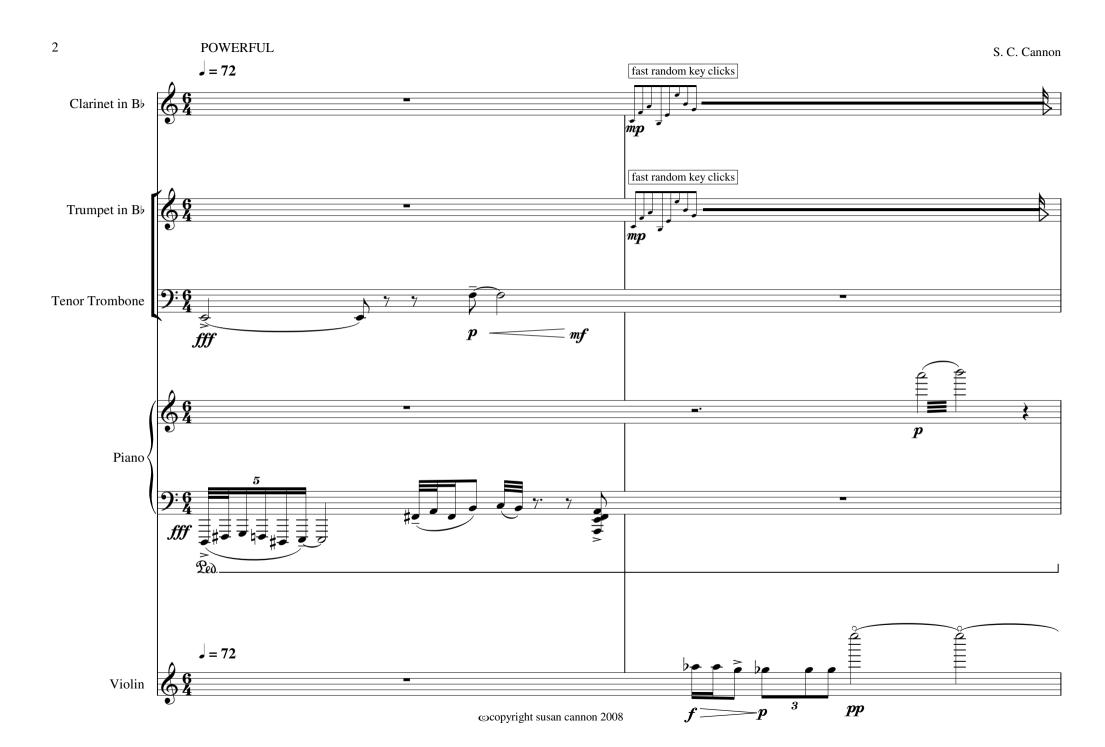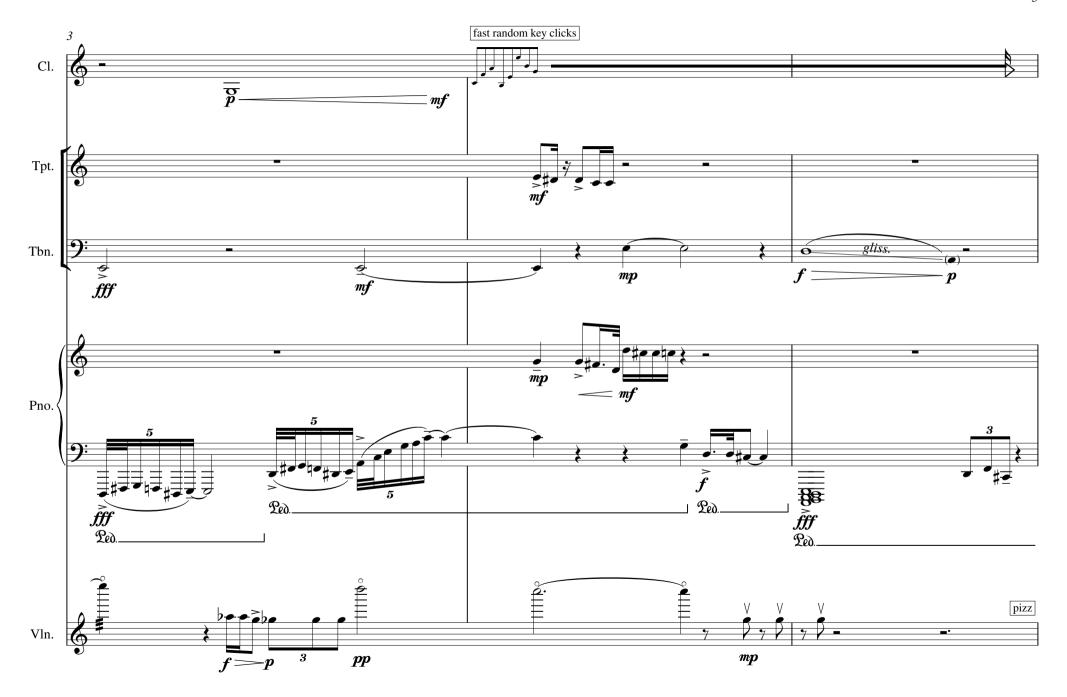
f   *p*   *fff*   *mp*
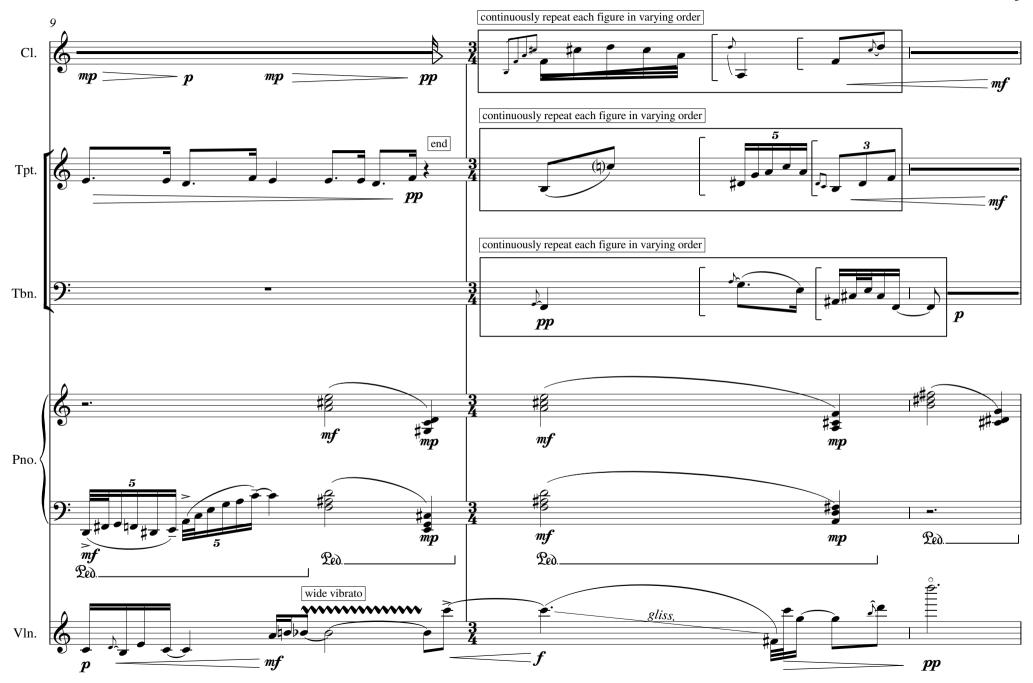
Ring a Ring O'Roses

Susan Cannon

Ring a Ring O' Roses
A pocketful of poses,
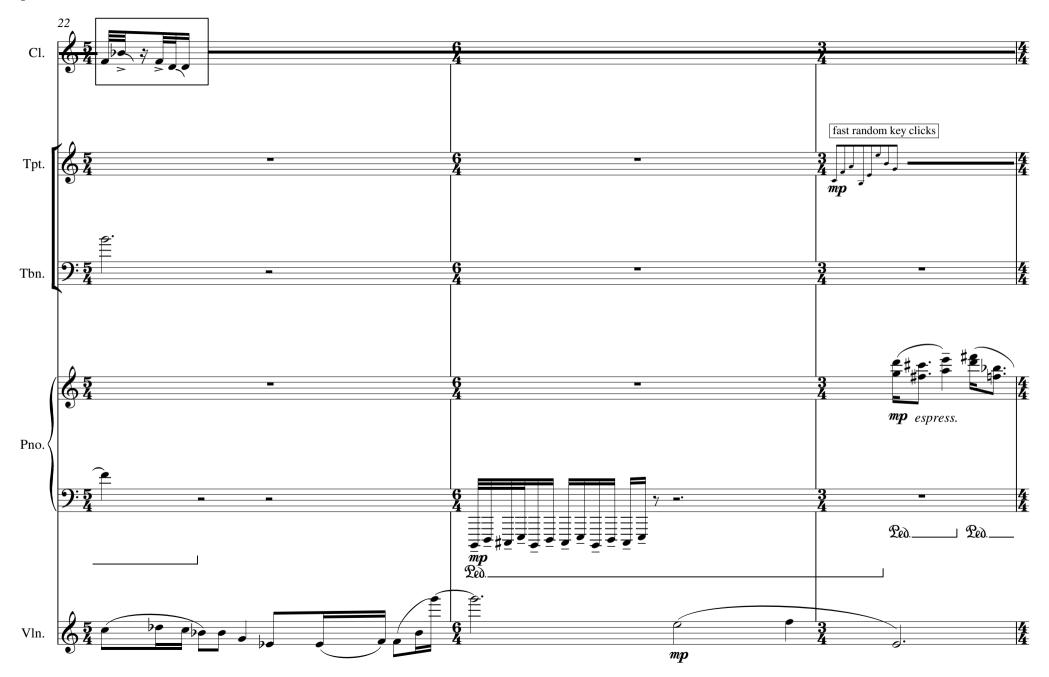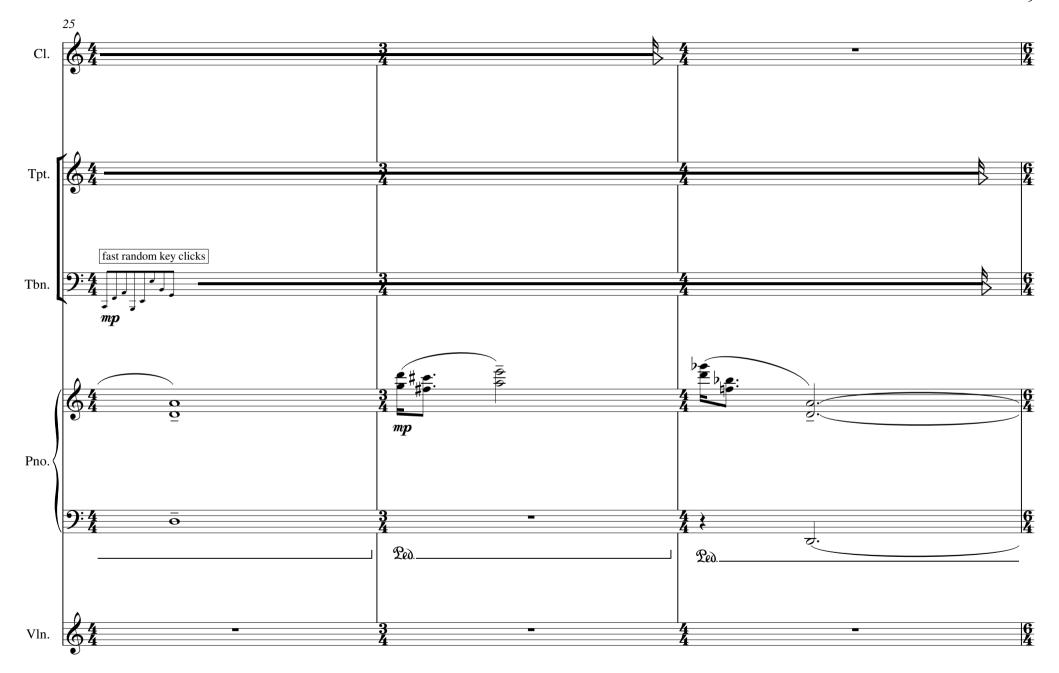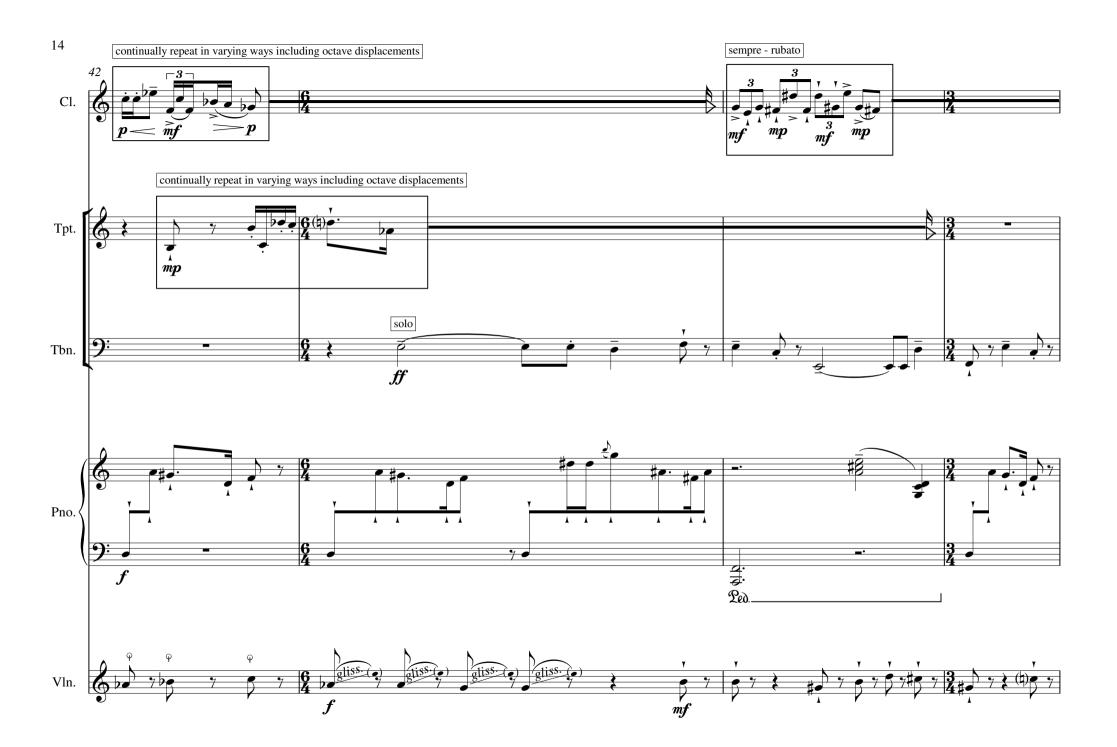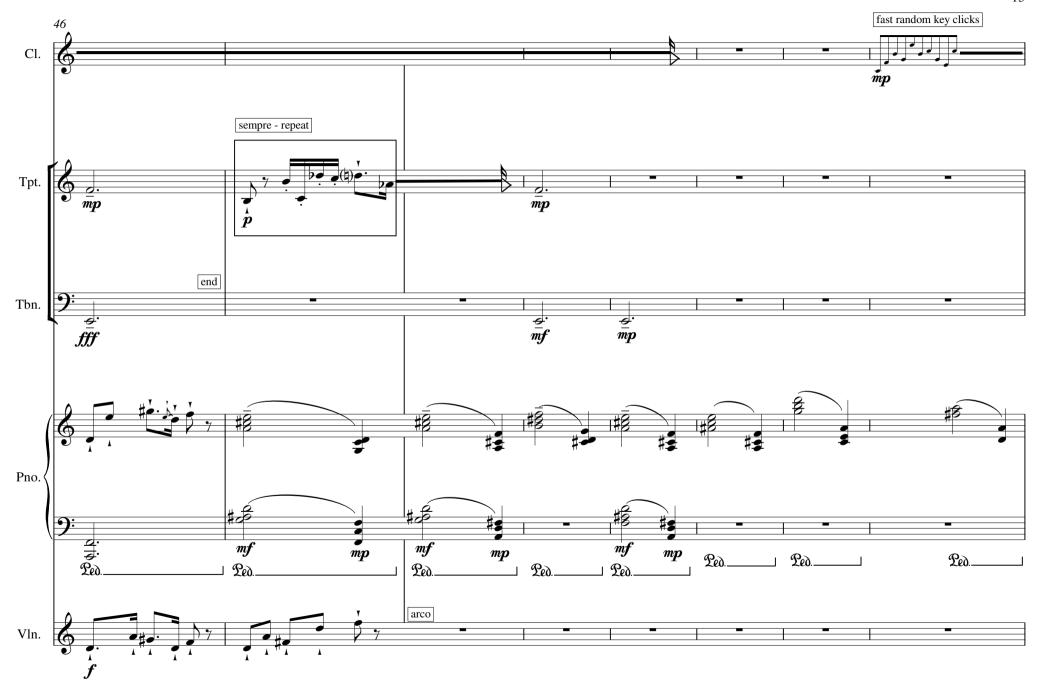Atishoo! Atishoo!
We all fall down!

Duration 6.30 minutes

POWERFUL

S. C. Cannon

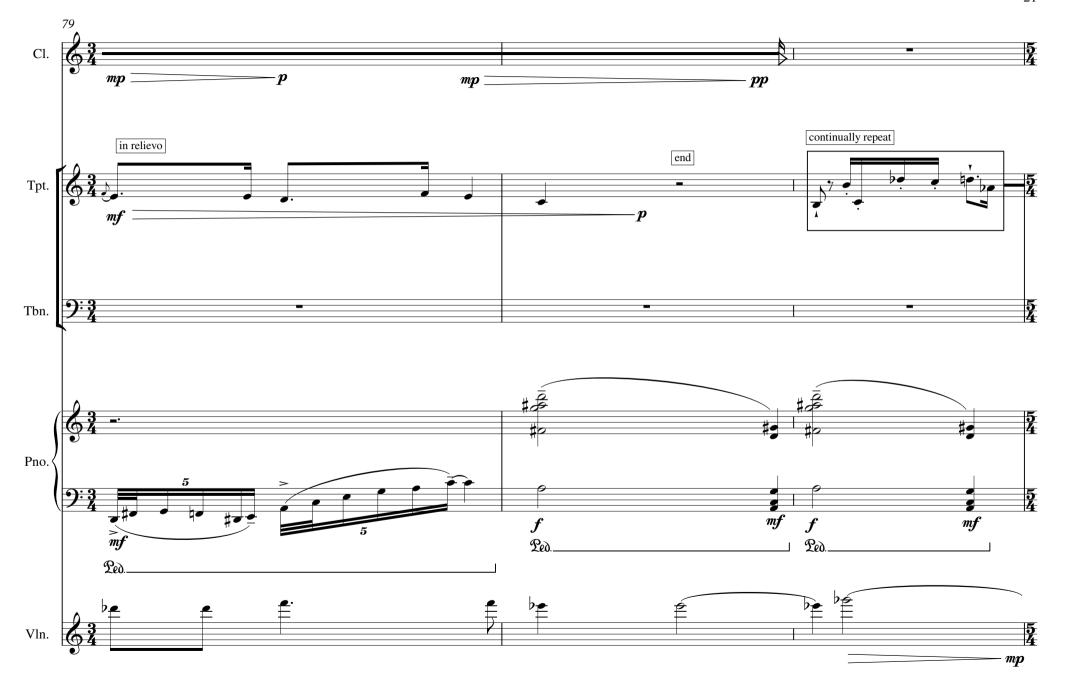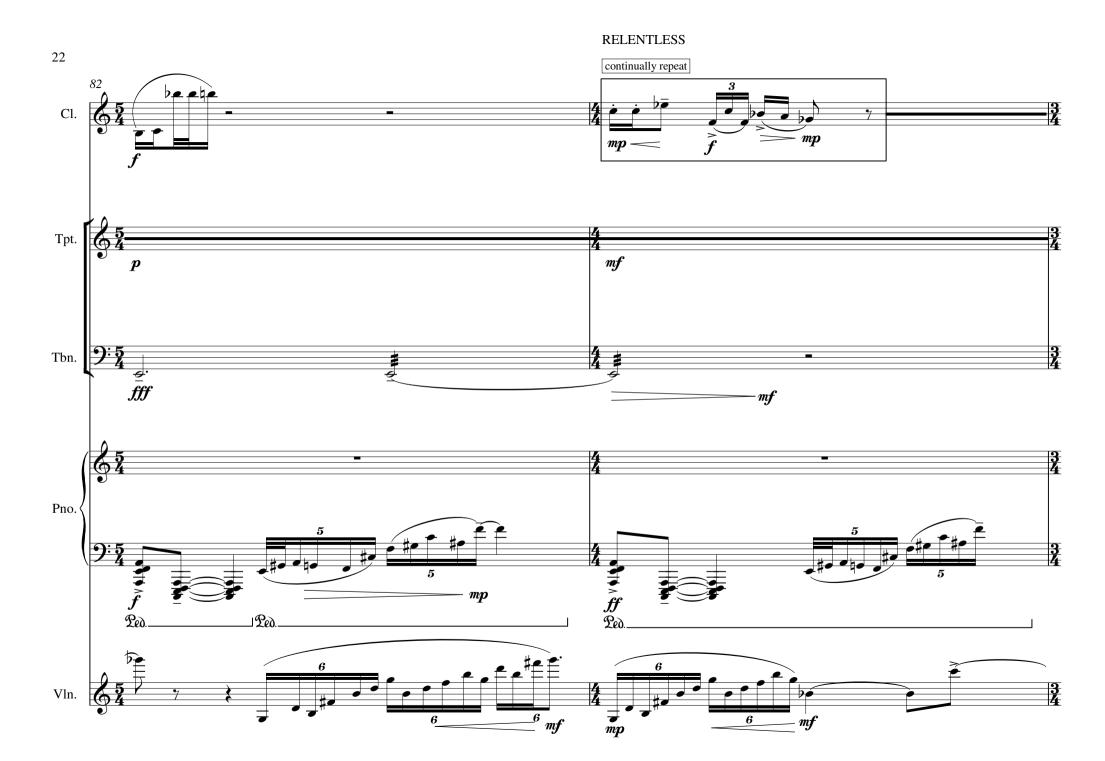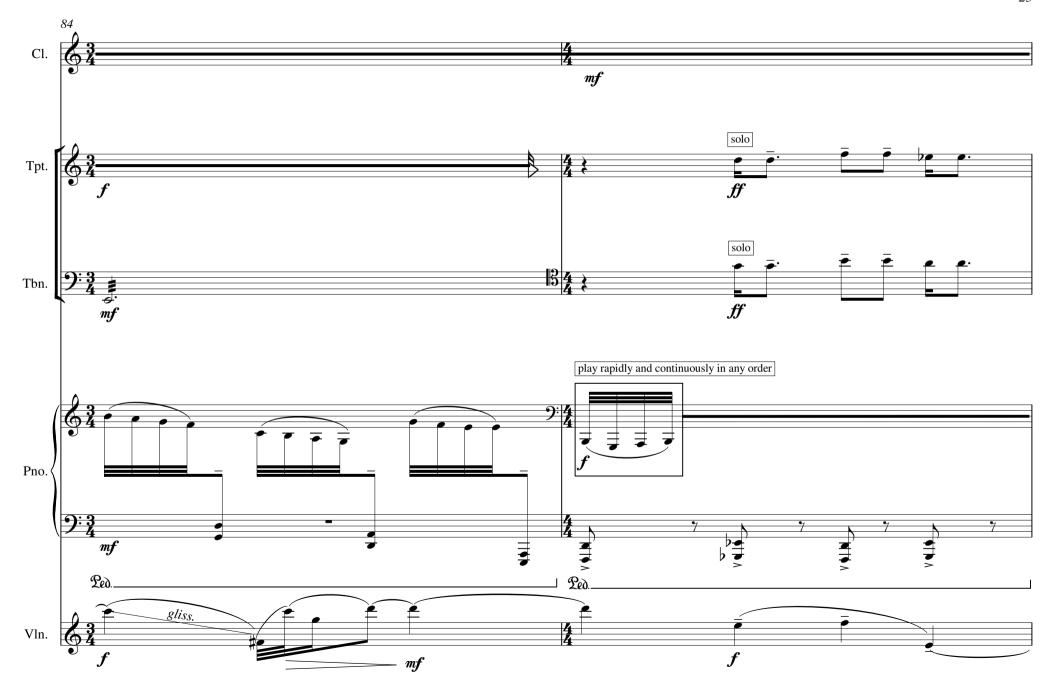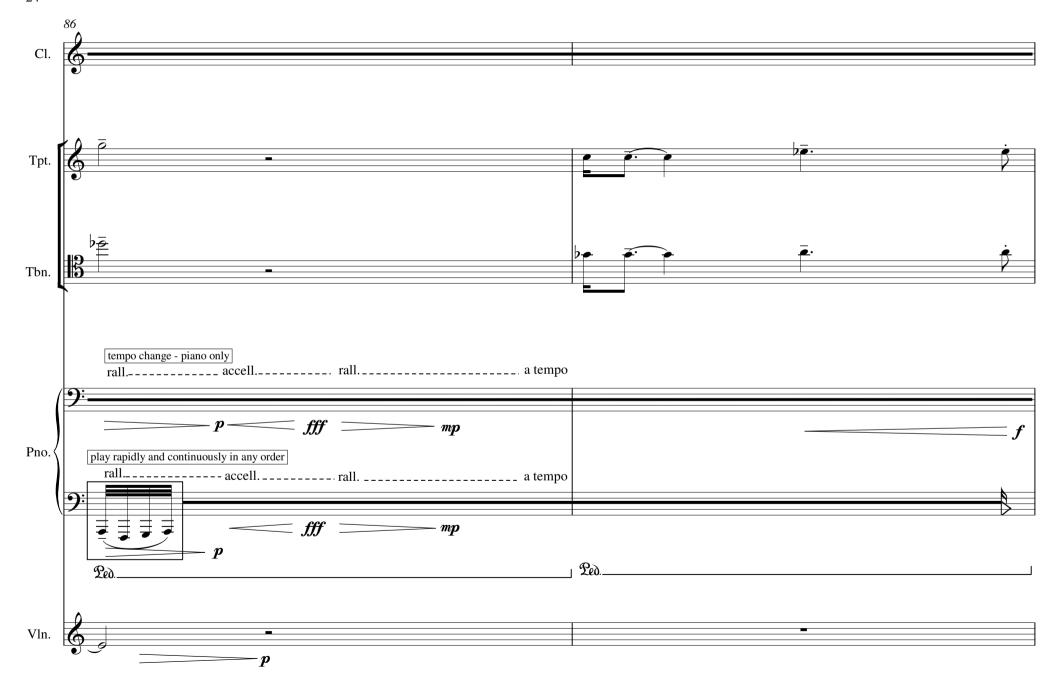randomly play motivic figures - leaving rests between them

22

ETHEREAL

Spryte

For solo flute with amplification using a microphone

Performance Notes

Play with freedom and passion, allowing notes to split for effect when required in preference to perfect pitch.

Accidentals apply to individual notes.

Singtone: play the notes indicated whilst singing the lower notes written.

Alternatively intervals of a fourth or a fifth below or above the flute pitch will create appropriate harmonic resonances.

A buzzing vibrancy is desired.

A comma indicates a brief hesitation.

The figure on rests indicates the amount of beats to count.

Multiphonics: use embouchure to sensitise the lowest note and add more breath to achieve the desired effect.

Cross fingerings are indicated in the score shown underneath the notes concerned.

Asterisks in score:

* Do not alter the embouchure to perfect the pitch and allow the harmonic overtones to sound.

** Harmonic gliss.

PROGRAMME NOTE:

My aim was to write a flute piece that was both passionate and challenging through the use of extended techniques, free rhythm and extreme musical contrasts.

The drama is heightened by the exploitation of colour, polarized pitch, dynamics and spatial timing.

S. C. Cannon

Spryte

Spryte

S. C. Cannon

unison if possible
otherwise an octave lower

4