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Collaboration and the Composer: Three Case Studies of Contrasting Collaborative Environments within the Creation of Music Theatre

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***Collaboration and the Composer:
Three Case Studies of Contrasting
Collaborative Environments within
the Creation of Music Theatre***

By

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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of collaborative relationships from a case study of Music theatre works in which I function as composer. The aim of this creative practice-led research is to illuminate working processes from the perspective of a composer-collaborator in the creation of these works, and reflect on key aspects of the collaborations which affected the way I approached composition and the works' final performance outcomes. It discusses and documents my compositional approaches to creating sound for three productions: *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, an existing text by Bertolt Brecht, a devised work including aspects of physical theatre entitled *Crossroads* and finally, contemporary playwright David Ives' *Venus in Fur*.

The reflection and discussion of my compositional process and creative output for these works will focus on three key aspects of collaboration: hierarchy in the rehearsal room between artists and art forms, language and communication between artists and how this is facilitated, as well as multidisciplinary timeframes and how these contrasting timeframes affected my ability to compose. Through this critical framework, I aim to illuminate how these factors shaped both my working methods and the sonic outcomes within these contrasting collaborative environments.

The written dissertation is accompanied by a creative folio of works from the three case studies discussed. This includes both archival video footage of selected sections of these works from the live theatrical performances as well as accompanying audio recordings of the music written, where music and sound was pre-recorded.

Declaration of Originality

I declare that the material in this thesis is my own original work towards the Masters of Music (Interactive Composition) and due reference is made in the text to all other material used.

Signed:

Date: 18th March, 2019
.....

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Due to the multi-disciplinary nature of Music theatre, this thesis and the theatrical productions discussed here could not have come about without the generous contributions of many artistic practitioners as well as the guidance of my supervisors. I would like to express my gratitude for the huge time commitments, dedication, creativity and skill of the following people:

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis looks at the process of multidisciplinary dramaturgy from the perspective of a composer-collaborator in a case study of music theatre works, analyzing collaborative relationships and practices. The aim of this creative practice-led research is to illuminate working processes from the perspective of a composer-collaborator, reflect on key aspects of the collaborations which affected the way I approached composition, and to suggest ways of approaching collaboration in these environments which improves the likelihood of success. It discusses and documents my compositional approaches for three productions: *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, an existing text by Bertolt Brecht, a devised work including aspects of physical theatre entitled *Crossroads* and finally, contemporary playwright David Ives' *Venus in Fur*¹. As this thesis is based on the insights of a composer-collaborator, it necessarily involves the voice of the dramaturg alongside that of a composer.

In this thesis, I will explore the evolving role of a composer-collaborator by illuminating hierarchical considerations, discuss the communication of sonic ideas across artistic disciplines and the conflicting timeframes between art forms which affect compositional approaches. Through this analysis and reflection, I aim to outline these key considerations, discuss how they affected the compositional process, as well as how the elements of integration, genre and parameters affected my compositional practice.

The term 'collaboration' is integral to a discussion surrounding composing for theatre, but can be used in various circumstances across many diverse industries. Gretchen Anderson explains, "collaboration doesn't come in one specific form and doesn't follow a recipe."² For the purposes of this discussion, a collaboration can be described as any

¹It is important to note that these works were either student productions with limited budgets, or independent theatre productions where music specifically was not allocated a budget for development, recording, performance or production.

² Gretchen Anderson, *Mastering Collaboration*, (Boston: Safari, an O'Reilly Media Company, 2019), under "What's Collaboration? And What Isn't?," <https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/mastering-collaboration/9781492041726/preface02.html>.

instance where “a diverse group of people are responsible for an outcome, but may not all be working hands-on to build the solution.”³ Due to the multidisciplinary nature of theatre, collaboration is essential, as to create any theatrical production, “every specialist must develop his or her own work and merge it with the craft of several others.”⁴

When Rosenberg and Harburg published their research into collaboration in the creation of American musicals in 1993, they claimed that “no venture can be a success without good collaboration, but whether collaboration in any specific case is good or bad cannot be known beforehand.”⁵ This thesis acknowledges the importance of collaboration in the creation of all genres of music theatre, and these collaborations can form in many different ways. Here, I will describe some different collaborative models that have arisen between artists in the desire to create integrated music theatre works, as well as interrogating my own practice. With this I aim to further the research into creating successful theatrical collaborations that has occurred since Rosenberg and Harburg published their findings, and assist in creating circumstances that promote effective creative collaborations and mitigate this unknown factor in a range of theatrical settings.

Music Theatre as a Multidisciplinary Art Form

Music theatre is inherently a multidisciplinary art form. From traditional text-led plays to more avant-garde multimedia works, music theatre requires input from specialists across different artistic disciplines. This may include visual and sonic design, direction, dramaturgy, choreography, as well as performance. As David Roesner states, “Theatre has always been a hybrid artform... (and) theatre history is, amongst many other things, a history of ever-changing relationships and interplays of different artistic practices.”⁶

³ Anderson, under “What’s Collaboration? And What Isn’t?”

⁴ Bernard Rosenberg and Ernest Harburg, *The Broadway Musical: Collaboration in Commerce and Art* (New York: NYU Press, 1993), 237.

⁵ Bernard Rosenberg and Ernest Harburg, *The Broadway Musical: Collaboration in Commerce and Art* (New York: NYU Press, 1993), xx.

⁶ David Roesner, *Musicality in Theatre: Music as Model, Method and Metaphor in Theatre-Making* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014), 2

A common aspiration when creating music theatre works is to achieve integrated-ness, often in very different collaborative environments. This idea of a theatre which combined musical and dramatic elements to create a unified work was described by Richard Wagner and his *Gesamkunstwerk*, or ‘total work.’ Rebstock states that “in his aesthetic writings Wagner was the first and certainly the most radical to claim that in theatre all elements should come together with equal rights.”⁷ In the tradition of opera where there is a strong separation of art forms and the music takes precedence over other theatrical elements, Wagner’s works still placed the composer as responsible for integrating these elements as both librettist and composer. This delineation of art forms continues in more contemporary multidisciplinary mainstream music theatre works.

The term ‘integration’ is commonly used when describing works in the genre of musical theatre, and traditionally has two main criteria for being considered as such. The music either furthers the narrative and propels the story, or reveals hidden aspects of a character unexplored in the libretto.⁸ This is exemplified in the musical *Oklahoma!*, the Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II classic from 1943. Restricting musical function to Hammerstein’s two criteria for musical integration limits the many possibilities of music’s use within the larger creative canvas of music theatre. As Kim Baston states, “music in theatre can be considered as an object, an experience, a function, a set of practices. It both is and does.”⁹ Music can act as metaphor, subtext, time manipulator, secondary narrative, or any number of other purposes in a theatrical context. Therefore, I will analyse music theatre productions with a broader marker of integration: probing the experience of integrated-ness within the different collaborative parameters set by the productions, and describing the compositional choices I made in reaction to these different collaborative environments. Valencia notes that music theatre is a genre created by many hands, but the work gives the impression of “having

⁷ Matthias Rebstock, “Composed Theatre: Mapping the Field,” in *Composed Theatre: Aesthetics, Practices, Processes*, eds. Matthias Rebstock and David Roesner (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 22.

⁸ B. Valencia, “A Method for Musical Theatre Dramaturgy,” in *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, ed. Magda Romanska, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 343.

⁹ Baston, “Not Just Evocative: The Function of Music in Theatre,” 25

been created by one.”¹⁰ In the three case studies discussed, all compositional choices were made to strive towards this idea of a cohesive creative aesthetic.

Music Theatre and Musical Theatre

This thesis will discuss the making and performance of a series of works from a range of theatrical genres, but all of which can be described as music theatre. It is worth defining from the outset what I mean by music theatre as the term often shades into what is often understood to be popular musical theatre which is a form that is included in the music theatre descriptor, but does not encapsulate all that it contains. As Dunbar states, “To write music theatre history is to make sense of its complexity, establishing webs of transmissions and shared genealogies that join the worlds of music and theatre together.”¹¹ Music theatre is constantly evolving and expanding as technology advances and artists continue to experiment with form. Salzman and Desi argue that “innovation and individuality are major characteristics of an art form that eludes institutionalization and sometimes seems to be perpetually coming into being.”¹² Its shared genealogy includes the work of theatre artists such as Grotowski¹³ and later Brook¹⁴ exploring the storytelling and communicative nature of sound, as well as composers such as Cage and Kagel¹⁵ experimenting with the performance of sound, and its inherent theatricality.

The genre of musical theatre lives under the music theatre umbrella and is part of the multi-faceted history of the performance of sound and story. Musical theatre is characterized by the mix of genres between elite and popular forms. Emotion-laden stories and stock vocal types as well as popular melody and comedy song have combined with the use of text, movement and spectacle to create the established commercial

¹⁰ Valencia, “A Method for Musical Theatre Dramaturgy,” 343

¹¹ Z. Dunbar, “Music Theatre and Musical Theatre,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Theatre History*, eds. David Wiles and Christine Dymkowski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 197.

¹² Eric Salzman and Thomas Desi, *The New Music Theater: seeing the voice, hearing the body* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), vii.

¹³ Raymonde Temkine, *Grotowski* (New York: Avon Books, 1972),

¹⁴ *The Empty Space*, directed by Gerald Feil (New York: Mystic Fire Inc, 1994), VHS.

¹⁵ Salzman and Desi, *The New Music Theatre*, 71.

genre we see today.¹⁶ The combination of these elements to tell coherent stories is the hallmark of the musical theatre piece and we can trace this clearly from Hammerstein through Sondheim to today's globally recreated mega-musicals. Though these have sometimes pushed boundaries in terms of narrative structure and musical style, they all value clear storytelling through the combination of song, text and other theatrical elements with an aim to large scale popularity and commercial success.

The collaborative relationships and the role of sound-makers in the creation of music theatre vary greatly between genres, and even between makers. In high-art forms such as opera and forms that have a history heavily based in these traditions, we see a strong delineation of creative roles. In traditional opera, creative works are seen to be created primarily by the composer. In more contemporary commercial musicals, these roles continue to be delineated, but with the hierarchy of art forms levelled to include a lyricist and/or librettist. We see this in such famous writing teams as Kander and Ebb or Rogers and Hammerstein. In counterpoint to these more traditional or commercial forms, we see an alternative to highly structured or delineated ways of working in more avant-garde or experimental music theatre works. In a devised creative process, there is a collective making process which sees composition not as the responsibility of a lone expert in the rehearsal room, but as a discussion between artists from different disciplines and responsibility of sound-making outcomes can lie more equally between these artists.

The final creative folio of this thesis will be a series of music theatre works where music plays a vital storytelling role, and is treated with equal importance to other theatrical elements, whether text, spatial design or movement.

The Role of Composer-Collaborator

The role of the composer has often been misconstrued as an autonomous position, what Sarah Whitfield describes as the 'Lone Genius,'¹⁷ who creates finished written works

¹⁶ Dunbar, "Music Theatre and Musical Theatre," 207

¹⁷ Whitfield, "'Next you're Franklin Shepard Inc.' Composing the Broadway musical, a study of Kurt Weill's working practices," 166.

which are separately interpreted and performed. However, even outside of a theatrical arena, “the ‘musical process’ involves a complex network of different institutions and individuals, and the composer’s aesthetic criteria are mediated by the actions of other artists, performers, conductors, managers, agents, publishers, academics and critics.”¹⁸ When moved into a theatrical context, these other considerations become manifold. Artists are also often required to help in the decision-making process outside of their artistic speciality to aid in the optimum integration of any theatrical work.

Diverse working methods and collaborative relationships are referred to within writing across different genres within music theatre. Kurt Weill, for example, preferred a *directive* approach to composition. Though he experienced some external influences, he worked quite independently and even did his own orchestrations.¹⁹ In contrast, Goebbels states that he prefers an *interactive* collaboration with performers involving improvisation, in which each performer’s “unique qualities”²⁰ are incorporated into a final score where Goebbels has the final say. In large scale commercial musicals, the cast involved in initial workshops are sometimes awarded royalties in recognition of their artistic contribution in shaping the final work, as seen in *Hamilton* and *Book of Mormon*.²¹ Conversely, composers such as Orlando Gough and Michael Nyman have spoken about their dissatisfaction when seeing their compositions interpreted by some choreographers. After composing the music autonomously and passing it to a choreographer, the choreography ignores seemingly clear musical pointers in the final realization of the work.²² Disagreement between collaborators does not necessarily

¹⁸ Sam Hayden and Luke Windsor, “Collaboration and the Composer: Case Studies from the End of the 20th Century,” *Tempo* 61, 240 (2007): 29.

¹⁹ Whitfield, “‘Next you’re Franklin Shepard Inc.’” 165.

²⁰ H. Goebbels, “It’s All Part of One Concern,” in *Composed Theatre: Aesthetics, Practices, Processes*, eds. Matthias Rebstock and David Roesner (Bristol: intellect, 2012), 113.

²¹ “Developing a Show: Actors v. Producers,” Cara Joy David, Huffington Post, last modified July 28, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/cara-joy-david/developing-a-show-actors_b_11219584.html

²² “Music that moves,” Judith Mackrell, The Guardian, posted October 18, 2000. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2000/oct/18/artsfeatures2>

indicate a lack of quality in the work, but the assertion by these composers suggests a disconnect between theatrical elements.

When writing about his transdisciplinary work *Handspun*, Luke Styles speaks of the importance of understanding the other theatrical elements – in this case, physical aerial work – to maximise integration. In this piece, initial stages of creation involved a workshop between choreographer and composer-collaborator to explore the different possibilities of each-others specialised knowledge.²³ Dunbar consolidates this theory of the importance of multidisciplinary understanding using the example of *West Side Story* in which many of the artistic collaborators on this team were skilled and had worked in other specialised areas of musical theatre creation²⁴ which enhanced its overall integration.

In this thesis, I will be using the term *composer-collaborator* in acknowledgement of these varying roles, exploring the “complex collaborative process in which it is extremely difficult to tell where any one person’s authorship begins and ends”²⁵

To analyse and evaluate my own collaborative practice, I will be adopting descriptions used by composer-academics Hayden and Windsor, developed over a series of case studies in their own collaborative music creation. They have concluded that the relationships between composer and performer can be classified into three broad categories: Directive, Interactive and Collaborative.

Directive: here the notation has the traditional function as instructions for the musicians provided by the composer. The traditional hierarchy of composer and performer(s) is maintained and the composer aims to completely determine the performance through the score. The instrumentation for the pieces in this

²³ Luke Styles, “*Handspun*, The Role of Collaboration and Embodiment as Compositional Process – A Transdisciplinary Perspective,” *Contemporary Music Review* 35, 6 (2016): .

²⁴ Dunbar, “Music Theatre and Musical Theatre,” 207.

²⁵ Whitfield, “Next you’re Franklin Shepard Inc.” 164.

category tends to be acoustic in nature and made up of conducted ensembles or chamber groups. The collaboration in such situations is limited to pragmatic issues in realisation, as outlined at the end of the introduction.

Interactive: here the composer is involved more directly in negotiation with musicians and/or technicians. The process is more interactive, discursive and reflective, with more input from collaborators than in the directive category, but ultimately, the composer is still the author. Some aspects of the performance are more 'open' and not determined by a score. The works in this category tend to combine notation, acoustic instruments and electronic media.

Collaborative: here the development of the music is achieved by a group through a collective decision-making process. There is no singular author or hierarchy of roles. The resulting pieces either (1) have no traditional notation at all, or (2) use notation which does not define the formal macro-structure. In (2) decisions regarding large-scale structure are not determined by a single composer. Rather, they are controlled, for example, through live improvised group decisions, or automated computer algorithms. The pieces which fit this category use electronic and digital media in combination with live or recorded acoustic instruments.²⁶

Though these three categories were created to describe the singular relationship between composer and performer, here they will be used to describe other relationships within a multidisciplinary theatre-making team, and therefore, the descriptions of each term need to be broadened to accommodate the multiple roles in play: a *Directive* relationship may include specific instructions from a director to be followed by myself as a composer, or clear notation that is passed on to a musician to follow; an *Interactive* relationship is defined by an exchange of ideas across disciplines, with final musical decisions being made by the composer, and a *Collaborative*

²⁶ Hayden and Windsor, "Collaboration and the Composer: Case Studies from the End of the 20th Century," 33.

relationship is characterized by improvisation or group discussion resulting in work without a clear author. These descriptors are not concrete, but act on a spectrum, and often more than one approach is used within a single work or even within one sonic moment. It is important to note that these terms will be used to describe collaborative relationships from my own perspective.

This thesis will describe multiple interrelated relationships within the compositional process, the hierarchy of decision making between artists and disciplines and the result of these collaborative partnerships; not only between composer-collaborator and performer, but with other relevant specialists that influence and contribute to the fruition of the sonic elements and integration of the final work.

The Composer as Individual

Each composer-collaborator approaches multidisciplinary relationships differently, as every individual comes to the collaboration embodied with a unique history and experience which informs their way of working and personal aesthetic.

My own practice has been formed from various perspectives within the rehearsal room as this practice has included multiple theatrical art forms. Initial study in musical theatre performance led to a performance-based practice which became heavily rooted in the cabaret genre. Working primarily as a solo artist, performing original compositions, the question of collaboration can almost be ignored completely. I have complete control over the content, the overall aesthetic, as well as the execution of all compositional material. Due to the cabaret medium, these compositions have a focus on audience interaction. This leads to a unique flexibility in performance, as I react and change the tempo, length and rhythm of music based on each individual audience and the timing of their responses.

Over time, I have found this individual approach to theatre making limiting. In *Finishing the Hat* Sondheim discusses the need for another voice to spark ideas and create a constructive dialogue in the creative process. Sondheim states, "I have to work with

someone... someone who can help me out of writing holes, someone to feed me suggestions when my invention flags, someone I can feed in return.”²⁷ When working individually, it can be hard to gauge how some elements of performance will be perceived, and easy to get stuck when lacking inspiration or solutions to problems that arise in both writing and rehearsal. Therefore, I began to work with directors to refine my work, and creative producers which allowed for the creation of larger scale cabaret works. Even when incorporating these contrasting voices, the focus of the performance was still primarily on myself as a composer-performer, with musicians adding accompaniment with fully scored parts in a *directive* relationship due to rehearsal time restrictions, working in the creation of unfunded independent theatre work.

My cabaret compositions are mostly comedic in tone, and are often created around a theme for each show. However, as the artist with the most artistic control in the role of both writer and performer, these parameters can be very loose and themes are often re shaped midway through the writing period when inspiration strikes. The final show can be quite different from the one I set out to write.

Musically, the compositional methods for these shows have little restriction. Each song usually arises from an overall idea, both lyrically and musically. I expand upon the musical idea until I have a rough eight to sixteen bar chord progression, and then shape the lyrics and melody of the first verse or a chorus. From here, I plan the structure of the song, finish the lyrics and melody and lastly, the piano accompaniment. As is common in the cabaret genre, I often get musical inspiration from a source and reference it directly in my own composition, using pastiche as a theatrical device. For example, in my song *Bicycle Face*, which is a modern feminist take on an article from the early 1900’s dissuading women from riding bicycles, I directly referenced Erik Satie’s *Je Te Veux*²⁸ using a similar chord progression, and crotchets in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, with strong octaves in the

²⁷ Stephen Sondheim, *Finishing the Hat: Collected Lyrics (1954-1981) with Attendant Comments, Principles, Heresies, Grudges, Whims and Anecdotes*. (New York: Knopf, 2010.), 105.

²⁸ “File: Satie – Je Te Veux (voice and piano).pdf,” *IMSLP Petrucci Music Library*, last updated 11 May, 2008, [https://imslp.org/wiki/File:Satie_-_Je_te_Veux_\(voice_and_piano\).pdf](https://imslp.org/wiki/File:Satie_-_Je_te_Veux_(voice_and_piano).pdf).

bass clef. Satie's work was written in a similar time-period to the article, and has links to the early days of cabaret in the clubs of Paris where Satie would play. Introducing parameters of this kind created variation in my own composition by experimenting in different styles. Yet this was a restriction of my own choosing, and I was still able to work within my own time frame, and to my own personal taste.

Working in larger scale music theatre works includes an entirely different set of collaborative partnerships, and an intricate web of relationships that require all parties to work within set parameters and timeframes, with hierarchical and communicative considerations that are not present in my work as a composer-performer.

The Composer-Collaborator: assessing collaborations from a compositional perspective

To be able to compare collaborative practices between the three diverse Music theatre works discussed here, I have isolated three elements involved in collaborating between multiple art forms.

Firstly, I will be looking at the 'hierarchy' in the rehearsal room, both between artists and art forms. The hierarchical structures within the development process and rehearsal room invariably affect the compositional process, creative freedoms felt by artists in making offers to the collaborative group as well as how the music will function in a theatrical work. The question of how hierarchy can affect creative output is articulated by Sondheim in *Finishing the Hat* where he outlines that after Jerome Robbins had derided his work in front of other collaborators during the writing of *West Side Story*, he had "felt paralyzed from making any contribution for days afterward."²⁹ The problems arising from restrictive authoritarian hierarchical structures gave rise to explorations into more democratic theatre making, in the form of devised theatre works. As Syssoyeva states, "typically, notions of collective creation emerge in response to some prior mode of theatre making felt by a particular theatre artist or group of theatre artists

²⁹ Sondheim, *Finishing the Hat*, 43.

to be aesthetically, interpersonally and/or politically constraining, oppressive, or in some manner, unethical.”³⁰ However, egalitarianism in the rehearsal room is not necessarily the marker of an integrated work, (as we see in the success of *West Side Story*) nor is the hierarchy of a creative team the sole crux of its success.

‘Language and communication’ represent a recurring theme within discussions around the success of multidisciplinary collaborations within the theatre. With artists from different fields with years of training and development within a specific area, it can often require a specialised vocabulary to verbally illustrate complex ideas. Van Stiefel cites his enjoyment of a collaboration with a particular choreographer as due to their musical knowledge and ability to communicate with the same language.³¹ Robinson states that a lack of common language caused problems in taking direction while composing for a production of *King Lear*. “How was I going to organise sound material with such “impressionistic” kinds of direction?... (the director) once told me in a private meeting that I should think of the whole production as a “rustic legend” – but as a composer who thinks very structurally and logically, I was not sure where to even begin.”³² Finding ways to communicate these ideas not only with the director, but with other artists working in multidisciplinary projects seems to be vital to the success of a collaboration.

Lastly, I will discuss ‘multidisciplinary timeframes’ and how the allocation of time and the tension caused by time constraints can affect compositional methods and outcomes in theatre works. These contrasts have been highlighted in the devising process by Allison Oddey in her assertion that “there is always a sense of never having enough time”³³ especially since the designers cannot begin the physical making process

³⁰ K. M. Syssoyeva, “Introduction: Toward a New History of Collective Creation,” in *A History of Collective Creation*, ed. Kathryn Mederos Syssoyeva and associate ed Scott Proudfit (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 5.

³¹ Van Stiefel, “A Study of the Choreographer/Composer Collaboration,” Centre for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies, 2002, https://culturalpolicy.princeton.edu/sites/culturalpolicy/files/wp22_-_van_stiefel.pdf, 16.

³² Stephanie L. Robinson, “Music for *King Lear*: Electro-Acoustic Composition and Collaboration for the Theatre” (Ph.D., University of California, 2005), 11.

³³ Alison Oddey, *Devising Theatre* (London, Routledge, 1994), 14

(whether set building or composing/recording) until the collaborators have an idea of what the performance will look like. In the creation of the musical *West Side Story* the eight-week rehearsal period has been described as one of the reasons for the musical's success, as it "allowed the creators to try new songs, realise they didn't work, and then discard them."³⁴ The ability to refine ideas in the devising and rehearsal room may seem a necessary step, but when time needs to be allocated to multiple disciplines within a timeframe that requires autonomous refinement, recording or re-building, tensions can arise; especially when there is not an understanding of time required for diverse creative processes.

This reflection will focus on the different ways collaborations can form, and illuminate considerations for composer-collaborators and those working with them when entering music/theatrical partnerships. After an analysis and reflection on these collaborations, this thesis will discuss the way these considerations, along with ideas of integration, genre and parameters can affect my creativity within these collaborative environments.

Chapter 2 – The Caucasian Chalk Circle

Table 1: *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* Production Outline

³⁴ Nathan Stith, "Creating *West Side Story*: An Investigation of the Sociopolitical Backgrounds and Collaborative Relationships of Jerome Robbins, Arthur Laurents, Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim in the Creation of the Original Broadway Production of *West Side Story*" (M.A., University of Colorado, 2011), 117.

Name	The Caucasian Chalk Circle
Theatrical Genre	Brechtian Theatre
Musical Function	Narrative force/Brechtian alienation
Music Presentation	Live – keyboard, accordion, cello, voice
Creative/Production Team	Director Assistant director Set Designer (+mentor) Costume designer (+mentor) Composer/MD Sound Designer (+mentor) Eleven Actors Three Stage Managers Assistant Stage Managers Technical operators
Rehearsal Period	Six Weeks – 5 days of 4 hour rehearsals Two weeks of technical rehearsals/production

*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*³⁵ by Bertolt Brecht was the 2017 graduating show of the Victorian College of the Arts acting students and the first work to be completed for this creative practice-led research. It was a large-scale music theatre production performed by a cast of eleven actors and two musicians, and had a creative team of set, costume, lighting and sound design as well as original live music. The music was performed on amplified keyboard, accordion and cello, with actors singing both on and off microphone. The translation was by Tom Wright, and we had his permission to make alterations to the text, often not the case when staging established scripts. The music functioned both as diegetic (within the world of the play) and non-diegetic (outside the world of the play),³⁶ and was primarily text based.

³⁵ Bertolt Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, trans. Wright, Tom. (Sydney: Belvoir, 1998).

³⁶ Ben Winters, "The Non-Diegetic Fallacy: Film, Music and Narrative Space," *Music & Letters* 91, 2 (2010): 224-225.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle was a part of Brecht's *Epic Theatre* where popular song forms are used to distance the audience from the reality contained within the piece and asks them to look at the work critically. Salzman and Desi describe this approach where "a serious contemporary issue is presented in parable form, using storytelling rather than role playing and asking for active intellectual rather than emotional response from the audience... The piece asks for participation in a train of thought that might lead to action."³⁷ The script fit this mold exactly, with characters speaking analytically about political implications of actions, and the entire piece being a 'play-within-a-play' overtly trying to teach a moral lesson. The action of the piece was led by a narrator who broke the fourth wall, directly guiding the audience through a series of increasingly fantastical events. To allow more of the students to have a significant role in the production, this was split into two narrator characters.

Our production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* was to be set in a dystopian post-Syrian-crisis future in which a collective of people try to rebuild their home. Design elements were to reflect the loss of resources within this world, and have a home-made aesthetic with costumes made from found materials such as tarpaulin and tin-foil, and music and sound being visibly made by people on stage in view of the audience. I worked with a sound designer who was responsible for amplifying the live music in the space, providing sound effects and sourcing existing recorded music where required. There was some cross-disciplinary work between us, with the delineation of roles discussed in initial meetings, and we were in constant conversation throughout the rehearsal period.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle presented challenges, largely due to the scale of the work. The final performance ran for over two and a half hours, with large sections being sung, or underscored with a combination of recorded and live sound. Set and costume design had begun in November of 2016, whereas the sound designer and myself were brought into the production in February of 2017. The director requested I did not start composition until he had started work on the floor with the actors. A second challenge in this work was the level of training by the actors. As this was a student production, we

³⁷ Salzman and Desi, *The New Music Theatre*, 66.

needed to cast the show from a pool of young actors, none of whom had extensive training in music theatre. Thirdly, the production had a large team with of both professional and student artists and therefore, the disparity in power had to be negotiated.

Hierarchy

The hierarchical considerations of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* were specific to this production as it took place in an educational institution with a mix of students and teacher/professionals. The Director was a working professional, the production team consisted of post-graduate students from the theatre school who each had a teacher/mentor who sat in on meetings and some rehearsals. The actors were undergraduate students, and the focus of the piece was primarily as a learning experience. I had quite a different experience to the rest of the production team as I did not have a mentor working with me to negotiate this unique power dynamic. Compositional challenges arose directly from this configuration of roles and functions, as instead of equal specialists able to discuss processes in rehearsal, all student artists were expected to work around the directors preferred working practices.

Before rehearsals began, the creative team went into a series of meetings with the director. Sonic and spatial design meetings were held separately and without professional teacher/mentor staff. Conversations with the sound designer delineated our roles clearly; as composer, I would write and musically direct the original live music, where he would be responsible for recorded sound effects, existing recorded music and amplification. The initial meeting with the director was a *directive* exchange, where the sound designer and I were briefed in the overall aesthetic of the world we would create. The visual elements of the play would consist of found objects, and give the play a make-shift quality. This aesthetic would be created sonically by the actors singing, playing instruments and creating their own foley sound effects. He also described how he wanted the music to be based in sonic ideas that came from the areas the play referenced; Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia.

Table 2: Caucasian Chalk Circle, Hierarchy 1

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Sound Designer Composer	Verbal discussion	Directive	Fully Delineated	Overall design aesthetic outlined

The second sound meeting was more *interactive*, with offers being made by both the sound designer and myself as we went through the script from start to finish, marking the start and end points of sound and music as well as spoken and sung text. Offers were accepted, rejected or considered, with the director making the final decisions.

Table 3: Caucasian Chalk Circle, Hierarchy 2

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Sound Designer Composer	Verbal discussion	<i>Interactive</i>	Fully Delineated	Sonic texture discussed Delineation of sound/composition All sound and music cue points positioned

Going into rehearsal, the director asked that no music or sung text be set, as he preferred an improvisatory freedom within the room to steer sonic elements in response to the physical action. Therefore, going into the first week of rehearsals I was starting with research and reference material, but no set original music.

An improvisatory approach on the floor in the rehearsal room was not my usual way of working, coming from a practice which included long periods of autonomous work and refining before any material is presented to an outside eye. To try and accommodate the director's instructions while satisfying my own need for preparation, I created a musical motif that could be used by the Narrators in the first scene while I established how the rehearsal room would be run. This motif was based on the song 'Kavkasiuri

Balada' by contemporary Georgian folk band 'Jgufi Bani.'³⁸ I was drawn to the strong rhythmic drive, the simple yet dynamic melodic and harmonic structure and blend of a geographically specific, yet contemporary sound. I took the two chords, (originally A minor and G major, but eventually adjusted to C minor and Bb major to accommodate actor vocal range), put it into a compound time with a duplet rhythm at the end of each four-bar phrase.

Fig. 1: Act I, Theme 1.1



Author's own work

This phrase was repeated once, and then to add variation, I added an eight bar 'B' section.

Fig. 2: Act I, Theme 1.2



Author's own work

These sixteen bars created a harmonic and rhythmic structure within which I could mold text, tempo and melody in response to the director's work on the floor, creating a space

³⁸ Seniz Asla. "Georgian Folk Music" (video), November 26, 2014, accessed March 8, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQH3CSScKeg>.

in which I could play with ideas yet retain a sense of form within the stylistic parameters we had agreed upon.

The Love Theme

Once in rehearsal, it became very clear that the hierarchy between the director and myself would be primarily *directive*. Due to this working relationship, I started to put together more sonic motifs to be used to delineate the ‘chapters’ of the story that were announced by the Narrators. This allowed me to play within set musical parameters during rehearsal, come up with material very quickly, and also tie in to an overarching structure within the piece.

Table 4: *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Hierarchy 3

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Composer	Verbal instruction	Directive	Fully Delineated	Creation of a series of sonic motifs

Characters and themes within the work also had their own motif. I heralded Grusha and Symon’s initial meeting with the traditional Armenian folk song *Sareri Hovin Mernem*³⁹ which speaks of longing for a loved one.

Fig. 3: Sareri Hovin Mernem Excerpt

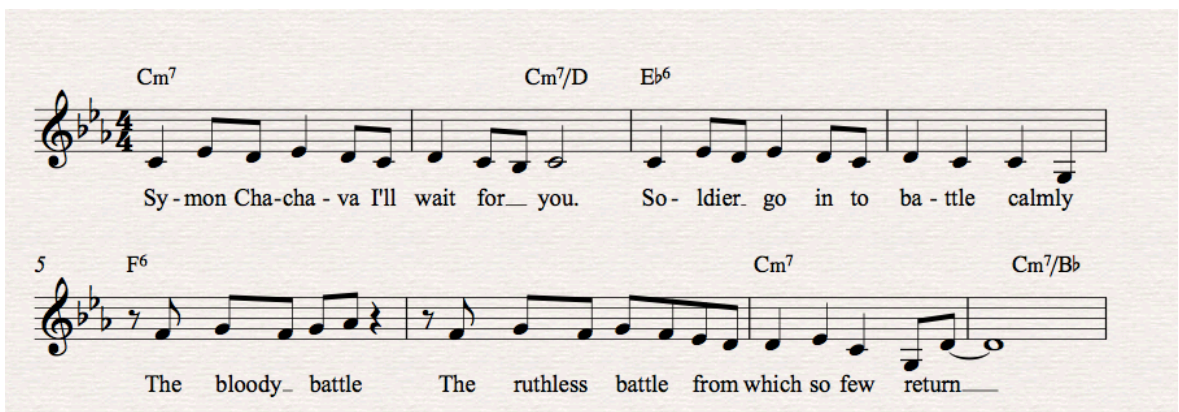
³⁹ Kostas Grigoreas, “Yannatou & Grigoreas – Sareri Hovin Mernem (Armenian Traditional)” (video), December 15, 2013, accessed March 8, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDway3Pu2e4>.



Transcription of Traditional Folk Song

I wrote a melody that could act as a counter melody to *Sareri Hovin Mernem* (with some rhythmic changes) for Grusha’s love song, *Symon Chachava*, later in Act I. This was inspired by the modern Georgian Folk song, *Is Vaji* by Nino Basharuli,⁴⁰ a contemporary Georgian pop singer who played guitar and had a beautiful low and husky voice which had many similarities with that of the actor who would sing this part. I then formulated a chord progression which could accompany both melodies:

Fig. 4: Symon Chachava, Melody Excerpt 1.1



Author’s own work

The key was lowered by a tone to accommodate the actor’s vocal range.

⁴⁰ ნინო ბაშარული - ის ვაჯი, “Nino Basharuli – Is Vaji (That Boy)//Georgian Song,” (video), June 20, 2013, accessed March 9, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qU0EeL1s7bo>

This theme then returned later in the piece, with the Narrator singing a variation of the *Symon Chachava* melody over the same chord progression. In Act III, where Grusha fantasises about seeing Symon's face in the water, the original Tom Wright translation was:

*As she crouched by a little stream to wash the linen
She thought she saw his face in the flow
But every time she washed his face grew fainter.
She rose to wring out the linen
And though she heard his voice in the willows
But his voice faded to a whisper
With the passing of the moons.
She sighed and evaded
Stayed out of her husband's way,
Poured out sweat and tears
And watched Mikael grow⁴¹.*

To 'massage' this into a similar song form to the original *Symon Chachava*, this became:

*As she crouched by a stream to wash the linen
She thought she saw his face there, in the flow
But every time, his face grew fainter
 Fade away and go*

*As she rose to wring out the linen
She thought she heard his voice there, in the willow
But it faded to a whisper,
 Fade away and go*

⁴¹ Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, trans. Wright. 46.

And with the passing of the moons,
 She sighed, tried to evade
 Stay out of her husband's way
 Poured out sweat and tears
 And watched Mikael grow.

Author's own work adapted from Wright Translation

After I had adjusted the lyrics to be sung over the chord progression of the *Love Theme*, the new lyrics dictated the rhythm. The melody was based on Grusha's original melody, but with adjustments to accommodate the new lyrics, it followed a different but recognizable shape.

Fig. 5: The Linen, Melody Excerpt

As she crouched by the stream to wash the linen She thought she saw his face

there in the flow But as she looked, his face grew fainter

fade away and go

Author's own work

Finally, when the lovers were reunited, these elements combined. The *Symon Chachava* melody was played on the cello with its piano accompaniment. The C section of *Sareri Hovin Mernem* was added to soar over the lower piano and cello parts unamplified, and accompanied the dialogue.

Fig. 6: Volumes, Full Score Excerpt

Musical score for a song in 4/4 time, featuring a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number (1, 3, 5). The lyrics are: "Kay - nel em, gal chem", "ka - rogh gal chem ka - rogh gal chem", and "ka - rogh Its". The piano accompaniment consists of a right hand with eighth-note chords and a left hand with a simple bass line.

Author's own work

The fast-paced method of working due to the *directive* relationship between the director and myself resulted in minimal reflection, adaptation of ideas or complexity in the melodic or harmonic structures that formed the basis of all musical moments. All choices

were heavily biased towards simplicity as the actors and musician had to deal with a large volume of new material in a short space of time, and perform it with very little rehearsal. This simplicity took the form of repetition in both the vocal and instrumental parts, a bias towards solo or unison singing and minimal growth and variation in the original musical themes. The lack of rehearsal time led to a mostly *directive* relationship between myself and other performers, as there was often no time for discussion. Though the final score had a simplicity to it, the clear mood shifts and thematic arcs created by the harmonic structures that I was working within were very effective both for the audience connecting ideas and moments throughout the play, but also allowed the actors to grasp large amounts of musical content very quickly.

The framework method of composition used during rehearsals was based on regionally specific sounds and instrumentation discussed with the director before the rehearsals started. His expectation of creating sound on the floor as opposed to a pre-crafted composition led me to believe there would be more devising and experimentation in the rehearsal room with a more *collaborative* approach. However, from very early in rehearsals, roles were entirely delineated with little to no interaction with designers outside our direct responsibility. This indicated a level of trust by the director to fulfill our brief to his vision, but also lay the responsibility of integration entirely on the director and his ability to communicate a strong aesthetic vision to all creatives in the initial few meetings.

Language and Communication

Before rehearsals commenced, an *interactive* style of communication was established in meetings between the director, sound designer and myself. The use of reference material was key in communicating sonic ideas across disciplines. This use of representational sound established the textures that would make up the sonic fabric of the play. This included traditional and contemporary folk music from geographic areas that the play inhabited, as well as possibilities for instrumentation and elements of sound design. The use of sound materials gave us a clear frame of reference and shared vision of the role sound had in the piece as well as the style we were working within.

Table 5: *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Language and Communication 1

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Sound Designer Composer	Verbal discussion – sonic examples	Interactive	Fully Delineated	Shared point of reference

From initial *interactive* meetings, the style of communication changed, largely due to the hierarchical dynamics within the rehearsal room. In the director’s theatrical ‘conducting’ he would call out instructions to the sound designer and I as ideas came upon him. This style of *directive*, spontaneous communication required me to be in the rehearsal room most of the time so that I could implement these ideas and include them in the final score. This impacted the amount of time I had writing/preparing work for the rehearsal room, as well as individual music rehearsal time.

Table 6: *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Language and Communication 2

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Composer	Verbal instruction	Directive	Fully Delineated	Limited individual rehearsal time Instructions to incorporate

Symon Chachava

Taking the ideas discussed in our original meetings regarding contemporary, regionally specific folk music, I envisaged Grusha’s song *Symon Chachava* as a contemporary Georgian Ballad. This was based this on the Nina Basharuli song discussed earlier in this chapter. I composed my own song around Tom Wright’s translation in the play and was heavily influenced by the style and feel of the referenced track.

Fig. 7: Symon Chachava Melody Excerpt 1.2

17
And when you do come back from war, No boots will stand before my door

21
No head upon my pillow, No kiss upon my lips And when you

26
do come back from war, Will you whisper sweet and low

29
Everything is as it once was

Author's own work

I ascertained in the first rehearsal that only one of the actors could read music, and so I communicated all vocal lines by singing and playing through the melody on the piano. To reinforce these melodies, I had the actors record rehearsals so they could rehearse privately. Often, we would not be able to go over any material we had learned for days or weeks, so making sure the actors had these recordings as a resource was fundamental in the success of the production.

When approaching the first rehearsal of *Symon Chachava*, it was still early in the rehearsal process and so were allowed more time than music included in the later parts of the play. In this rehearsal, I had an *interactive* exchange with the actor playing Grusha. Her voice was low with a captivating quality, but quite a small range. Through discussion and experimentation with the melody, we adapted the song to her vocal strengths. We collaborated on this adaptation, but roles were always delineated, and I had the final say in all changes that were made leaving the authorship of the composition clear. Even with these minor adaptations and time spent to develop this work to the specific

performer, it transformed this moment into one of the most enchanting parts of the performance.

Fig. 8: Symon Chachava Melody Excerpt 1.3



Author's own work

Table 7: Caucasian Chalk Circle, Language and Communication 3

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional Outcome</i>
Composer Actor	Verbal Trial and error	Interactive	Fully Delineated	Music tailored to actor

The director watched the final part of this rehearsal to assess how it would work on the floor, but provided no instruction to change elements of the song.

I had little communication with the director after the initial sound meetings. During rehearsals he was occupied with working with the actors, and due to hierarchical considerations, I did not feel comfortable contacting him outside of rehearsals. Where each of the other design students working on the show had a mentor with whom to

discuss ideas, or if they needed to raise concerns, there were no direct channels of communication open to me as composer on this production.

Yussup’s Theme

Due to the ‘theatrical conducting’ mode of rehearsals, some sound requirements were not apparent until well into the rehearsal period. In initial discussions, we had outlined the cue points of sound and music. This was largely specified by the text, as most music was facilitating sung parts of the narrative.

A small piece of music was required in Act III, *In the Northern Mountains* where the script specified “Pandemonium”.⁴² After initial discussions, I had thought this may be a reprise of *Kalinka*, a Russian folk song used in the previous scene. However, when we arrived at this point in the script, it was discovered that we needed a few bars of music to cover a set change. The director wanted ‘big cello’ (which became a frequent instruction through the rehearsal process). I improvised a short and loud few bars around C minor so the piece could transition easily into the next piece of music where we returned to the main theme of this Act.

Table 8: *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Language and Communication 4

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Composer Set Designer (indirectly)	Verbal instruction	<i>Directive</i>	Fully Delineated	New theme required

When rehearsed again, this piece of music had transformed into the musical theme of the villainous character Yussup, and appeared on page thirty-eight where we had originally envisaged a funeral dirge, as well as an extended section on page forty-six to cover choreographed movement with a tarpaulin. The lack of communication left me a

⁴² Brecht, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, trans. Wright. 44.

little unprepared, and the final piece of music had minimal variation, as it had been put together incredibly quickly with little time for refinement of the initial improvised idea.

Table 9: *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Language and Communication 5

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Composer Set Designer (indirectly)	Verbal instruction	<i>Directive</i>	Fully Delineated	New theme required – three renditions in total

I had hoped that I would be able to achieve variation in the final performed music by encouraging the cellist to improvise over these sections and sketched the cello part, more as an indication of texture rather than a set composition.

Fig. 9: Yussup's Theme, Cello Excerpt

18. Yussup Exits/The Linen

The musical score is written for Violoncello (Vc.) in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff starts at measure 1 with a tempo of 50 and a dynamic of *fff*. The second staff starts at measure 6 with a tempo of 60 and a dynamic of *mf*, marked "Smoothly". A cue "Cue: Tarp lowers" is placed above the staff at measure 6. The third staff starts at measure 13, and the fourth staff starts at measure 19, ending with a dynamic of *p*.

Author's own work

We had included improvisation on the cello in some legato sections of the work which proved very effective in covering extended scene changes where we repeated bars until a visual cue. However, this large, grating sound was not her most comfortable style, and so we did not achieve variation in this way for this section.

In performance, an additional communicative problem arose. The director had required prominent cello playing in many sections of the play. As I had to be on stage for the entire play, this inhibited my ability to communicate what I needed in technical rehearsals when setting microphone levels. I could not assess the levels between keyboard, accordion, cello and voice, and so was not able to communicate with the sound designer what I required as we did not have a shared reference as to how the sound was perceived by the audience. I was only able to watch the archival footage of

the production afterwards, where the cello was almost undiscernible for many parts of the play, including *Yussup's Theme*.

Table 10: *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, Language and Communication 6

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Composer Sound Designer	Verbal – no sonic reference	Interactive	Fully Delineated	Unbalanced sound

Communication in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* was challenging on many counts. Initial *interactive* discussions indicated an ongoing exchange of ideas. However, the primary mode of communication from the director was almost exclusively *directive*. This was partly due to unexpected restriction in rehearsal time which I will discuss later in this chapter. Other problems in communication arose due to unclear channels of communication for the duration of the rehearsal and performance period. This created an atmosphere of uncertainty which restricted creative freedom. In the few moments where discussion and more *interactive* modes of communication could take place, the music was built around the performers, who developed an ownership of the material and highlighted their abilities.

Multidisciplinary Timeframes

Issues surrounding conflicting timeframes during the rehearsal period for *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* arose from two main points; the level of preparation requested by the director going into rehearsals and the lack of rehearsal time allocated to music once rehearsals had begun. These two factors combined to have a profound effect on how the overall musical concept changed throughout the rehearsal period, and on the execution of sound within the piece.

The lack of rehearsal time was not a conscious choice, but the outcome of a lack of communication between the institution and the director. Before rehearsals began, the director was under the impression that the actors were rehearsing full time. The original plan was to stage the work during the morning, and to follow up with music and movement rehearsals in the afternoon. When it was discovered that this was not the case, the work was staged, music was incorporated and then not rehearsed. The lack of music rehearsals dictated compositional methods directly as it required the fastest and most easily executed choices. Most often this led to *directive* methods of working, however in one specific case, a *collaborative* proved most effective.

Where Are The Generals?

In initial design meetings, the director, sound designer and myself discussed the option of a rap for Azdak in Act IV, as a reference to *Hamilton*⁴³, and as a recognisable voice of political and social dissent which reflected the tone of the work, the character in this moment as well as the ethos of Brecht's work as a writer of political theatre.

Time constraints required aspects of *directive* working, especially with the lyrics. Firstly, the original Tom Wright translation needed modification to sculpt into a rap-able form. For example, the original lyrics for the first verse were:

Sister, hide your face, brother, grab your gun
Upside-down times have come
The wealthy men complain,
The poor don't notice a change.
The city says; let's drive the powerful out of our walls,
Storm the bureaucracies, burn the secret files.
The masters are for the first time required to labour,
The troglodytes arise and smell the daisies,

⁴³ Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Hamilton (Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, Atlantic Recording Corporation/WEA International, 2015, MP3 file, downloaded May 1, 2015, iTunes.

*The bank-counter is broken and made into a bed,
They own bakeries who once lacked bread,
Those who lived on the dole, now dole it out instead.⁴⁴*

After the first verse, Azdak's offside Shauva had the text 'Oh, oh, oh, oh', which was repeated later in the song, delineating a chorus. However, I decided to instead create a chorus from a repeated part of Azdak's text, which placed emphasis in what seemed to be a more pertinent part of the song and message of the piece.

*Where are the Generals? Where are the Editors?
Won't somebody restore order?*

Working autonomously, I used rhythmic variation to highlight assonance, alliteration, internal rhyme and near rhymes in addition to adding and subtracting words, then worked with the actor to highlight these elements, and changed very little in rehearsal.

⁴⁴ Brecht (trans. Wright), *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, 63.

Fig. 10: Where are the Generals?, Azdak Excerpt

Azdak 4/4 Sister... hide your face, brother... grab your gun the upside...
 2 down time has come for all and one. The wealthy...
 3 men complain the poor don't notice... a change, the city...
 4 says, "Let's drive the powerful... right out of the main frame, storm
 5 bureaucracies... burn the secret fi-les The master is for the first time re- quired to
 7 labour... The trogladytes... arise... and smell the daisies... The bank
 9 counter is bro - ken down to a bed, yo, they've got ba-ker-ies now that had no bread.Those that
 11 lived on the dole now dole that shit out instead...

Transcription of adapted Wright Lyric

A more *collaborative* approach was used when creating the music itself. Much of this was achieved in casting an actor who brought a drum machine and mixer into the audition. The actor offered different textures of drum samples, which we discussed *collaboratively* and layered throughout the piece. Before the chorus, we inserted a slight interlude or B section, with a higher pitched mono toned, syncopated synth rhythm. The variation was highlighted by taking out the deeper drum tones. As we envisioned a

comedic feel for this section, we embraced a naff quality instead of aiming for a serious rendition.

Fig. 11: Where are the Generals?, Drum Loop Transcription

The image displays a musical score for a drum loop. It is divided into three sections. The first section, titled "Main Drum Loop", consists of two measures. The second section, also titled "Main Drum Loop", consists of two measures. The third section, titled "Pre-Chorus Bar", consists of one measure. The score is written for five instruments: Monotone Synth, Low Snare, High Snare, Hand Claps, and Bass. The notation includes various rhythmic values such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and sixteenth notes, along with rests and dynamic markings. The score is presented in a standard musical notation format with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat.

Transcription of included collaborative work

The character had a musical motif based around the chords **Cm6**, **Bb6** and **G7** which was sung by the Narrators as they told his story and delineated this 'chapter' of the play, *The Tale of the Judge*. I used the same chords for Azdak's rap, which connected this sonic

moment to Azdak's character motif and theatrical 'chapter.' I used these chords with a syncopated rhythm that sat behind the beat and so was recognisable, but markedly different to the main theme. The cellist improvised her own part to fit with the beats and piano. The addition of the pitched instruments not only fleshed out the sound and added tonality for the chorus, but also tied this section into the rest of the play. Had this piece been beats and spoken voice alone, it would have felt disconnected from the existing musical language of the piece.

The minimal rehearsal time meant that after the initial rehearsal where these sections were put together, we were not able to rehearse. A second rehearsal was undertaken during production week, primarily focussing on confidence and rhythm of the spoken text. Aided by recordings made in rehearsals, the actors undertook private rehearsals where they explored the relationship of the characters and played with physical movement, drawing not only from *Hamilton*, but inspiration from the Beastie Boys⁴⁵. These rehearsals led to the bravado and playfulness seen in the final performance.

The lack of time in the creation of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* led to a range of different compositional methods being used. The *collaborative* approach in *Where are the Generals* gave the actors a sense of ownership over the material which had positive results, in both the material itself, but also in their playfulness and desire to refine this piece outside scheduled rehearsals. Though this method of composition was not my usual way of working, the cross-disciplinary nature of this collaboration harnessed the skills of each individual to create something that we could not have crafted independently. This sonic moment only required two actors, who could be taken out of rehearsal while the company were rehearsing scenes where they were not required. This was not common throughout the work and most musical sections required larger groups of actors or actors who could not be spared from the main rehearsal room to workshop and develop music collaboratively.

⁴⁵ Beastie Boys. "Beastie Boys – No Sleep Till Brooklyn" (video), June 16, 2009, accessed May 1, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07Y0cy-nvAg>.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle – A Summary

The Caucasian Chalk Circle had many challenges encountered by myself and others on the creative team. The unique power structures created by a team formed of professional/teachers and students hindered our ability to overcome issues as they arose throughout the rehearsals. There was a highly structured hierarchy with the director communicating his aesthetic vision in a primarily *directive* manner. Roles were delineated from the outset with no communication between myself and any creatives involved in visual design. This placed the responsibility of creating an integrated work primarily with the director. There was minimal communication between most parties involved in the production, and the lack of time allocated for rehearsal which impacted both the development and performance of music was itself a communication issue between the institution and director.

This unique circumstance created many challenges to me as a composer. Hayden and Windsor state that integrated works can arise from multiple collaborative models, but that those models need to arise from the group and not be imposed by one artist onto another.⁴⁶ The director's preferred working process varied greatly from my previous composing experiences and going into a creative environment with such tight restrictions had a huge effect on my compositional approach and creative freedom. Where I had been used to spending time crafting, testing, refining and discarding ideas to create a polished performance, I adapted these techniques to this work. By retaining the beginnings of my usual process by creating a structure to work within, I was able to improvise within these parameters in rehearsal to satisfy my own creative needs, but also the requirements of the director. However, under these conditions harmonic and melodic ideas did not grow throughout the piece, and accompaniment was simplistic and consisted of rhythmic chords that provided a harmonic position and tempo rather than the regionally specific inspired accompaniments originally envisaged.

⁴⁶ Hayden and Windsor, "Collaboration and the Composer," 38.

An improvisatory approach could have worked when developing the music for this work, however restrictions on rehearsal time, level of music training in the cast, and the time allocated for music within the schedule discounted this possibility. The most successful parts of the work were those that allowed even a small amount of time for workshop and development with the actors involved. *Symon Chachava* and *Where are the Generals* became the most memorable pieces of work due to their ownership by the actors involved and the ability to refine and develop these ideas with the actors even slightly in rehearsal.

Chapter 3: Crossroads

Table 11: *Crossroads* Production Outline

Name	Crossroads
Theatrical Genre	Devised Theatre
Musical Function	Not diegetic – devised piece with movement focus
Music Presentation	Pre-recorded
Creative/Production Team	Director Set/costume designer Composer Sound Designer Actor Technical operator
Rehearsal Period	Five Weeks – <i>4x4 hour rehearsals per week</i>

Crossroads was the second work to be completed for this research project. It was a devised theatre piece, with a creative team of director, set designer, dramaturg/choreographer, composer, sound designer and actor. The devising/rehearsal process began with a provocation presented by the director in the form of a thematic starting point. The team were presented with the case of a woman who had died whilst in a mental health facility in New South Wales, and the ancient Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone. We were to discuss and examine the possible intersection of these two narratives. Due to the nature of a devised form of theatre-making, we did not have a script to follow, but instead had these two stimuli with which to start a theatrical exploration.

It has been argued that the modern notion of ‘devised’ theatre or ‘collective creation’ arose during the 1960’s and 1970’s with “companies associated, variously, with collective performance creation, egalitarian labour distribution, consensual decision

making, and socio-political revolt.”⁴⁷ From here, the term ‘devised theatre’ has grown to encompass many different processes of theatre-making, which differs from company to company and even project to project. This multiplicity of ways to devise theatre arises from a decentralised power structure, plurality of vision and relationships within differing devising groups. During this creative development, each creative specialist was required to work outside their primary field of expertise, yet was still responsible for a specific element of the performance in its final realisation. This adheres to Alison Oddey’s description of a devised performance that “originates with the group while making the performance, rather than starting from a play text that someone else has written to be interpreted.”⁴⁸

Working in this environment presented different challenges than those faced in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. Where the previous production was created in a restrictive, highly hierarchical and delineated environment, this work had a creative environment that focussed on cross-disciplinarity and collective creation. Going into this production we did not have parameters to work within, a specific brief to fulfil, or even a performative style, as making these decisions was part of the *collective* making process. As we were still working to a short timeline, the greatest challenge I faced was making these decisions, developing ideas and still having enough time to create the recorded sound works to be incorporated into the final performances. This became more difficult as the original actor decided not to finish the project a week from performance. Instead of using the final week to integrate elements of the content created, this period was used to rehearse a new actor and all focus was on making sure she was supported and able to learn the text and movement.

Hierarchy

As a devised piece, the hierarchy within the rehearsal room for *Crossroads* was wholly different to the previous work. The aim of the devising and rehearsal process was not to

⁴⁷ Syssoyeva, “Introduction,” 1.

⁴⁸ Oddey, *Devising Theatre*, 1.

stage a fully finished work, but a work in progress exploring ideas and themes with a view to further development into a fully realised show in the future. This placed a focus on process, conversation and collaborative group work with a less defined power structure and more of a collective dynamic between art forms and artists. There were no specific parameters we were working within and no dominant art form to play against. Each rehearsal began with a 'check in' in which we spoke about how we were outside of rehearsals, which was specifically incorporated into the rehearsal schedule to promote a sense of community within the collaborative group. Compositionally, I was still primarily responsible for the music in the finished work, but the choices leading to these compositions were made from cross-disciplinary discussions. My relationship with the sound designer was negotiated throughout the devising process as initially we did not know how sound would be incorporated. Once we had a rough outline of the structure of the show and how sound functioned in these moments, we agreed that I would be responsible for all tonal sound (incorporating some sound effects) and she would be responsible for creating a sound sequence from recorded voices, including some stems that I provided from another track composed for the piece. The sound designer was also responsible for the amplification of sound in the space.

Key considerations in this working environment were the multiplicity of opinion when discussing ideas and directions the work could take, as well as the lack of parameters to work within. As a composer used to working within the stylistic conventions of cabaret, or to a specific theatrical brief, this lack of clarity presented a challenge to my usual working processes.

Give Me Winter

The parity in the rehearsal room led to a looser delineation of roles. Early in the devising process, all artists were working outside their specialised area. The first few rehearsals were simply structured conversations led by our director around the themes she wanted to work within; the myth of Demeter and Persephone, structural inequalities in the mental health system in Australia, and the power of theatre to create change. The ideas and related experiences of all artists were taken as a springboard to create the narrative

and style of the piece, and we were encouraged to contribute to areas outside our speciality. This led to more abstract workshop on the floor. The set designer facilitated a guided meditation around the themes of the play, and I led a gestural movement exercise which I had experienced when composing for another play a few years before. In these early stages of development, there was a *collaborative* structure, with a barely discernible hierarchy.

Table 12: *Crossroads*, Hierarchy 1

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Dramaturg/ choreographer Composer Actor	Verbal discussion	<i>Collaborative</i>	Undelineated	Framework for theatrical work decided

Initial development did not have a performance goal, but each artist was aware of their main area of responsibility and so took the findings from these discussions and applied them to their own specialisation.

Taking our collective ideas regarding the links between the Greek myth and news articles, I suggested the potential for the piece to be framed by a musical theme that began the performance and then returned at the end. Up until this point in the process, all discussions had been conceptual with no work on the floor. I began to worry that by the time decisions had been made regarding sonic or movement style, I would not have time to produce the quantity of sound required by opening night. Therefore, I suggested a song from the perspective of Demeter that was poetic in tone, and could have meaning that resonated with the modern narrative after exposition in the body of the piece. The creation of a recurring musical theme had been instrumental in making sure the music could be finished on schedule in the previous production, and this could also be used as either a springboard for a textural and/or physical language in the piece, or if this offer

was not accepted, it would give me a style to work against in the creation of alternative sound ideas.

As our discussions had been based around connecting an ancient myth to a modern news story, I suggested that the distinction between the ancient and the modern could be framed in instrumentation and texture. The example I used to illustrate this idea was *I Wear Black* by Ngaiire and Megan Washington⁴⁹. There are two versions of this piece; the acoustic version with voice and solo piano⁵⁰, and an electronic accompaniment that has an entirely different feel. Though I began this conversation, the team discussed this concept *collaboratively*, again without a structured hierarchy. The director had originally envisaged the opening as being more domestic, and with the actor already in the space when the audience entered, and so would not be sure when the performance started. However, she was willing to hear an alternative viewpoint and experiment with ideas. We also discussed the image of Demeter standing with a lantern, and how this would interact with an acoustic accompaniment or acapella version of an opening song. The creative team could see how the song would tie into many of our areas of discussion; of connecting the stories, cyclical seasons and sonic textures as delineators of time. They listened to both versions of the reference material and not only thought this was an appropriate starting point, but enjoyed both versions of the song immensely.

Table 13: *Crossroads, Hierarchy 2*

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Dramaturg/ choreographer Composer Actor	Verbal discussion	<i>Interactive</i> pitch <i>Collaborative</i> discussion	Discernibly delineated	Initial song concept drafted

⁴⁹ Ngaiire and Megan Washington, "I Wear Black", *Blastoma*, Ngaiire, Maximillion Brown, 2016, AAC audio file, downloaded August 28, 2017, iTunes.

⁵⁰ "Ngaiire's stripped-back soul", *ABC Radio National*, last modified October 1, 2016, <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/musicshow/ngaiire/7888256>.

Taking the style and feel of the reference tracks, I autonomously wrote a verse and chorus to discuss in further rehearsal before a full development of the idea. I had been informed before rehearsals that the actor could also sing, so initial musical ideas were developed with the intention of being sung live. We also decided that any non-vocal music would be recorded. We were going into the process with a performer who had a background in physical theatre and a choreographer. Space was at a premium in such a small venue, and complex live instrumentation would inhibit the performer's ability to move freely.

The song began with construction of the lyrics. Taking the idea of Demeter singing of her search for Persephone and the creation of the seasons, I began with the idea of a repeated motif *Give Me Winter*. As we had discussed the whole performance as a cycle of seasons, I wanted to reflect this in the lyric construction, but not make the lyrics specific enough to discount the intended secondary interpretation. Verse one began as follows;

Give me winter

For who could fathom spring?

Give me winter

The cold will numb the sting

Give me winter

For once you've seen the black

Give me winter

For once you've tasted the fruit

There's no turning back

Author's own work

This could be interpreted as a direct reference to the myth of Demeter and Persephone, but also the idea that once knowledge is gained, it cannot be un-learned and ignored; as in the case of uncovering the abuse and neglect of vulnerable people. These lyrics were followed by a brief B section that was less oblique in its exposition of the story, but was again applicable to both the myth and news story.

*You won't read this in the obituary
But I'll be damned if this stays a mystery today*

Once I had an idea of the feel of the lyrics, I added a simple piano accompaniment. The first draft had a single repeating note with a rising bass line that would return to the tonic of the chord at the beginning of each phrase. This also reflected repetition within the acoustic piano rendition of *I Wear Black*. The tempo of these repeated notes was much faster than the reference material as I felt the accompaniment needed a sense of urgency to reflect the feeling of searching and loss.

Fig. 12: Give Me Winter, Piano Excerpt



Author's own work

This was constructed to represent the momentum in the search, the lack of change, and the constancy of fear. This simple repeated motif grew in complexity as the chord was fleshed out more fully, and rose the instrumental climax that would become the chorus.

Fig. 13: Give Me Winter, Vocal and Piano Excerpt

Author's own work

Though this work was done autonomously and closely resembled my usual song-writing methods, the ideas of linking the myth and news story with lyrical ambiguity, responses to grief reflecting the seasons, as well as stylistic musical choices were all based in our collective discussions.

Table 14: Crossroads, Hierarchy 3

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Composer	N/A	Autonomous work	Fully delineated	Song offer

The musical offer was brought to the group and part of the next rehearsal was spent teaching this to the actor. It became clear that the actor was not a confident singer, and would need extensive rehearsal time to perform even a modified version of the piece. In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, we dealt with similar issues by modifying melodies and adjusting keys. However, as *Crossroads* was a devised work and we currently had no content to perform, I did not want to use our minimal rehearsal time bringing the song to a performance standard and therefore taking time away from the other creative elements of the work. I discussed this issue privately with the director and advised that we use a pre-recorded version of the song in performance. This would not only free the actor to perform in an uninhibited way, but would free up the considerable rehearsal time it would take to work on the live singing to bring it to a point that would serve the story. Though the director had the final say in this decision, this was an *interactive* exchange, in which she respected my role as having a larger responsibility over the sonic aspects of the show.

Table 15: *Crossroads*, Hierarchy 4

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Composer	Verbal discussion	Interactive	Discernibly delineated	Pre-recorded version needed Live music concept scrapped

The initial placement and function of the song had been shifted in solo discussions between the director and dramaturg which altered the arrangement ideas from the initial reference tracks. This decision had been made in a separate meeting away from the rehearsal room and so was presented in a *directive* manner. The director and dramaturg had decided to structure the performance into four sections representing the seasons starting and ending in Summer, so instead of framing the beginning and end of the piece, *Give Me Winter* now appeared as an instrumental which underscored physical movement where the transition began from the *Autumn* to *Winter* sections. A second vocal version was to appear as part of another movement section within the *Winter* segment of the piece.

Table 16: Crossroads, Hierarchy 5

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional Outcome</i>
Director Dramaturg/ choreographer	Verbal discussion	<i>Interactive</i> discussion (Dir&Dr/Ch)	Fully delineated	Instrumental version required
Composer		<i>Directive</i> discussion (Dir&Comp)		Vocal version required

After our initial multidisciplinary *collaborative* discussions, there was a greater delineation of roles as we went into construction of performance content. As *Give Me Winter* had been created as the starting point for a repeated musical motif, this theme was used in an *interactive* multidisciplinary improvisation. In the section *The Letter*, the central character whose mother had passed away while in a psychiatric facility, is alerted to the fact that her mother’s death could have been prevented. To explore a sonic and movement language for this section, the actor improvised movement with ideas and stimuli being offered by the dramaturg/choreographer throughout. I responded to this movement on piano, using melodic ideas and chord progressions that were used in the original *Give Me Winter* song, changing tempo, pitch and feel to create contrast. The director called out suggestions to both the dramaturg/choreographer and myself as these art forms interacted with each other. After this improvisation, we *collectively* discussed our reactions to this exercise and defined how this moment would work, and our individual roles in its construction moving forward.

Table 17: Crossroads, Hierarchy 6

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Dramaturg/ choreographer Composer Actor	Improvisation/ spontaneous reaction to opposing artforms	<i>Interactive</i> improvisation	Fully delineated	Establish feel/tempo of piece
	Verbal discussion	<i>Collective</i> discussion		Basis for written music

Example 1.1 - Give Me Winter

In contrast to this instrumental version of the piece, I created a secondary variation which focussed on the vocal aspects of the piece. In our research and discussions surrounding the myth of Demeter and Persephone, the group had talked about the idea of the witness; Hecate who heard Persephone's cry and the nurses in the psychiatric hospital. Therefore, the initial song idea was expanded to include multiple voices from different directions as the call of Persephone to the central voice of Demeter. This also encompassed the modern story, with the disembodied voices representing those who had been neglected by the mental health system, and their need for their story to be told. I recorded a simple piano accompaniment and lead vocal, and then layered improvised vocal harmonies over the top. After the recording session, I could bring out or mute certain lines to create the feeling of climax and release. I then removed the piano, to create a sparser feel and create more contrast to the instrumental version.

Example 1.2 – Give Me Winter

Draft piano and acapella tracks were sent to the whole creative team for feedback and discussion in the next rehearsal.

As I began to spend more time writing, recording and mixing the music to be used in performance, I was not able to attend as many rehearsals and therefore, the choreography was developed separately by the director, choreographer/dramaturg and actor. We brought these elements together on the floor in rehearsal and discussed our thoughts and reactions *collaboratively*. I thought the purely vocal version fitted the narrative, resonated with our discussions around the power of speaking up against injustice, and the unheard voices of victims of neglect. However, as the other team members had been rehearsing with existing reference tracks that had a strong percussive feel, the director wanted to retain more of the rhythmic drive of the piano from the original song. As the development was nearing performance, more *directive* conversations took place as there was less time for conversation and workshopping ideas. As the two incarnations of *Give Me Winter* were to take place within the one

section of the performance, the two piano parts needed contrast. Therefore, I went back to the original reference track by Ngaiire with solo voice and piano. I used a more syncopated accompaniment than my original offer, and removed the repeated E that had created a sense of urgency in the initial draft. Though I had been happy with the quality of the purely vocal track, the hierarchy in the rehearsal room was a democratic space incorporating input from all specialists. As most creatives, including the director, performer and choreographer agreed that the vocal track lacked essential elements that inhibited its ability to fulfil its artistic function and therefore, hindered integration of all artistic elements, I agreed to produce an alternative that fulfilled these requirements.

Example 1.3 – Give Me Winter

Though the initial idea had been to create two contrasting versions of a single musical idea, the two versions in the final showing were quite different from the initial ideas pitched. This arose from the constantly evolving nature of piece, and collective discussion involving all creatives involved in the project. Due to the devised mode of creation, the work was almost continually coming into being, and therefore a flexibility from all artists was required and embedded in this process of creation. As the project grew closer to performance, a more defined hierarchical structure emerged, and solidified with greater delineation of roles and more *directive* communication from the director to other artists. In contrast to the initial *collaborative* period with input from all creatives across disciplines, decisions in the final weeks of rehearsal were delivered from the director without discussion with other collaborators. All changes in the composition were made to help integrate the sonic elements with other artistic disciplines and tie all elements into the overall aesthetic of the work. As initial discussions and ideas were made without strict parameters and often required a spontaneous or time-sensitive offer, these pieces were also based in my own personal aesthetic as a songwriter and vocalist, and then shifted by the collaborative nature of the development process to serve the play.

Language/Communication

During the development and rehearsal of *Crossroads*, I used similar methods to the previous work to communicate sonic ideas across disciplines, using reference materials to illustrate ideas I had difficulty communicating verbally to non-music specialists. This started before rehearsals began as the director and I discussed ideas of style and ways to communicate subtext or associations that arose from specific textures or sounds. I was reticent to dive into a specific musical genre before rehearsals had begun as we were not building the piece around the music but devising a theatre piece based on thematic ideas. Therefore, we left definitive musical choices until later in the devising process. Effective communication in this project was crucial as there was so much discussion across disciplines and sonic ideas were developed by a group of primarily non-musicians.

Autumn Sweeping

The composition for *Autumn Sweeping* went through a series of steps which included input from most of the creative team. *Autumn Sweeping* was the first movement section to be envisaged by the group, and acted as a starting point for the rest of the piece. Therefore, substantial time was allocated to its development, as it established a style and movement language of the piece as well as building the world of the play both visually and sonically. At the beginning of the process, not all of the creative team were able to attend rehearsals. The sound designer was on tour and the set/costume designer was in production of another project and so these conversations and rehearsals included a reduced team.

To begin the development of this section, initial meetings consisted of verbal discussion, without separation of disciplines. We drew mind maps, discussed narrative structure as well as possible characters that could be in the story. The director also led conversations around physical and mental responses to grief, where we drew on our own personal experiences as well as the experiences of people close to us. This resulted in a starting point for the physical movement. The initial rough conceit was the need for repetitive,

meaningless activity, in this case, cleaning, to distract from the mental anguish of the loss of a loved one.

Table 18: *Crossroads*, Language and Communication 1

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation of roles</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Dramaturg/ choreographer Composer Actor	Discussion	<i>Collaborative</i>	Undelineated	Collate sonic reference materials

From these discussions, I put together a list of reference tracks to be used in rehearsals alongside improvised movement. These consisted of musical works with varying instrumentation, mood, tempo and texture. In primary movement workshops of this section, I played pieces from this playlist as the actor improvised repetitive cleaning movements led by the choreographer/dramaturg. I would change the music after short intervals to see how these shifts would highlight aspects of the movements, and how these contrasting pieces would change the movement energy and focus of the actor.

These improvisations lasted for around 2-3 minutes, after which we would have a short discussion around what the actor felt, what they had found in the improvisation, as well as what the other members of the creative team experienced and interpreted from watching the actor's movement and its relation to the sound. I could ascertain how elements of tempo and texture affected the actor, as well as how this affected the desired outcome for this section of the finished work. Some problems arose in attempting verbal descriptions of sonic elements. It was often difficult to convey which components I was trying to extract in relation to the source material of the work, and which parts the other artists from non-sonic disciplines thought aided or hindered the movement. This got more difficult when other artists in the rehearsal room attempted to use technical musical language to describe what they wanted to emulate from the reference material I had provided. Unfortunately, as they did not have grounding in the correct use of musical terminology, these terms were used incorrectly which led to

confusion on both sides of the discussion. For example, one member of the team used the word ‘staccato’ to indicate that they had found the more up tempo sections had been more effective in contrast to the true meaning of ‘short and detached,’ used regardless of tempo.

Despite these difficulties, we agreed on the use of up tempo, repetitive phrases that matched the actor’s energy. This not only helped the actor in her performance of the movement, but acted as a sonic reflection of the character’s mental state. The use of legato phrases and held notes that acted in counterpoint to the movement seemed to foreshadow the grief explored later in the piece. At this early stage of the performance we wanted to leave the emotionality more ambiguous.

Table 19: Crossroads, Language and Communication 2

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Dramaturg/ choreographer	Non-verbal interaction	<i>Interactive</i>	Fully Delineated	Isolated effective elements to be included in further musical exploration
Composer Actor	Verbal with sonic references	<i>Collaborative</i>		

The improvisations on the floor, as well as discussions between myself, the director and dramaturg/choreographer dictated instrumentation in this section. Independently we had brought examples of piano works by Ólafur Arnalds⁵¹ and Phillip Glass⁵² to discuss or use in movement improvisations and we all agreed that a primarily piano texture would create the feel we needed to integrate with the movement. We had also been using pieces in rehearsal by Sigur Rós⁵³ and SBTRKT⁵⁴ which had repetitive electronic

⁵¹ Olafur Arnalds, *Living Room Songs*, Erased Tapes, 2011, AAC Audio File, downloaded May 30, 2016, iTunes.

⁵² Phillip Glass, *Metamorphosis I*, Bruce Brubaker, Infiné IF1032, 2015, streaming audio, Spotify.

⁵³ Sigur Ros, *We Play Endlessly*, EMI/The Independent UPSGRRO501, 2009, MPEG Audio File, downloaded March 3, 2016, iTunes.

⁵⁴ SBTRKT, *SBTRKT*, Young Turks, 2011, MPEG Audio File, downloaded February 21, 2012, iTunes.

phrases. I decided to put together an offer that included different looped piano phrases layered over each other, with acoustic percussive sounds such as the creaking of the pedal. These lines could be added or subtracted to create different moments within the piece. I created a very rough draft of this idea as an offer to the rehearsal room. However, I was very unhappy with the results. The movement was to last quite a long time, and these repeated phrases did not have enough variation, or the muted emotionality which I wanted to include in the piece as an essential human element. To bring this concept to a quality that matched my own aesthetic sensibilities would have taken more time than I wanted to spend on this offer, which had the potential to be disregarded completely if it did not align with the group's collective vision. As the piece needed to develop along with other music later in the work that had not been started yet, I decided to fall back on my more tested working methods.

Example 2.1 - Autumn Sweeping

I discarded the previous idea completely without bringing it to the group. The final piece was created by a mode of working more similar to my cabaret songwriting work. I spent autonomous time at the piano, improvising repeated sections and chose those which created the feel I desired. I used variation to sculpt these into a piece that reflected the four movement sections described by the choreographer, and notated the final composition, refining these ideas continually through the notation process.

The final piece to be included in the performance had four distinct sections, punctuated by a short ritardando concluding each part. Imposing static sounds then interrupted the piano to crescendo slowly, and then disappeared abruptly once the piano resumed, a tempo. The static was included to show the chaotic thoughts that were only kept at bay through the repeated movements. The piano is in 12/8 time, with rolling, repetitive quavers that modulate gradually from chord to chord. Each section builds into a variation that mirrors the characters' attempt at distraction through different physical tasks, but all with the same motivation.

Fig. 14: Autumn Sweeping Piano, Excerpt

The image displays a musical score for 'Autumn Sweeping Piano, Excerpt'. It consists of four systems of notation. The first system is labeled 'Piano' and features a tempo marking of quarter note = 90 and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The second system is labeled 'Pno.' and begins with a measure number of 4. The third system is also labeled 'Pno.' and begins with a measure number of 7. The fourth system is labeled 'Pno.' and begins with a measure number of 10. This system includes performance directions: *molto rit.* (marked with a dotted line) and *molto accel.* (marked with a dashed line). A fermata is placed over a note in the right hand at measure 11. A first ending bracket is shown in the right hand at measure 12, with a *15^{mo}* marking below it. The score is written in 12/8 time and uses treble and bass clefs.

Extract of author's own work

Example 2.2 – Autumn Sweeping

In performance, the movement did not match these distinct sections due to extra-musical issues that arose towards the end of the process. The original actor cast for the development, rehearsal and performance was not able to perform the work, and so a second actor was cast for the final stages of development and performance. She had the equivalent of one day's rehearsal before the performance, and was not able to completely familiarize herself with each piece of music, so was not able to closely match her movement with the final recorded musical piece which resulted in a less integrated final performance.

Communication in the creation of *Autumn Sweeping* began as a series of verbal discussions establishing the conceptual basis of the work. Once we began working on the content of the piece, communication was primarily through reference material. This was not as a single example to be emulated, but included elements from different works to be incorporated and then developed throughout the process. These reference points allowed a shared understanding of elements when working on the creation of content on the rehearsal room floor, however verbal discussions were restricted by the misuse of musical terminology. The final work was based on our discussions and discoveries from rehearsal, but all elements were not fully integrated due to a lack of rehearsal time with the performer. Even though this was not fully realized in performance, there was a shared understanding of how the music functioned, why it functioned in this way and how it should be integrated into performance. Had we more rehearsal time after the development stage, a closer integration of sound and movement could have been achieved.

Multidisciplinary Timeframes

Crossroads was a devised work, so all disciplines went into this project with minimal preparation. *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* not only had an existing text to work from but a lengthy history of previous productions, an existing theatrical style, and strong parameters to work within. Because of our existing understanding of the work, considerable planning could happen before the rehearsal period began. This level of preparation was impossible with a devised piece, as setting initial parameters was an integral part of the collaborative decision-making process. As the focus of this piece was on the creative development of the work, much more time was allocated to the devising of the material. This led to conflicting timeframes with time required to record and produce sound that would support the stage action and other theatrical elements as well as be the appropriate length. Joyce Koh has called musical composition the act of “sculpting time”⁵⁵ but it is difficult to create a piece with a coherent durational form if the duration of the piece is not known at the time of composition.

⁵⁵ Joyce Koh, lecture, Melbourne, October 5, 2016.

Going into rehearsals, the director sketched out a rough timeline for us to work within. The first part of the process would focus on the creative development. This included discussion and collectively making decisions around the world of the play, character(s), narrative and structure, form and musical/design elements. From here, the creative development would then lead to creation of content. After this, the process would transition to a 'performance' focus with the realization of the content, rehearsal of fixed material, technical rehearsal and finally the performance. There was no set allocation of time for each of these phases going into rehearsal which affected the ability of theatrical elements to be realised simultaneously.

Spring

In the creation of *Spring*, independent modes of creation were used that were quite dissimilar to other sections of the work. Allison Oddey asserts that often difficulties arise in devising situations due to the conflicting time requirements of the art forms involved. As the work is often in flux until quite close to the performance, issues can emerge when trying to have all elements ready and integrated by opening night.⁵⁶ As *Spring* was the final section of the piece to be approached in the content creation period of development, it encountered the most problems in the conflict between the time needed to devise ideas, choreograph movement and have the time to write a structured piece of music, record and mix in time to rehearse the movement and music together to a performance standard.

The first part of development required the creation of a performance style. We had discussed the idea of ritual and feeling of hope in this moment, and so spent time in soundless cross-disciplinary movement workshops on the floor discovering a gestural movement language. However, as the Autumn and Winter sections were also in development, and the group came to the Spring section much later, I was not able to attend subsequent rehearsals of this section after the initial movement exploration.

⁵⁶ Alison Oddey, *Devising Theatre* (London, Routledge, 1994), 14

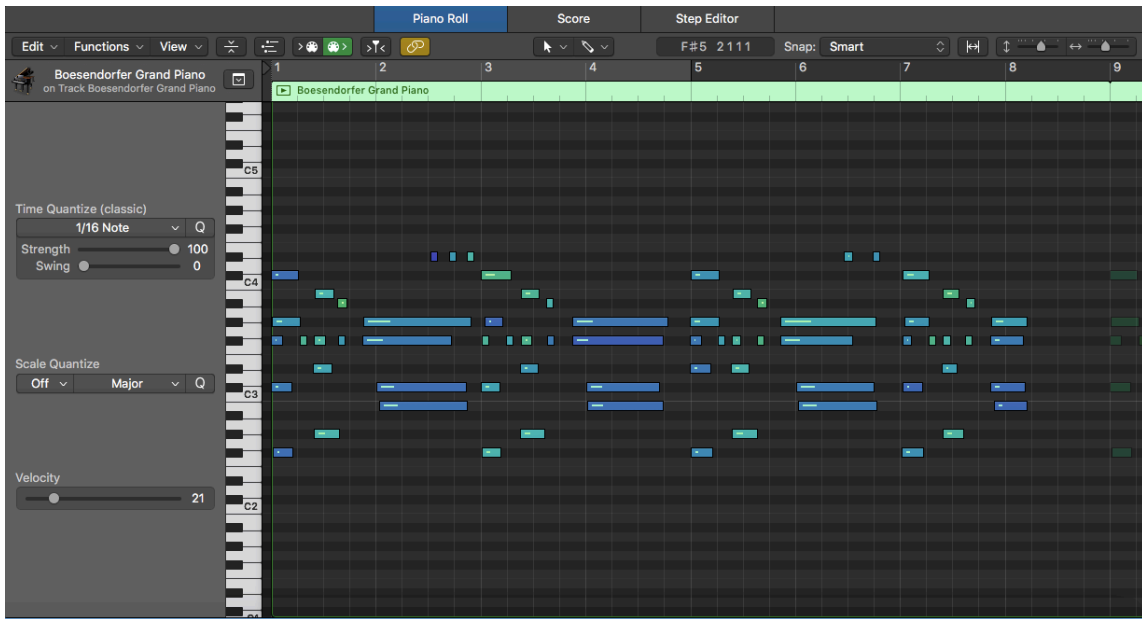
Due to the time required to write and record the music, I required autonomous writing and recording time for the other pieces which had had a greater level of discussion and workshop. As we were nearing the performance dates, I advised that I needed to start writing the *Spring* section before the movement had been developed. The director estimated that the duration of this movement would be two minutes, and so I put together a two-minute piece. We had discussed a sound that was hopeful without sounding twee, and again had a cyclical feel. The best example that emulated the style and feel we required was the first minute of *Sæglópur* by Sigur Rós.⁵⁷ We thought the relationship between the piano and glockenspiel had a beautiful fragility, however we would be aiming for a sound that was slightly less melancholy in tone.

At this stage of rehearsal, the performance was less than two weeks away and so there was no time for sonic workshop or reflection time. I chose piano as it was used in the reference track, as well as the fact that it had become a thread through the body of the piece and placed this section within the established sonic world. In contrast to the *Autumn Sweeping*, I did not have time to notate the music before recording. Instead, I recorded improvisations and took the sections that worked best to create variations on an overall theme.

I chose a major key, reflecting the quiet hopefulness of the piece coming to an end. I used a simple, repeating A section that had slight variations.

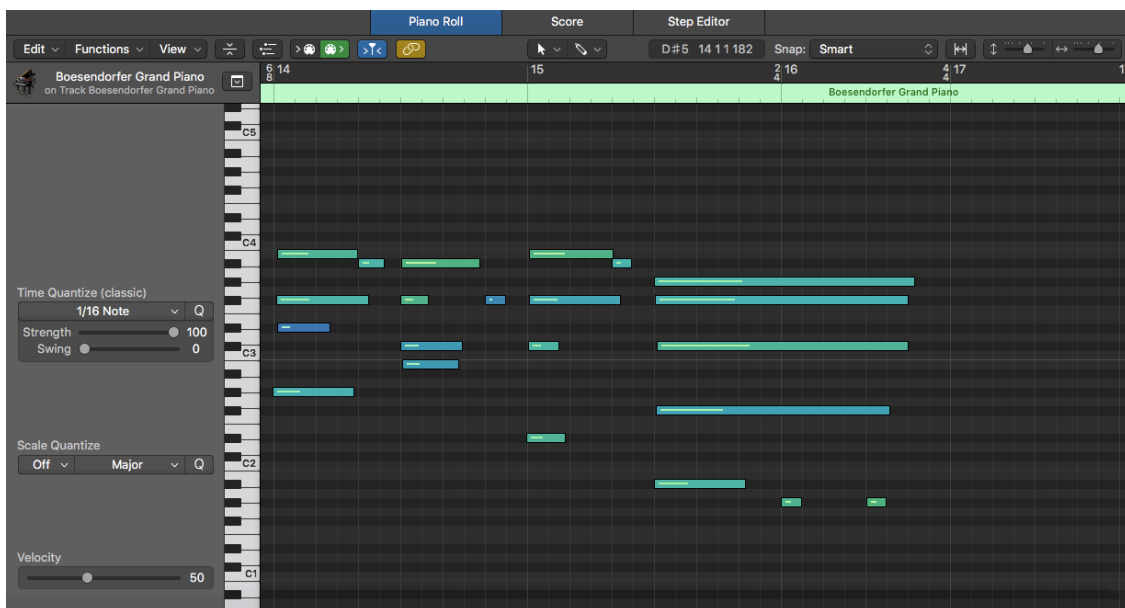
⁵⁷ Sigur Rós, *We Play Endlessly*, EMI/The Independent, 2009, MPEG Audio File, downloaded March 3, 2016, iTunes.

Fig. 15: Spring, Logic Screenshot 1



This lead to a B section that descended further in pitch gave the sound a greater depth as well as changing from 4/4 to a 6/8 then 2/4 to create a feeling of tumbling downwards. This was then pulled back into the central 4/4 rhythm at the beginning of the next A section.

Fig. 16: Spring, Logic Screenshot 2



The other feature of *Sæglópur*⁵⁸ that the director wanted to emulate was the relationship between piano and glockenspiel, so I put a very simple glockenspiel line over the top with an almost child-like lightness, as well as a soft creak that I had recorded from an old piano pedal which referenced our improvisations with *Living Room Songs* by Ólafur Arnalds⁵⁹, as well as signifying a cultural resistance to change.

Fig. 17: Spring, Logic Screenshot 3



Example 3.1 – Spring

Two rehearsals before performance, I brought the two-minute draft track to rehearsal and put it together with the choreography which had been developed separately by the director, dramaturg/choreographer and actor. However, what had been envisaged as a two-minute section had grown into around a six-minute piece with repeating movement motif that then transitioned into a final *Summer* procession at the close of the performance. As we were just days before the performance date, there was no time to

⁵⁸ Sigur Rós, *We Play Endlessly*.

⁵⁹ Ólafur Arnalds, *Living Room Songs*, Erased Tapes Records, 2011, AAC Audio File, downloaded February 20, 2014, iTunes.

rewrite and restructure the entire piece for the choreographed gestural movement and so my compositional methods had to adapt to this unique situation.

Taking the repeated piano motif, I simply repeated written sections to create the right length required by the choreography. To create the necessary feeling of variation and growth throughout the piece, I layered the glockenspiel part over itself at random points throughout the work. The glockenspiel was recorded electronically (as opposed to a recording of an actual glockenspiel) and therefore I listened to unexpected patterns that formed in this layering process and adjusted these so the patterns were highlighted. To heighten this feeling of growth and then transition to the *Summer* section, I then added strings from the *Summer Procession*, faded the piano and left the glockenspiel looping in its layered state. I then added a track of birdsong and cicadas to complete the cycle of the seasons.

Fig. 18: Spring, Logic Screenshot 4



Example 3.2 - Spring

This is not the method I would have envisioned using to create this piece of music initially, preferring to map out a durational form, and then create a piece with a set

structure to create a trajectory through the piece with distinct sections. When composing for movement in the past, the music has always preceded the movement and so the kind of adjustments required to integrate the *Spring* music to the movement have not been necessary. However, as a devised work, having extensive sonic preparation before entering the rehearsal room was not possible. The time it took to finalise the movement was very different to the time it took to compose and produce the music; a consideration that was not sufficiently understood by other artists in the creative team. However, these conflicting timelines through the process led to more inventive methods of creating that maximized the time we had and accommodated the requirements of the other artists and disciplines. The finished piece had the required sonic textures that had been discussed in initial discussions, was the required length, and the form mirrored that of the movement, with small variations on repeated sections. The use of electronic instruments as opposed to acoustic instruments allowed a greater flexibility in re-structuring and lengthening this piece to aid integration in final performance.

Crossroads – A Summary

Crossroads was a markedly different process than the previous work, and presented its own challenges specific to this mode of working. The rehearsal room and hierarchical structure within the team was consciously geared toward equality, cross-disciplinarity and collective group work, which created an environment where ideas could be discussed, developed and realised with input from many points of view. Communication was integral to development, with decisions being made collectively early in the process. Communication across disciplines included both existing recorded sonic examples, and also an exchange of ideas through improvisation, as well as recorded examples of original composition. Using sound itself as a communicator proved most effective, as attempting to verbally articulate sonic concepts became difficult as the devising process progressed. The progression of ideas was crucial to the process, as concepts from initial discussions were not taken to performance, but were developed, adapted and refined. Flexibility was required from all art forms as we collectively discovered how the performance would look and sound.

The emphasis on cross-disciplinary contribution created the possibility for inspiration sparked by alternative points of view, but also slowed the creation of content due to lengthy discussion periods. The parameters that developed within this specific creative environment were not only the creative parameters formed by artistic choices, but parameters created by the lengthy collective decision-making process and the time required to produce the finished works. The inspiration sparked by the multiplicity of opinion was instrumental in creating music that was further removed from my cabaret aesthetic, but the democratic decision making created a very time-consuming process as offers were written, recorded, discussed and altered. Similar to *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, the greatest shifts in my usual compositional process occurred when the strictest parameters were imposed. When time was at a premium, and recorded pieces needed to be created very quickly, I needed to develop alternative ways of producing work. *Summer Processional* was an example where instead of working within traditional song forms, I created a formless soundscape including both musical and atmospheric sound that was incredibly effective and would have been completely different had I had more time in development. *Spring* was in my opinion, less effective, as it needed stronger form to integrate with the choreographic sections and the limited time restricted this development, however it encapsulated key elements of our discussions and was able to function in performance. *Crossroads* had great variation, not only in the compositional processes used, but also in the sound works produced. A multiplicity of opinion may have contributed to time restrictions, but the inspiration gained from working closely with other artists produced works I would not have created independently.

Chapter 4 - Venus In Fur

Table 20: *Venus in Fur* Production Outline

Name	Venus in Fur
Theatrical Genre	Existing text-led play
Musical Function	Non-naturalistic counterpoint
Music Presentation	Pre-recorded
Creative/Production Team	Director Set/costume designer Composer Sound Designer Two Actors Two Producers Technical operator
Rehearsal Period	Seven Weeks – <i>(not required in all rehearsals)</i> An additional month pre-rehearsal development

*Venus in Fur*⁶⁰ was the final work to be completed as part of this practice-led research. It was the second play produced by Lightning Jar Theatre Company and was an existing text by David Ives which looks at *Venus in Furs* the novel by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch through a modern feminist lens. It had a cast of two actors, a creative team of director, set/costume design, lighting design, sound design and original music composition as well as a stage manager who also operated (light/sound) in performance. Original music was pre-recorded and formed a theatrical counterpoint to the action on stage, not heard by the characters themselves. Though there was no music indicated in the text of the play, the music integrated with other design elements to create the theatrical world the characters inhabited and not act as a transitional device to cover scene changes or outside the storytelling aspects of the play.

⁶⁰ David Ives, *Venus in Fur* (New York: Dramatists Play Service Inc., 2012).

Venus in Fur begins as a naturalistic discussion between an actress (Vanda) and a playwright/director (Thomas) as Vanda auditions for his play. The theatricality increases as the characters act out scenes from the play and the boundaries between the play and the 'real' world begin to blur, until the climax of the action when the audience realise that the Goddess Aphrodite has come to teach a lesson to the playwright. The sound and music was included to aid the theatrical elements of the play, lift it out of a naturalistic staging of the work, and create the world of the play through soundscapes that would lie under the text. These increased in frequency and conspicuousness as the play progressed to its highly theatrical end. The music and sound were not structured melodic pieces, but were designed to create an atmospheric sense of the world of the play through textures. This needed to be done without distracting from the written words.

Hierarchy

Venus in Fur had a similar collective dynamic to *Crossroads* despite it being a more traditional staging of an existing text-led play. I had expected the hierarchical dynamic in the rehearsal room to be more aligned with *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* as similarly, we were building our work around an existing text which dictated a performance style. However, our director, though being firmly at the helm of this production, made efforts from the beginning of the process to create a collective dynamic and ownership of the play. Though final responsibility for design and performance elements still lay with specialists on the creative team, the decision-making processes throughout the development and rehearsal periods were much more *collaborative*, with input from artists across disciplines and a more democratic hierarchy of artists and art forms.

At the initial read through before the rehearsals started, everyone was invited to bring along sonic and visual examples inspired by the text as well as any thoughts on the text itself to be discussed as a group. This meeting consisted of the actors, director, set, lighting, sound and music, stage manager as well as the producers of the show. The sonic

examples discussed ranged from Alban Berg’s Lyric Suite⁶¹ that was directly referenced in the text, religious and secular choral music, to Steve Reich’s Mallet Quartet⁶². After looking at what each person brought to the table and discussing how these related to the text and history of the source material, we then dissected the first ‘beat’ of the work and began the text analysis as a collective. Most of the text analysis was completed at a series of separate meetings by the director and actors, but this initial session gave each of the design team an understanding of the aesthetic of the play, the way the director viewed the text, as well as an understanding of the approaches the actors were taking in creating the world in which the story took place.

Table 21: *Venus in Fur*, Hierarchy 1

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
All	Verbal discussion – sonic and visual references	<i>Collaborative</i>	Undelineated	Creation of reference playlist

A secondary *collaborative* meeting was held between myself and the sound designer to establish how the creation of sound would be managed between the specialties of ‘music’ and ‘sound’. The sound designer disliked adding sound that was not specified in the script. Therefore, we agreed that he would be responsible for the technical elements of sound amplification as well as sourcing all sound effects referenced by the playwright such as thunder and rain. I would be responsible for all sound that was outside stage directions, which included both music and soundscape that created a theatrical counterpoint to the text, lending a heightened reality to the work that grew as the play progressed.

⁶¹ Damon J.H.K. “Alban Berg – Lyric Suite [Lyric suite] [With score]” (video), January 7, 2017, accessed September 22, 2017.

⁶² Sandbox Percussion. ““Mallet Quartet” – Steve Reich” (video), January 1, 2013, accessed September 26, 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uH9ku-52PUA>.

Table 22: *Venus in Fur*, Hierarchy 2

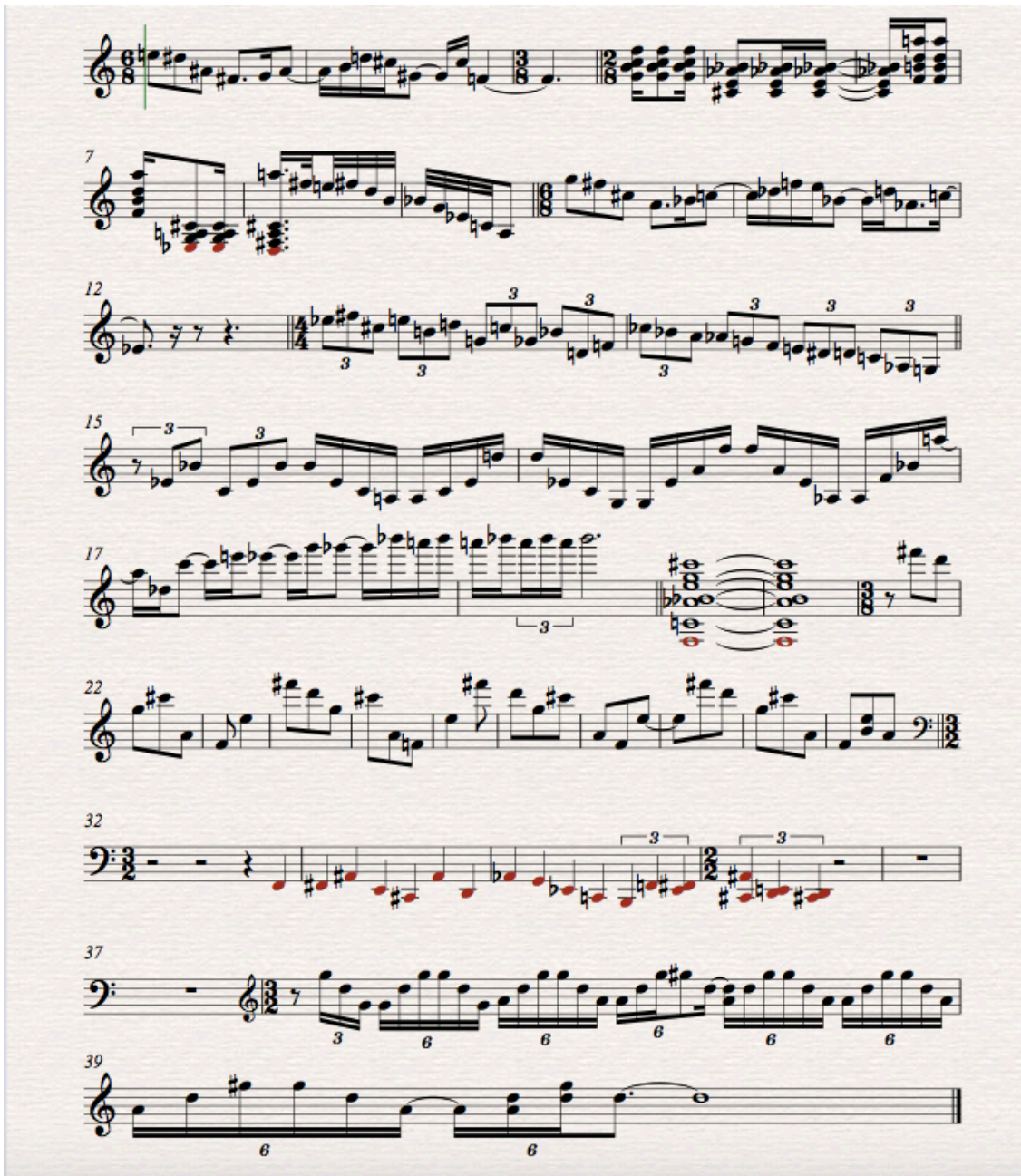
<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional Outcome</i>
Composer Sound Designer	Verbal discussion	Collaborative	Delineated	Established delineation

After consulting the analysis and research completed by the actors and director, I decided to mirror their discussions around the binary of modern and ancient as well as the Apollonian and Bacchanalian sensibilities of the two opposing characters with two distinct sonic languages.

The first would be a choral arrangement of Sappho's *Hymn to Aphrodite* sung in ancient Greek and based on recreations of ancient Greek music as well as religious and secular choral music. I would also use a vocal drone based around the G harmonic series. The choral arrangement would fade in and out of the work, before coming together in the climax of the play. Further discussion of the composition of this work will be addressed under Multidisciplinary Timeframes.

The second concept would contrast this harmonic choral work with a broken and metallic rendering of excerpts of Alban Berg's *Lyrical Suite* on tuned percussion over an electronic textured drone also based around G.. I extracted melodic sequences from the work, and placed them side by side to discern patterns and similarities.

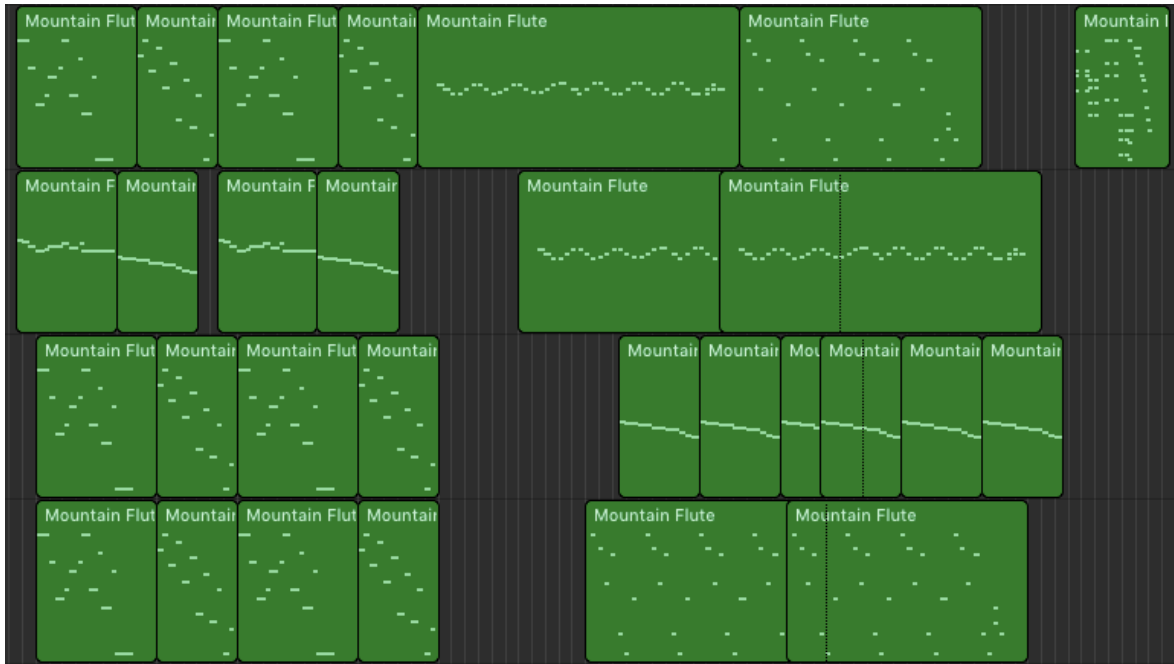
Fig. 19: Lyric Suite Excerpts



Excerpts from Alban Berg's Lyric Suite

I played these into Logic, and experimented by layering and repeating the sequences in different patterns. I also played with texture, deciding on a series of electronic kalimba sounds that were designed to be a sonic representation of a metal pole in the centre of the space. This pole was specified in the stage directions and it was decided by the director and actors in the script analysis, that it functioned as a lightning rod, directing Aphrodite to earth.

Fig. 20: Berg Experiment, Logic Screenshot



Example 4.1 – Berg Experiment

These experiments helped to refine my ideas and to illustrate this concept to the creative team.

Table 23: *Venus in Fur*, Hierarchy 3

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Composer Director Actors	Written analysis shared with creative team	N/A	Delineated	Concept developed

The Contract

After pitching these ideas to the creative team, I had a separate meeting with the director in which we dissected the text in a sonic sense, marked all cue points and decided upon the role sound played in each moment. On page fifty-four of the script, Thomas and Vanda (Vanda/Severin) signed a contract to make their relationship a binding agreement. The director wanted to highlight the importance of this moment

with sound. Through a *collaborative* verbal discussion and live manipulation of the experimental draft tracks I had made, we decided on ‘Fraught Berg’; an up tempo, disjointed and layered exploration of the *Lyric Suite*. We *collaboratively* decided on texture and tempo as I manipulated these sounds in different ways during our meeting. The time taken by the director to address each element of design indicated a parity in how each was valued.

Table 24: *Venus in Fur*, Hierarchy 4

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Composer	Verbal discussion – sonic references/ manipulation	<i>Collaborative</i>	Moderately delineated	Shared understanding of sonic concepts Outline of cue points and sonic ideas

After this meeting where all sonic moments were outlined, I created a draft of each soundscape. When these had been completed, an afternoon of rehearsal was allocated to focus on music to assess as a group how this affected the text, and look at issues of balance, focus and rhythmic contrast. Instead of running rehearsal as normal and adding the sound as a secondary element, the hierarchy of art forms was restructured for this specific rehearsal, placing prime focus on the music so the group *collectively* assessed the effectiveness of each musical moment. The actors ran text over the music, jumping from cue to cue, with a discussion after each piece evaluating how it affected performance of the scene, what were the positive outcomes, and what changes could potentially be made to enhance the integration of text, staging and music. *The Contract* was an extremely important moment for the director, and she was not happy in the way the music featured in this draft. The director thought that *The Contract* needed a greater contrast to pieces heard earlier in the play and sounded similar too *Stacy* which had underscored the action on page forty-five and forty-six of the Ives text.

Example 4.2 – The Contract

Table 25: *Venus in Fur*, Hierarchy 5

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Two Actors Composer Producers	Sound and text Verbal discussion	<i>Collaborative</i>	Moderately delineated	Create more variation from other pieces in work

The evenness in hierarchy shifted as we entered the final phase of rehearsals and entered the theatre. I drafted a second version of *The Contract* which lowered the dominant kalimba line by an octave, and altered the texture of the sound to be more hollow and resonant opposed the harshness of the previous draft. However, this also did not have the required feel that the director wanted. The tempo needed to increase, and the lower, hollow texture of the kalimba dissipated the tension in the scene instead of increasing and heightening the friction between the characters in this moment.

Example 4.3 – The Contract

Table 26: *Venus in Fur*, Hierarchy 6

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Composer	Sonic Offer Verbal discussion	<i>Directive</i>	Delineated	Increase tempo and texture of Kalimba

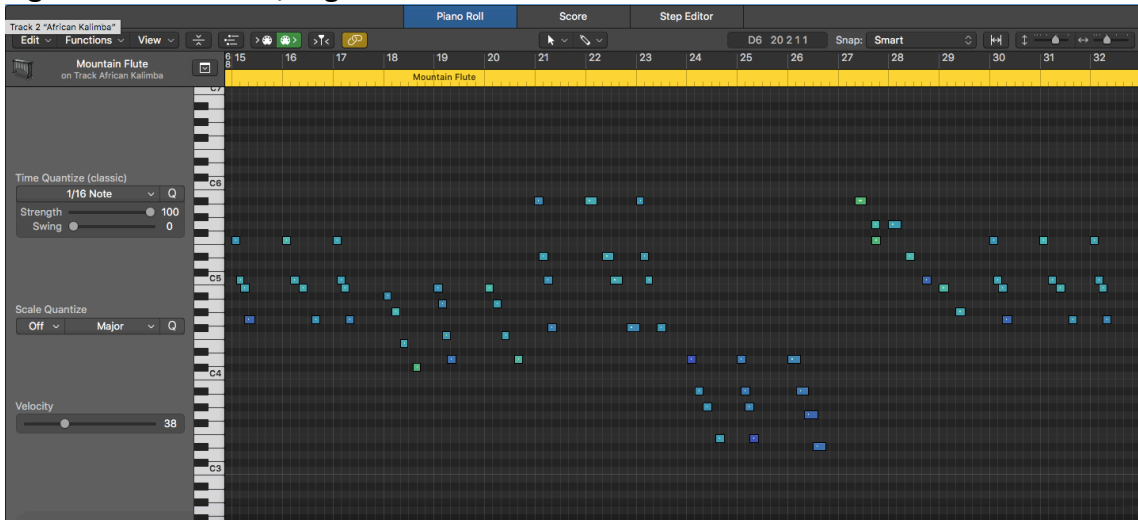
When in the theatre at the audio rehearsal with the actors, the director was still not happy with the integration of text and music, so major changes needed to be made within the next twenty-four hours. I took a different excerpt from the original Alban Berg source material which I had chosen for its harmonic rather than melodic qualities.

Fig. 21: Lyric Suite Excerpt, The Contract



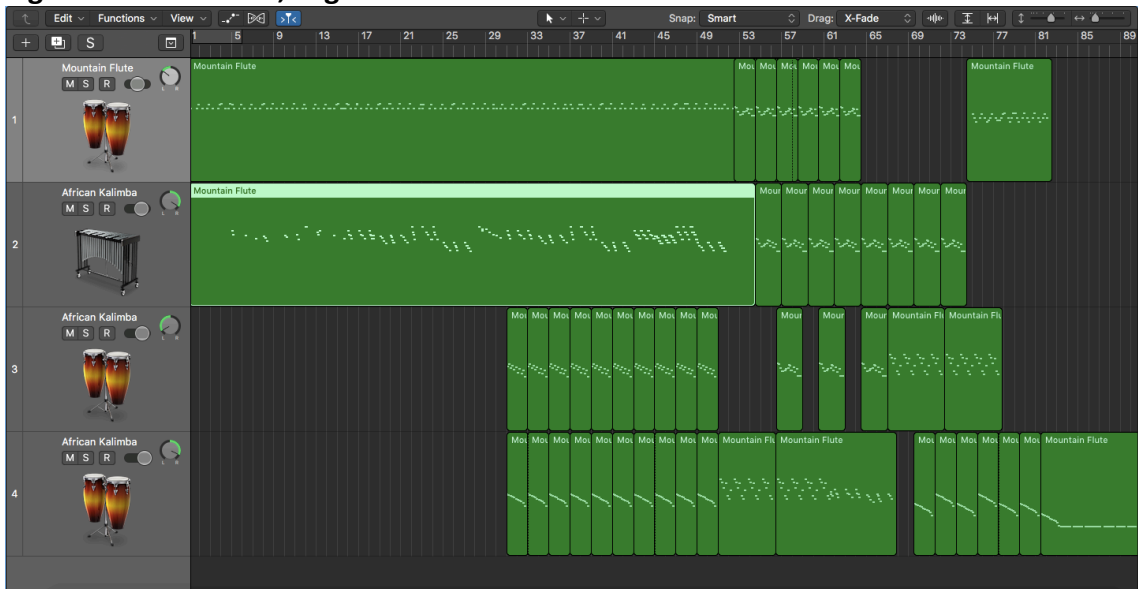
I arpeggiated these chords in a descending, syncopated pattern;

Fig. 22: The Contract, Logic Screenshot 1



layering in some parts of the original material used.

Fig. 23: The Contract, Logic Screenshot 2



This created a section that was markedly different from the other kalimba tracks, as it included an excerpt of the *Lyric Suite* that was not used in any other part of the play, but kept a similar timbre to the other pieces which connected it to the rest of the work. This specific exchange between the director and myself was quite *directive* as lengthy conversation was not possible with our limited time at this stage of the production as we were days away from the first preview. By this stage of development, we had established a shared understanding of the work, and as changes needed to happen in an incredibly short period of time, a *directive* model of collaboration was necessary to ensure all elements of design were ready for performance.

Table 27: *Venus in Fur*, Hierarchy 7

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Composer	Sonic Offer Verbal discussion	<i>Directive</i>	Delineated	Create an entirely new piece incorporating directive instruction

Example 4.4 – The Contract

The hierarchy between artists and art forms in this work began similarly to the devised work *Crossroads*. It followed a similar path beginning at collective discussion, through to delineated realisation of ideas and finally into a *directive* relationship between the director and all art forms as the production approached performance. Efforts were made by the director to create a collective dynamic and allocate time to each artistic discipline and ensure that all artists were working from a shared understanding of the aesthetic of the piece. Because of the extensive discussion and the emphasis placed on collective idea generation prior to rehearsals starting, I could experiment with methods of making which were not possible in previous productions. I also had the chance to develop these ideas with input and inspiration from other members of the creative team. After initial meetings, the group splintered into smaller collaborative exchanges and I dealt with the director and actors in making creative decisions. When seeing the final production in performance, I realised that the sonic cue points did not always align with drastic changes in lighting. If I had been able to be a part of the decision-making

process in wider collaborative exchanges later in the rehearsal process, I feel the piece could have achieved a greater integration of elements.

Language and Communication

Due to the director's encouragement to contribute ideas across disciplines, communication in *Venus in Fur* was welcomed at all points of the development and rehearsal process. Reference materials became a core mode of sonic communication which was established in the first meeting. The director took an intellectual approach to the text, with a heavy focus on script analysis before rehearsals began and then brought these concepts to the rest of the group as stimuli for other design elements. In this working environment, these stimuli developed into a sonic concept that included elements from contrasting traditions of sound making. Challenges arose in communicating these concepts across art forms as it included compositions which were not simply appropriating a style or texture from an existing identifiable genre, but combining elements from multiple sources to create something that had not previously existed.

The starting point for most ideas used in the piece were the original offers of reference materials brought in by the cast and creatives in the first meeting. We discussed religious and secular choral music, with the group agreeing on the use of the organic feel of choral voices as well as the relationship between the use of voice as a signifier of the approaching goddess throughout the play. However, the director also wanted a lighter quality as a contrast, and a percussive juxtaposition to the heaviness of the vocal pieces discussed and used Steve Reich's *Mallet Quartet*⁶³ as an example of the kind of qualities she wanted to emulate. In our initial group analysis of the first 'beat' of the play, the director consciously explained all technical terms that may not have been clear, so there was a shared understanding by all artists in these meetings.

⁶³ ""Mallet Quartet" – Steve Reich".

Table 28: *Venus in Fur*, Language and Communication 1

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
All	Verbal	<i>Collaborative</i>	Undelineated	Formulate a musical concept for the work

After these group discussions, as well as reading through the script analysis completed by the director and actors, themes arose in our approach to the text. The idea of a binary and conflicting forces; the ancient and the modern, male and female and Apollonian (intellectual)/Bacchanalian (sensory). This led to interpreting these into a sonic sense; the ideas of organic and the electronic, sustained and the percussive, as well as the tonal and atonal would be explored.

The Improvisation

Once the initial idea had been formulated, it became more difficult to communicate verbally what it would sound like to the non-music specialists. Though the group could not envision how these ideas would sound, they understood the underlying concepts behind the sonic choices as well as how these ideas linked with the those explored in the play and overall theatrical aesthetic. *The Improvisation* included elements of both ideas overlapping as the two characters had a rare moment of unity onstage. It was impossible to verbally articulate how I envisaged a vocal drone based around the G harmonic series, overlaid with sections of *Lyric Suite* played on electronic kalimba would interact with each other and the text.

Table 29: *Venus in Fur*, Language and Communication 2

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
All	Verbal	<i>Interactive</i>	Fully delineated	Sonic examples required

Therefore, to aid in communication and to gain a shared language regarding the sound, rough tracks were made as examples to express these ideas. None of these tracks were intended to be used in the final performances of the play, however this made it possible to convey how the ideas could function with the text. With these example tracks, I sat with the director and discussed sound and music in detail. She provided feedback and suggestions to aid in integrating the sound into her concepts surrounding other design elements and performance. I adjusted tempo, isolated and muted individual lines within the makeup of the music, and worked with the director to create different textures. In this way, we could communicate with a shared understanding of the sound, without the use of technical musical terms. This meant that we could create the best possible outcome for all art forms, optimum integration of music with other theatrical elements and ultimately serve the directors vision accurately. In this discussion, we mapped out each moment where sound occurred, the texture and feel required for each piece and the cue points for the start and end of each piece of music and soundscape. These did not necessarily align with the beats that had been marked into the text in the analysis sessions between the director and actors.

Table 30: *Venus in Fur*, Language and Communication 3

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Composer	Discussion with sonic manipulation	<i>Interactive</i>	Fully delineated	Shared outline of all music and sound content

Once I had completed demo tracks from the ideas discussed with the director, these were brought to rehearsal with the director, actors and producers present. This rehearsal allowed for a *collaborative* discussion around how each piece of music or sound functioned with the text and how this could be refined to improve its integration into the work. Having these sounds again allowed non-music specialists to vocalise their reactions and suggestions around how the sound functioned and how this could be improved, but also how this affected their performance. *The Improvisation* was well received and helped to heighten the theatricality of this moment as the story here began to lift into a much more abstract space from its naturalistic beginnings.

Example 5.1 – The Improvisation

Table 31: *Venus in Fur*, Language and Communication 4

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Actors Composer Producers	Verbal discussion & Sonic references	<i>Collaborative</i>	Undelineated	Respond to discussion points with finished works

They Shake Hands

They Shake Hands needed much more work from this music rehearsal. In discussion with the director in our private meeting we had discussed of a soundscape that created a theatrical counterpoint to the text, incorporating scraping sounds, a creaking piano pedal and static. However, when accompanying the text, the director requested the sound be more ‘a grating of the psyche’ and a sonic representation of ‘the masculine ideal.’ These were not clear musical directions, but more of a conceptual direction for my own interpretation which I found challenging, as it was not clear where I had to go from here.

Example 6.1 – They Shake hands

Table 32: *Venus in Fur*, Language and Communication 5

<i>Creatives involved</i>	<i>Mode of communication</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Delineation</i>	<i>Compositional outcome</i>
Director Composer	Verbal	<i>Directive</i>	Fully delineated	Develop an alternative offer

I took this feedback and emphasised the sound of the pedal creaking, creating a second track with the same sound and lowering the pitch to get a literal ‘grating’ sound, as well as incorporating the sounds of high-pitched door creaks in contrast. In this *directive*

instruction from the director, the use of more conceptual language was not as helpful in guiding me to her desired outcome as its interpretation is entirely subjective. From her instructions, I took the sonic markers – the idea of ‘grating’ and applied it as best I could to the track. With the alterations to the soundscape, along with the low-pitched electronic drone, the track with these new textures seemed to work.

Example 6.2 – They Shake Hands

In this case, having the time to create demo tracks and manipulate the sounds in real time with the director to facilitate an equal *interactive* exchange was invaluable, especially when attempting to communicate complex sonic ideas without an existing musical source that could act as a comparison. The communication in this production was almost always *interactive* and included input from everyone involved in the production. Conversations between creative specialisations was encouraged and facilitated mindfully by the director and production team to create a shared understanding and in turn lead to a more integrated work. Though some conversations included conceptual discussions without a clear sonic action to be taken, the time that we had to develop ideas meant that if an offer did not integrate with other elements or align with the director’s vision, we had time to develop an alternative using the discarded offer as a means to refine the piece into the desired sound work.

Multidisciplinary Timeframes

Due to an uncertainty surrounding performance dates, the creative team had an incredibly long period to prepare before rehearsals began. The first read through was mid-December 2017, with script analysis starting soon afterwards. This continued until a short break over Christmas and New Year with rehearsals starting in the second week of January. We moved into the theatre during the first week of March with previews a few days later. Where the previous projects in this thesis had extremely limited time resources, the elongated pre-rehearsal time on this project allowed for the formulation and development of ideas. This allowed for compositional methods that did not simply

require time efficiency, ease of execution or simply the first concept explored, but for an exchange of ideas between art forms, discussion, refining and a more complex overall aesthetic to be developed.

Hymn to Aphrodite

Without the pre-rehearsal development period, the *Hymn to Aphrodite* choral work would not have had time to be created. After collating videos of Latvian choral singing, religious choral works and contemporary theatrical vocal works by Orlando Gough, I decided to pursue the thematic ideas discussed within the group more closely. I found recreations of ancient Greek music, including a video by Armand D'Angour a professor of Classics at Oxford University that included performances of reconstructed Ancient Greek music on Lyre, Aulos and voice⁶⁴. Taking inspiration from his assertion that ancient Greek poetry was written to be sung, I found a phonetic translation in Ancient Greek of Sappho's *Hymn to Aphrodite*⁶⁵ as well as an audio recording⁶⁶ so I could hear an interpretation of this pronunciation. The poem is a call to Aphrodite, and seemed fitting for the arrival of the Goddess at the end of the play.

*Iridescent-throned Aphrodite, deathless
Child of Zeus, wile-weaver, I now implore you,
Don't--I beg you, Lady--with pains and torments
Crush down my spirit,
But before if ever you've heard my pleadings
Then return, as once when you left your father's
Golden house; you yoked to your shining car your
Wing-whirring sparrows;*⁶⁷

Ποικιλόθρον' ἀθάνατ' Ἀφροδίτα,
παῖ Δίος, δολόπλοκε, λίσσομαί σε

⁶⁴ Armand D'Angour. "Rediscovering Ancient Greek Music (2017)" (video) , November 26, 2017, accessed December 18, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hOK7bU0S1Y>.

⁶⁵ "Hymn to Aphrodite," *Sacred Texts*, accessed January 29, 2018, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/usappho/sph02.htm>.

⁶⁶ D. Claude Katz. "Hymn to Aphrodite (remixed)" (video) , February 13, 2008, accessed January 29, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiwHRHWvk-A>.

⁶⁷ "Sappho's Hymn to Aphrodite," Elizabeth Vandiver, *The Stoa Consortium*, accessed January 29, 2018, <http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/vandiver.shtml>.

μή μ' ἄσαισι μήτ' ὀνίαισι δάμνα,
πότνια, θῦμον.

ἀλλά τίδ' ἔλθ', αἴποτα κατέρωτα
τᾶσ ἔμασ αὐδωσ αἴοισα πῆλγι
ἔκλυες πάτροσ δὲ δόμον λίποισα
χρῦσιον ἦλθες

Poikilo'dron? a`ða'nat? ?Afrodita,
pai^ Di'os, dolo'plope, li'ssoma' se
mh' m? a?'saisi mh't? o?ni'aisi da'mna,
po'tnia, du^mon.

a?lla' tui'd? e?'lð?, ai?'pota ka?te'rwta
ta^s e?'mas au'dws ai?'oisa ph'lgi
e?'klues pa'tros de` do'mon li'poisa
xru'sion h?^lðes⁶⁸

When crafting this into the choral arrangement, I was inspired by the use of time in Ancient Greek musical recreations that followed the natural rhythm of the words instead of fitting the text into a fixed time signature. Unlike the reference pieces, that used a monophonic arrangement, I wanted to evoke the feeling of having multiple voices as part of a single voice; my sonic interpretation of an omnipresent celestial being. Therefore, I kept a largely unison rhythmic structure that changed time signature to follow the lyrical word patterns and layered harmonies for the vocal parts which included male and female voices.

⁶⁸ "Hymn to Aphrodite," *Sacred Texts*, accessed January 29, 2018, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/usappho/sph02.htm>.

Fig. 24: Hymn to Aphrodite, Score Excerpt

The image displays a musical score excerpt for a hymn. It consists of three systems of music, each with four staves (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass). The lyrics are written below the vocal staves. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The lyrics are as follows:

24
 Aa Aa Aa Aa
 Poi-kil-oth'-ron a - tha-nat A-fro-di - ta Pai di-os, do - lo - plok - e,
 Poi - kil-oth'-ron a - tha-nat A-fro-di - ta Pai di-os, do - lo - plok - e,
 Poi-kil oth' ron a - tha-nat A-fro-di - ta Pai di-os, do - lo - plok - e,

30
 li'ssom-ai - se A-fro-di - ta mair mi sai - si mair on - i - ai - si dam-na
 li' - ssom-ai - se mair mi sai - si mair on - i - ai - si dam-na
 li' ssom-ai se mair mi sai - si mair on - i - ai - si aaaa dam-na
 li' - ssom-ai se mair mi sai - si mair on - i - ai - si dam - na

35
 Pot'nia ou- mon A - lla tuid elth ai po-ta ka-te rwo-ta
 Pot' nia ou- mon A - lla tuid elth ai po-ta ka-te rwo-ta
 Aaah pot' nia ou- mon A - lla tuid elth ai po-ta ka-te rwo-ta
 Pot' - nia A - lla po-ta ka-te rwo-ta

Author's own work

After recording the vocal lines, I wanted to keep the deep resonance that had built up in the previous scene with the vocal drone in the G harmonic series, so I added lines of the monotonal drone recordings in the tonic of the key to give the piece some extra weight and keep the sound building towards the climax at the end of the play.

Example 7.1 – Hymn to Aphrodite

This process was much more time consuming than that used in previous productions, as having time to create these layers of meaning and attention to detail was not possible on more restrictive timeframes.

When run with the text in the rehearsal room, this piece was the right length, as I had timed the length of the piece required in previous rehearsals. However, when moved into the space at the technical rehearsal, it became clear that the performance space required the actors to walk longer distances than anticipated between sections of text and deal with the physical realities of the set that had been mimed in the rehearsal room. This required some editing to the work after recording had been completed, and as in the previous project, there was no time to re-structure or re-record the work at this late stage.

I was required to add a minimum of another twenty seconds to the end of the piece, and so instead of achieving the climax of the sonic work at the close of the play, I layered parts of previous lines and departed from the unified rhythmic structure to create more of a harmonic cacophony. This was not my desired structure of the piece, but it served the purpose of creating a rise to the climax and maintaining tension while the actor completed her physical tasks. Through the course of the season, as the actor became used to the mechanisms in the set that had created the need for extra time, this action grew much faster. One week into the season, the timing of the piece was almost back to what I had envisaged, with only a second or two of the extra cacophony heard before the play ended.

Example 7.2 – Hymn to Aphrodite

The extended pre-rehearsal period brought freedoms into this process that had not been present in the preceding works included in this study. Instead of taking the first impulse to performance, or continually re-writing works as other artistic disciplines developed throughout the process bringing rapidly changing sonic requirements, *Venus*

in Fur had the most developed sound concept of the three works discussed. These ideas had the necessary time for conception, trial, discussion and refinement as well as the time required for production. Despite the lengthy development period, the performance space added additional requirements which necessitated changes to the compositions at a very late stage in the process. As all sound was recorded, we could not adapt the pieces live to the movements of the actors, but time in these recorded tracks could be built using existing recorded material very quickly. These difficulties in timing dissipated with rehearsal, and the extra sections did not feature prominently in the performed production as these artistic elements integrated with repetition in the performance space.

Venus in Fur – A Summary

The process of staging this production of *Venus in Fur* was highly collaborative. Creating a group dynamic was essential to the development of the work, as well as how the rehearsal room functioned. This collective way of working did not necessarily mean that all artists had input all decisions made throughout the process. We began as a large decision-making group, and this later splintered into smaller collaborative discussions as the process continued, roles became more delineated, and we focussed on the prime responsibility of our part in the team. The *collaborative* nature of initial discussions greatly affected not only the sonic aesthetic that was eventually created for this production, but also the way that the music and sound was created. I worked from source materials quite far removed from my usual frame of reference, and the time allowed for development of sonic concepts led to more experimental ways of working that were quite different from all other productions. This is clear in listening to the music created for this show, as it has not only a sonic texture and instrumental choices removed from the other works, but also varies in its use of form and harmony. Due to the time allowed for trial and development, my compositional methods did not have to remain within the safety of successful past experience.

Despite splintering into smaller collaborations, communication remained open and all discussions that I had with artists displayed an equal exchange of ideas which led to

creative inspiration and choices that could not have been arrived at without contribution from minds other than my own. The director's insistence in using up tempo, minimalist tuned percussion led to the most prominent musical theme throughout the piece. My past compositions had been more melodic in nature, using improvisation on the piano to create phrases to build into a coherent form. Instead, using the Alban Berg source material, I experimented with layering individual lines that morphed slowly between changes to create a sonic atmosphere as opposed to more traditional notions of 'song'. Communication with the director and other artists was key to this process, with extra time scheduled to facilitate ample discussion at all stages of production. Equality in communication was enabled by using reference materials of both found examples as well as mock-ups of sonic ideas. Having the ability to electronically manipulate these sounds in real time to demonstrate their possibilities ensured that instead of crafting multiple drafts of tracks to be included in the piece, we could discuss sound with a shared understanding, and alight on the desired outcome much faster without the need for many drafts.

Having sufficient time for the development of concepts used in the piece was fundamental to the hierarchical structures and time allocated to communication of ideas. Instead of a rush to the finish line with no time for discussion, having this time allowed for the possibility of longer and more frequent discussions around concepts and design instead of a *directive* form of hierarchy and communication which can function as a time-saver, but inhibits the possibility of creative exchange, lessens the feeling of ownership and freedom, as well as ruling out the possibility of inspiration sparked by contrasting voices. Due to the hierarchical dynamic established at the beginning of rehearsals, I felt that I could reach out if needed, and not simply take direction and try to interpret it without a method of clarification which can arise in highly structured hierarchical working groups. Lastly, I enjoyed working in this way with responsive, respectful and inspired creative minds, as I feel that it allowed me to create works that arose from ideas inspired by the group and the play itself instead of falling back on my own aesthetic or usual working methods in moments of uncertainty or last-minute panic.

Chapter 5 –Summary and Conclusion

In this thesis, I created original music and sound for three productions in collaboration with artists across different disciplines involved in the creation of music theatre works. I have documented factors affecting my music-making process and investigated how these factors affected sonic outcomes in each specific case study. The research aim was to investigate how collaborative processes impact on composition and therefore, my approach to this research relates to an intersection of composing and dramaturgy and the unique role of the composer-collaborator. The critical framework for discussing this relationship between collaboration and composition proposed three discursive topics: hierarchy, language and communication, and multidisciplinary timeframes. I have not set out to dictate which collaborative model is ‘best’, ways of communication that are most effective, or the most efficient allocation of time in development and rehearsal processes.⁶⁹

In my conclusion, I distil the importance to me as a composer and artist of how the creative environment affected music and sound, summarising the extent to which the idea of integration, genre, and parameters ultimately dictate the qualitative differences in my composition.

Hierarchy

The hierarchical structures across all projects affected the way that I approached composition, and the effectiveness of the music in final performance.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle had the most structured hierarchy of the three works discussed. This led to the most restrictive creative process, working within strict parameters of style, collaborative model and time. Most importantly, these parameters

⁶⁹ I am aware that any findings that I elaborate upon here are solely my own experience and are subjective to my own experience on these case studies.

limited the development of ideas and led to initial impulses being taken to performance with very little rehearsal. A key compositional outcome for this way of working was my decision to create harmonic structures to work within throughout the rehearsal process. Creating these additional musical parameters that limited the possibilities in each moment aided decision making when creating large volumes of musical content in short periods of time, and aided my creativity when exploring these harmonic motifs. These motifs consisted of short, diatonic chord progressions, with small groups of chords. The Act I motif consisted of **Cm** and **Bb**, Symon Chachava consisted of a slightly larger group of **Cm**, **Eb**, **Fm** and **G7**, Azdak's theme was based around **Cm6**, **Bb6** and **G7**. Structurally, these motifs were all based around short 8 or 16 bar sequences, with chord changes happening at regular 1-2 bar intervals. This was not entirely based around the reference material collected, but also the tendency of all working methods and musical outcomes towards simplicity.

Crossroads and *Venus in Fur* had a similar hierarchical structure to each other, despite being very different theatrical genres. Going into the three projects, I had anticipated similarities between *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and *Venus in Fur*, as they as were both working from established texts and had set requirements from the outset. However, the second two productions both favoured a more collaborative model, despite being vastly different theatrical styles. The exchange of ideas and cross-disciplinary discussion was encouraged to spark inspiration and to create a shared aesthetic. Both productions included compositions that were markedly different from the melodic pieces of *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, and included works with barely discernible form, greatly contrasting sonic textures and experimentation with modal and atonal harmony.

In all cases, the process started with collaborative group discussions, separation into smaller collaborative partnerships, and then finally a shift into more *directive* working relationships as time became limited and decisions needed to be made and implemented quickly. This demonstrated that time was an important factor in the hierarchical structures that formed in all projects. This *directive* method of collaboration made little difference to my compositional choices when close to performance, as most decisions had been made by this stage of the creative process. It was not unusual to

have this structure in place at this point, as the director pulled all elements together, maximising integration by tweaking creative elements under a singular creative vision.

In *Crossroads* and *Venus in Fur*, directive relationships in the final stages of rehearsal between the director and myself altered the length of tracks including *Summer Processional* and *Hymn to Aphrodite* to aid in a smoother integration of sound and movement in the performance space as actors negotiated extra-musical elements such as set, props and costume. As the music was recorded, I could alter these tracks digitally without making substantial changes to the overall sound and concepts explored. However, when highly regimented structures were in place earlier in the creative process, it led to safer compositional choices, similar to what had worked for me in previous projects. An example from *Caucasian Chalk Circle* was Azdak's theme which makes a departure from the more regionally specific inspired pieces of the earlier parts of the work, and reflects my own cabaret aesthetic. Multiplicity of opinion led to more daring choices, working methods and musical outcomes that were tailored to the specific show, as opposed to my own existing aesthetic and musical palette.

Hierarchy also affected my creative freedom in these projects. Whereas in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* creativity was restricted by many parameters such as time and directorial control, the lack of parameters and decentralised decision-making created challenges in *Crossroads*. The minimal restrictions surrounding development, in addition to a focus on group discussion and decision-making, led to an elongated period of idea generation. As these conversations surrounded larger themes and narrative structural concepts instead of specific performance outcomes, this affected my ability to produce sound works in time for performance. However, the ability to discuss ideas freely without hierarchical constraints sparked inspiration in both the sonic concepts developed, compositional methods and the outcome of sound works. Projects with a collective approach and cross-disciplinary conversation led to a development of ideas, and more complex and varied choices.

Language and Communication

The methods of communication across these three projects were quite similar, though the way they were facilitated varied greatly. Each project relied heavily upon sonic references to communicate ideas across disciplines instead of relying upon a verbal articulation of sonic concepts. All projects began in group meetings with discussion surrounding existing music which could act as a starting point for the development of our own musical language. The greater the amount of communication, the more varied the instrumentation choices became. *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* had minimal communication after initial meetings, and was entirely composed for instruments that I had worked with previously, including the voice and piano which make up the bulk of my usual compositional work. *Crossroads* also had these elements due to time constraints, but contained elements of non-musical sound in composition such as cicadas, birdsong and thunder. *Venus in Fur* saw the greatest shift in instrumentation, as inspiration was gained from the entire creative team, who were encouraged to communicate their own sonic vision for the piece with references at initial rehearsals.

The Caucasian Chalk Circle also had sound incorporated in the rehearsal room from the beginning, though most communication ceased after initial sound concepts were outlined. The lack of feedback on sonic offers from other artists during this process led to a lack of development in musical concepts. In *Crossroads*, the use of reference material aided the integration of all elements, as new sound concepts were discussed and drafted alongside other theatrical elements as they progressed for all specialists to hear. However, due to the development of ideas and shifting requirements of the production, this led to the time-consuming creation of multiple drafts as ideas were refined. This resulted in some choices being led by time efficiency and produced a lack of polish in the final tracks. *Venus in Fur* saw reference material used in a similar way, with recorded examples of music being manipulated live to facilitate sound conversations with artists who may not have had a sonic vocabulary. The effectiveness of this conversation negated the need for many drafts leaving time to produce more polished tracks and time in rehearsal to discuss the integration of text and music as a group. Where verbal communication with no sonic reference was attempted in all three

projects, from misuse of music terms, articulating combined ideas or even to facilitating the required sound mix in the performance space, the results were not ideal.

The greatest difference in communication between the three works was in the way it was facilitated. Hierarchy was an important factor in facilitating communication between artists across all projects. Where hierarchy was most regimented, communication was most difficult. In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, I had no clear chain of communication to follow, I did not feel comfortable approaching those at the apex of this hierarchical structure, and when I articulated my needs, they were not seen as important. The second two theatrical works had smaller teams of artists, which affected the ease of communication. However, both these projects also actively facilitated cross-disciplinary communication across all stages of development. *Crossroads* saw each rehearsal as the possibility for group discussion and development. *Venus in Fur* had a more delineated form, and so communication after the initial meetings happened between smaller groups of artists, but extra time was scheduled to ensure communication could happen between artists and art forms.

Having open, cross-disciplinary communication in these works created a multiplicity of opinions which led to new ideas being generated that could not have developed independently. The *Venus in Fur* script analysis done by the director and actors formed the basis of all sonic concepts used throughout the work. Having access to the foundation of work done by the performers ensured that these ideas permeated not only my own work, but the aesthetic of the production. This was supported by verbal communication as well as sound used in rehearsals to assist the integration of these elements. *Crossroads* also encouraged the sharing of ideas and created inspiration, but developed a more *directive* form of communication earlier, due to a lack of time in the development process.

Multidisciplinary Timeframes

A feeling of 'not having enough time' permeated all three projects at one point or another throughout development and rehearsal. *Venus in Fur* was the outlier of these

three works with the most time allocated for all aspects of preparation. The uncertainty around performance dates led to not only a longer rehearsal period, but allowed for an additional development period before rehearsals even began. The luxury of time led to complex concepts being conceived, tested and adjusted as the world of the play was built. More daring choices could be made, as the pre-rehearsal development period allowed time for failure and to discard ideas in the pursuit of the best choice for the production. In both *Crossroads* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, the lack of time negatively impacted my ability to bring polished sound works to performance.

Restrictions on time caused creative teams to have more delineated roles, less cross-disciplinary interaction, and hierarchy with a more authoritarian structure. Communication was more *directive* with less conversation between artists, and often, in my case, a tendency to fall back on methods and sounds that I had used in the past. In some rare cases, this restriction had the opposite effect, as I was forced to come up with solutions very quickly. In *Spring* and *Where are the Generals*, my compositional methods changed drastically to ensure I had the required music ready by opening night. In *Spring* the short piece was lengthened using repetition and growth through layering the instrumentation electronically, and in *Where are the Generals*, a *collaborative* approach produced a piece shaped around the performers creating a feeling of fun and ownership of the work. Both pieces would have sounded very different had I had more time for development, composition and rehearsal. However, these works were effective in performance and added compositional methods to my working practice that I did not use previously.

Another factor that impacted conflicting timeframes in these projects was a lack of understanding between art forms, of the time required to produce sound. Though there was the opportunity for a research period before *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* began, the director's request that no music be composed before he had begun to stage the piece hindered my ability to test and develop ideas before inclusion in the final score. The director also did not comprehend that his small decisions on the floor, for example the decision to move a large set piece, would require much more musical construction than the few moments it took to make that decision; as we saw in the last-minute inclusion

of the recurring *Yussup's Theme*. A similar challenge arose in *Crossroads* with *Spring*, as the director and choreographer did not realise that their decision to repeat a movement phrase may take only a few minutes of rehearsal time, but would require a huge restructuring of recorded sound to ensure these elements were able to function together onstage. The multidisciplinary timeframes in all projects had a great effect on how the work was made, artists' ability to develop and refine ideas, as well as integrate these elements effectively into the final performance.

Integration, Genre and Parameters

Viewing the outcomes of my composition through this critical framework, I will illuminate how the idea of integration, genre and parameters influenced the creation of original musical works for these projects and my own compositional process within these contrasting collaborative environments.

Integration

The integration of creative elements within these three music theatre works was one of the core aspirations of each collaboration. To achieve a singular aesthetic vision within the many-handedness of the collaborative process was an ongoing consideration, challenge as well as providing focus to our work within these contrasting creative environments. While the word 'integration' was never explicitly outlined by the director of any production, it was understood that all decisions were made to create a unified theatrical vision. The aim of integrating music and sound with other elements not only shaped the texture, form and style of music and sound used in each production, but also the methods used during the compositional process.

Two distinct modes of achieving integration emerged within these three projects. In *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, efforts toward integration took the form of a singular creative vision articulated by the director, with the creative team following instructions. This form of working lay the responsibility of integration solely with him. As this collaboration was *directive* and the exchange of ideas between myself and other creatives on the

design team was limited, sonic ideas stemmed from specific instruction and reference materials from the director, and was then mediated by my own creative needs and aesthetic. The second two productions aimed for integration through multidisciplinary communication and mindful decision-making processes that involved discussion outside of our own specific discipline, which lay the responsibility of integration of theatrical elements more evenly among the respective creative individuals. This resulted in sources of inspiration outside of my usual sphere of reference and modes of working that I had not previously explored. Decisions in all productions were mediated by additional parameters throughout the development and rehearsal process, but the success of integration could be said to lie in how clearly articulated the creative parameters were within each production, and how best we could mould our work within these parameters to create a cohesive theatrical world.

Though each project had a contrasting theatrical vision, aim, and working process, some similarities can be found within these works which indicates that my individual aesthetic is not wholly altered by the aim to integrate my work with that of other artists. Some similarities found between the works, such as common instrumentation in the use of piano and voice can be explained by additional parameters of time. However, in all three productions, harmonic similarities arise. Much of the music for these works is written in a minor key, and the use of the first two chords of a piece establishing the minor i chord, and then releasing that dramatic tension in a major III chord on the mediant, as can be seen in *Symon Chachava, Autumn Sweeping* and even *Hymn to Aphrodite* which was the most far removed from my solo compositional practice, in its use of swift changes in time signature and more modal approach to harmony. *Give Me Winter* holds the i chord over a moving bass line, but the bass moves up the harmonic minor scale to the mediant, which also has a similar feel. In all attempts to create a work that seemed to have been created by a unified body, my own aesthetic choices are evident throughout.

Genre

To some extent, the genre I was working within dictated working methods and the form the music would take. For example, taking the script of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, it

was immediately apparent that I would be working in a text-led, song based fashion. During *Venus in Fur*, the script was so dependent on the actors' dialogue, that the creative team collectively agreed on more of a soundscape as counterpoint to the text. The exception to this was *Crossroads* as creating these stylistic parameters was part of the collective process, and was eventually decided by the ability of performer instead of any artistic choice.

Arranging the text-led, melodic songs to be performed by live musicians in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* required a highly personal approach in the rehearsal room, as I responded to the needs of the director and actors within my set harmonic frameworks. In this style of working, the vocal storytelling was the most important aspect of the music, and therefore all compositional choices were in support of the actors spoken and sung text. This way of text-led melodic composition was most like my cabaret song-writing work with its focus on text. Similar to the *Bicycle Face* example discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, a rhythmic harmonic passage was created which formed the basis of melody construction. Melody was shaped around the rhythm of the lyrics, and pitched in a clearly audible tessitura that sat easily in the actor's range. Almost all music created for this production had the sung melody as the focus, with instrumentation supporting the sung text providing simple and repetitive harmonic and percussive support.

This was completely different from *Venus in Fur* where the function of the music was to support the spoken text, but as a theatrical counterpoint to the script instead of being embedded in the world of the play. This resulted in an entirely different approach to melody. Instead of a singular line that sat over a structured chord progression, in the pieces created from the *Lyric Suite* excerpts, short melodic lines were overlaid to create unexpected atonal shifts that slowly morphed from one section to another. These pieces did not have a discernible melody, focussed more on the texture of the sounds involved. Even in *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the melody itself was not the focus of the piece, but was the result of multiple lines of similar importance layered over each other to create a deep body of sound which supported the spoken text and other extra-musical elements.

As *Crossroads* did not have an established genre going into development and production, the music created for this production did not have the stylistic guidelines of the genre to work within, and so a combination of elements came together to create the contrasting sonic moments. In *Summer Processional*, the use of layered tuned and untuned sound without discernible harmonic shifts or melody mirrored the process and compositional outcomes of *Venus in Fur*. In other parts of the work, such as *Give Me Winter* the text-led melody of the piece was the primary focus, with simple piano and legato vowels by secondary voices providing accompaniment. The primary causes of compositional choices and outcomes in this work were led by the parameters that arose throughout the development and rehearsal process.

Parameters

In all case studies, finding the parameters to work within was integral to the creative process, and my own creativity in these settings. Establishing the parameters in each creative environment whether individual stylistic requirements, or the three key considerations discussed in this thesis, clarified my approaches to composition and the sonic outcomes for each project, bringing focus to the creative process. It also elucidated the notion of how much freedom I need to generate music and create compositions which meet the given task or necessity.

Each work had its own set of restrictions to work within, and indeed, the creation of sound for these works and its integration with other theatrical elements depended on the clarity of these restrictions. During the development of *Crossroads*, parameters were established slowly through a time-consuming drafting and conversation process. Once these were in place and I had a clue as to the sonic texture, function, length and relationship to other theatrical elements such as text and movement, I could play within these outlines and found a creative freedom. Having an established compositional environment for each work functioned as a structure in which I could play as a composer, and created more interesting options as I was inspired by the relationship music played to other theatrical elements. Working within the restrictions of each

production led to creative solutions that involved previously untried compositional methods.

The parameters which created the working environment that informed my composition for each piece were made by one of two things; necessity or inspiration. Parameters of necessity were borne from challenges within the production that needed to be negotiated to create the work required, where parameters of inspiration arose through constructive conversation regarding the aesthetic of the production and the ideas gained from working with multiple creative minds. These produced quite different compositional outcomes, even within a single production.

The restrictions of time and budget resulted in similarities in instrumentation. Throughout all pieces there is the repeated use of piano and voice. This is the area in which I feel most comfortable, and so when pressed to produce works quickly, I often gravitate to these textures. In addition to a lack of time, when there is no financial support from the production to pay instrumentalists or provide equipment for alternative instrumentation, these textures are also readily at my disposal. When faced with the parameters of necessity, I am more likely to produce more highly structured pieces with shorter, clearly differentiated sections that have small groups of chords in diatonic harmony. This is evidenced to the approach taken in *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* and also *Autumn Sweeping*, *Spring*, and *Give Me Winter* which all include a clear form and are based around diatonic chords.

When the parameters are creative in nature, the results were quite different. With more time in development, constructive communication and egalitarian hierarchies, creative outcomes moved much further away from my usual work. When composing within these parameters, instrumentation and sonic texture moved further away from piano and voice, and not only into contrasting tuned sound, but also non-musical sound, as evidenced in the dog, chain, creak composition of sound in *They Shake Hands*. These creative parameters also affected my use of form and harmony. Elements of this were seen in *Summer Processional* with a slow build, as elements were layered and grew to a slow crescendo as opposed to structured shifting chord changes. It became more

apparent in *Venus in Fur* in the use of the layered lines from Berg's *Lyric Suite* where instead of looking at the way the lines intersected harmonically, I was more experimenting with the shape of the lines, and how these intersected at different points. The layers faded in and out, creating a slow movement, but without the diatonic groups of chords seen in previous compositions. It could be argued that it was genre that dictated these outcomes, however this approach was attempted in the initial stages of *Autumn Sweeping*, but the parameters of necessity, in this case a lack of time, steered the final work to a more structured tonal outcome.

In Conclusion

During the course of this study, I experienced three unique collaborations between groups of artists in the creation of music theatre works. Each collaboration was specific to the individual artists involved and was unexpectedly not dictated by genre or style of the theatre work. None of the productions had a specific conversation regarding how the collaboration would work before the process began, yet each collaborative model directly affected the way I composed, the sonic outcomes and overall integration of the piece.

Due to the nature of each collaboration being made of individuals with their own history, personality and set of preferred working practices, there is no verifiable formula for creating a successful collaboration between artists in the creation of music theatre. Each collaborative model needs to arise from the artists working on the individual project and align with their unique needs and personalities. In any collaborative practice there will be some compromise. It was in these areas of working and the challenges that arose that I found prompted creativity, produced work farthest from my own usual working practices, and expanded my compositional methods. The parameters created by these compromises were sometimes creative and provided inspiration as in *Summer Procession*, and *Ode to Aphrodite* but sometimes limited creativity as was seen in the lack of variation throughout *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

I would describe a successful collaboration as one where the majority of parameters set by the work are creative, leading to a unified aesthetic and an integration of creative elements. Where the final performance incorporates ideas that could not have arisen without inspiration from multiple minds. Every production will have challenges, and having the flexibility to adapt to unexpected circumstances and time restrictions is part of working in this art form. However, to mitigate the unknown factor of collaborative working and minimise the likelihood of parameters that restrict creative freedom there are some steps that I will incorporate when working on future music theatre works.

Hierarchical challenges arose solely between myself and the directors I worked with. The hierarchy of any creative team originated from the director and it was their role to set the tone of discussions and structure of the creative team. To approach future collaborations without the hierarchical challenges of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* it is imperative to set expectations before rehearsals about how the room will be run, the working processes (or collaborative model) preferred by both parties, and ensure channels of communication are established and agreed upon. The director is often the leader of any collaborative team when taking a music theatre work to performance, but this leadership can take many different forms. Discovering their expectations of sound for the work in relation to the financial and logistical capabilities of the production will indicate how the parameters will form in development and rehearsal. The likelihood that these will be creative or restrictive will become clear.

In all productions a clear frame of reference provided the best mode of communicating sonic ideas. Whether this was a playlist of existing materials, fragments of offers or the ability to hear the sound mix from the audience, a shared understanding was crucial for effective *communication*. Being prepared with examples of existing sound materials will create a springboard of ideas and assist in creating a vocabulary to approach new sound creation. Creating rough tracks to demonstrate ideas and use in rehearsal will also assist in having a shared understanding. Ensuring logistical support in technical rehearsal will assist in creating a unified understanding of sound in the performance space which is necessary when integrating the sound into final performance.

An understanding also needs to be reached between composer and other creatives around the *timeframes* required for music production, whether this is recording and mixing, or writing and rehearsing for live performance. This will assist in creating a rough timeline before the process begins so artists can have a shared expectation of when music will be developed, written, recorded and integrated into rehearsals. Though some compositional methods were extended by restrictive timeframes and last-minute changes, the sound works most tailored to the individual production and with collaborative inspiration arose from having a pre-rehearsal development period. Allowing time for the development of ideas, testing and refining can greatly increase integration with other theatrical element. Beginning conversations regarding the specifics of sound in a music theatre work in advance of a short rehearsal period can create a more detailed musical idea and a higher level of execution. Ensuring this shared aesthetic is established at the beginning of a development process will also mitigate anxiety when inevitably communication has become *directive* due to time constraints.

In this thesis, I have found that the hierarchy in the rehearsal room, the way artists communicate and the way communication is facilitated throughout the project, as well as the multi-disciplinary timeframes within the piece all shifted my own creative output and dictated my level of creative freedom. However, despite all external stimuli and contrasting collaborative models, the compositions still adhered to my personal aesthetic, and similarities could be found through all three works despite coming from contrasting genres within the realm of music theatre. The key considerations of hierarchy, language and communication and multidisciplinary timeframes are interdependent and the balance of these elements has the potential to either restrict my creativity, or allow for a freedom to experiment within clear creative boundaries, expanding my compositional practice as I strive towards creating an integrated music theatre.

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