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The Creative Approaches of Sound-Making to Spoken-Word Narrative in a Multimedia Environment.

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

This research paper will examine the creative approaches of sound-making to a spoken-word narrative in a multimedia environment through practise-led research in the form of a body of audiovisual works. It will explore how certain electroacoustic compositional techniques on sampled sound can be used to convey a spoken narrative and enhance how the listener/viewer experiences it in conjunction with visual media. It will investigate this through the analysis of work from other iconic composers and discuss how and why their techniques have been used in my own work. It will then document my own creative processes in using spoken stories and poems as the source material through making a new body of work to understand the creative approaches of sound-making in giving a sonic identity to the voice and environmental sounds and analyse what informs my making process in a narrative-driven multimedia work.

Declaration of Originality

I declare that the material in this dissertation has not been submitted to any other degree or diploma in any other institution in addition to being my original work, except for when due reference is made in the text.

Signed:

Date: 20/03/2020

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Introduction

My background as a composer involves working in an interdisciplinary creative environment, working closely with collaborators in the field of dance, film and intercultural storytelling. As a composer, I'm interested in narrative and how my craft and creativity is dictated by the story. As a collaborator, I'm interested in how to control which creative practise oversees expressing the narrative and which one supports it by arranging and re-arranging what elements are organised into background, middle-ground and foreground in a collaborative arts environment.

This research will examine the use of text as narrative and illuminate the different ways this can inform compositional decisions. It will explore how craft and creativity are influenced by using text as source material and identify the creative solutions and compositional techniques for translating the material into a narrative-driven multimedia body of work. The rationale behind creating this work is to understand how the collision of sound, narration and imagery results in a multisensory storytelling experience. The creative output is a series of audiovisual works exhibiting a collection of stories of identity from Indigenous Australians and asylum seekers, interpreted by sound and media artists.

Each voice tells a story of identity theft, traumatic recollections and hope for a better future. The intention is to give each voice a sonic identity and amplify these stories of multicultural struggles in Australia. It will focus on using compositional techniques such as Concrete Music (*musique concrète*) and incorporate environmental sounds to create an immersive soundscape for the narrator to exist in, to integrate each voice into the environmental sound of this country. Secondly, it will use granular synthesis on the voice and sound design to investigate how this technique can de-humanise the voice and distort the sonic identity through computer manipulated deconstruction in response to the themes of stolen identity within each story. Thirdly, it will explore how the rhythmic placement, repetition and melodic contour of vocal phrases and words can impact the emphasis of the narrative at specific moments of each story and how speech-melody can amplify vocal

phrases and bring a musical quality to the sound design. Lastly, it will combine film music composition aesthetics using piano and string instrumentation with the voice and sound design to discover how this can be used as a response to enhance a narrative-driven multimedia work. As a final component to understanding the interaction of narrative, sound and imagery, it will discuss how the visual media conceptually and rhythmically interacts with the audio to contribute to a multisensory storytelling experience.

This is a practice-led research in which I will be documenting my own creative process and examining the results of how a text-based narrative has influenced my compositional craft and collaborative decision-making. This research aims at answering the question: how can the incorporation of text as a narrative affect the sound-maker's creative decisions in a multimedia environment through the creation of a new body of audiovisual works? The course of this research seeks to provide answers through a practice-led journey and discuss my artistic intentions, craft, creativity and methodology and how they relate to my research question. As well as this, it will discuss specific examples by other practitioners and how they are relevant in the identification of solutions to the creative obstacles throughout the research.

The first chapter will look in detail at concrete music as a compositional language and how it has been used and built upon by other composers. It will examine how other practitioners have incorporated sampled sound to contextualise the meaning of their work and discuss the relationship with the principles of soundscape composition. This research will cross examine my own creative experiments in using these techniques with the spoken narrative to explore how this enhances the storytelling experience.

The second chapter will discuss the incorporation of recitative text as an instrument and how this affects the creative decisions of the composer. It will analyse how the rhythm of repetition, rhyme, syntax and melodic contour or 'speech-melody' can be used to construct musical phrasing as a platform for other compositional choices. It will also explore different works by other composers in this field and reference their academic opinions.

The third chapter will examine the technique known as granular synthesis and its application on sampled audio. I will be discussing the details of granular synthesis, why I have used it to communicate the narrative and look at how this has evolved in the works of other practitioners. This chapter will document my own creative rationale behind using this technique on sampled sounds and the spoken voice to transform the meaning behind certain concepts and respond to themes of identity loss and de-humanisation.

The fourth chapter will look at why the aesthetics of film music composition are important to my creative process and how the accompaniment of a visual medium can contribute in adding another dimension to each story and create a sonic intertextuality to the narrative. This will be compared in the examinations of my folio work and look at a final conclusion of how these compositional techniques have affected the voice and sound design, enhanced the narrative and discovered the interplay of spoken narration, sound design and music to understand how this interacts with the visual media to create a multisensory storytelling experience. Throughout each chapter will be references to folio works, milestones, obstacles, reflections and outcomes to draw an academic conclusion from the results discussed in each chapter.

Chapter One: Concrete Music and the Immersive Qualities of Sampled Sound

Music is a succession of sounds and the composer is merely the organiser of these sounds. Hearing sounds which are just sound immediately sets the theorizing mind to theorizing, and the emotions of human beings are continually aroused by encounters with nature.

– John Cage¹

Concrete Music (*musique concrète*) is a compositional technique that utilises recorded sounds as raw material which can then be manipulated, processed or put together as a collage in any particular order and presented as a musical work.² Since the invention of the Phonograph in 1877 by Thomas Edison³, technology was available to record and playback the sounds we could hear, however it wouldn't be for another 70 years before this was used as a compositional tool to create music. As recording technology made further advancements from the Phonograph to the Gramophone (1889) to the magnetic wire recorder by Vlademar Poulsen (also 1889) composers now had new tools, techniques and instruments to work with to produce or reproduce recorded sound. The first documented piece of concrete music ever composed used this technology and was by Halim El-Dabh in 1944⁴ but it would be 10 years before this that The German Magnetophon was developed by Fritz Pfeumer, improving on the commercial applications of audio recording by magnetically imprinting audio information to tape.⁵ It was this technology that was an integral part to concrete music which was known publicly in 1949, credited to its originator, Pierre Schaeffer and Studio d'Essai in France.

¹ John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writing, Chapter 4: Experimental Music*, Wesleyan University Press, 1961, p204

² Pierre Schaeffer, John and Christine North Translator, *In Search of a Concrete Music: (California Studies in 20th Century Music)*, University of California Press: Berkley, 2012, p3

³ Library of Congress "The History of the Edison Cylinder Phonograph" last modified March 14th, 2013, retrieved from <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/edhtml/edcylidr.html>

⁴ Andre Millard, *America on Record: A History of Recorded Sound*, Cambridge UP, 1995, p18

⁵ Tim Onosko, *Wasn't the Future Wonderful? A View of Trends and Technology from the 1930's*, Dutton, 1979, p58

The use of the technology as an imperial system of reproducing the sounds of the environment would give composers a new instrument to argue that all sounds we hear can be music. To quote Robert Normandeau, a Concrete Music composer from Canada –

*“I need to be in touch with sound and the sound triggers my imagination, not the opposite. I’m not thinking in the absolute about some sounds. I can think about some sources but thinking about the sources is not about sound. Sound is the real thing. When you go into a studio with a performer or an object, or whatever, and then you start to create sounds. This is sound. And that triggers my imagination.”*⁶

The incorporation of found sound recordings from our everyday environment as a fabric to ‘trigger the imagination’ is the starting point in my practice-led research and the foundations of transforming the meaning of a narrative in my creative work. However, the choice of these found sounds were dictated by the source material text and the compositional craft was controlled by the timbre and musical qualities of the chosen sampled sounds themselves.

Barry Truax is another Canadian composer who specialises in a type of concrete music known as soundscape composition as well as real-time granular synthesis, which I will be discussing in chapter 3. The term *soundscape* was coined by Michael Southworth and popularised by R. Murray Schafer who led much of the work on the subject from the 1960’s onwards⁷. The concept of soundscape composition involves the sampling of found sound and relies on the importance of listener’s perception. Truax points out that a soundscape can be defined as a sonic environment with the emphasis on the way it is perceived or experienced by the listener, in context.⁸ He goes on to state that the purpose of soundscape composition is to evoke something that the listener already has a relationship to. Not just

⁶ Robert Normandeau, *Interview with Robert Normandeau*, Electroacoustic Communications Canada, Feb 8th, 2011.

⁷ R. Murray Schafer. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, Oxford Press, 1977, p2

⁸ Pracownia Audiosfery. “Interview with Barry Truax” (video) June 18th, 2014, retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFuRgnqyAjA&t=90s>

anecdotally, not just as inspiration for the composition but to have more of a central role and invite the audience to participate in the piece and bring their own association.⁹

Truax puts this aesthetic into practise by firstly stating the principles of soundscape composition:¹⁰

- Listener recognisability of the source material is maintained.
- Listeners knowledge of the environmental and psychological context is invoked.
- Composers knowledge of the environmental and psychological context influences the shape of the composition at every level.

In his piece *Pendlerdrom* (1997)¹¹, Truax composes a 2-part soundscape that focuses on exterior sounds becoming interior and plays on the perception of the listener. The first part is an unaltered sound recording of a commuter at a busy train station, boarding a train and taking a seat. The second part is a manipulated soundscape capturing these exterior environmental sounds and making them interior to replicate a soundtrack to a daydream in the mind of the commuter.¹² The overall piece has a general narrative arriving at a central station in Copenhagen and being mesmerised by passing trains, coming back to reality as their own train arrives, getting into it and settling into their seat, only to fall into another daydream where elements of the previous composition come back in little memory loops. The two parts of the composition arguably manage to both environmentally and psychologically trigger this narrative. Through this piece, Truax explains that a soundscape is always dependant on the perception of the listener but the methods of composition are more concerned about *how* the listener perceives it.¹³ He goes onto say that by contextualising this piece to an audience beforehand brings the soundscape out of abstractness. The listener must then perceive it the way the composer had intended.

⁹ Pracownia Audiosfery.

¹⁰ Sonic Acts XIII. "Barry Truax: Composing Music with the Environment Lecture" (video) July 22nd, 2010. retrieved from

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOt0sGccfLogAmEJyOxRINQ>

¹¹ Barry Truax, *Islands*, Cambridge Street Records, 2001, CD.

¹² Sonic Acts XIII.

¹³ Sonic Acts XIII.

However, it could be argued that some environmental sounds are recognisable to most of us without explanation due to the regularity in our surrounding environment.

By having a spoken-word narrative to tell the story throughout my own work, the listener has context to understand and apply meaning to the story without assistance from the sound-maker. This then allows the sound-maker to focus on enhancing the narrative and create a new dimension to the story at selected moments during the listening experience. The following page is a table of listed folio works and the specific lines of dialogue (timecoded) that the sound-maker is responding to by using concrete music as the creative process.

<u>Folio Work Title and Timing of Moments</u>	<u>Line of Text</u>	<u>Creative Response</u> Concrete Music	<u>Intention</u>
The Noises That I Heard (0:37, 1:21)	<i>"Well, I still remember the noises that I heard from my trip on the boat".</i> <i>"I can only picture three noises in my head, number one, the noises of the engine of the boat."</i>	Ocean sound sample Engine sound sample	The description of the environment and trip on the boat invites the listener to participate in the soundscape of the story.
Stripped of my Human Identity (1:33, 2:14)	<i>"It was like hell on earth"</i> <i>"I was stripped of my human identity."</i>	Glass smash sample Fire Crackle sample Gasoline/match strike sample	The anarchic sounds are the sound-makers association to the dark and traumatic words.
Screaming in a Silent Night (0:25s)	<i>"You hear their steps and are waiting for the time they appear to talk."</i>	Tunnel footsteps sample	The words introduce the sound of steps. Begin at a slow pace and building to a run to create a sense of urgency.
A Stingray Story (1:53, 6:11)	<i>"The water speaks in waves."</i>	Underwater waves sample	To create an underwater effect to invite the listener into an ocean environment portrayed in the story.
Crying on my Pillow (0:06s, 0:50s)	<i>"Day and night will pass."</i> <i>"An ocean of sadness is surrounding me."</i>	Cricket sample Clock tick sample Ocean sample	The semantic association to night time - a clock ticking, ocean sample and purring crickets are intended to set the environmental tone and psychological undertones of the narrative.

The table highlights the exact moments during each folio work where the line of dialogue informs the sound-maker to incorporate sampled environmental sound related to the words

in each phrase. For example, *Folio Work No. 1, The Noises that I Heard* relies heavily on using concrete music as the main technique throughout the entire work to communicate the story and enhance the immersive storytelling experience. It also uses the principles of soundscape composition through the contextualisation brought by the spoken word narration. The raw sample of a recognisable sound that opens the piece was recorded from a moving metal barrel to capture the soft motion of the water. This could be water splashing sounds from a bathtub or swimming pool but by inserting the spoken voice to recite the text told by an asylum seeker reminiscing about his time at sea, the descriptions of the noises that he heard becomes the noises that we hear. The sampled sound of the sea is brought into context with the opening line stating – “*Well, I still remember the noises that I heard from my trip on the boat*”. The immersive environment is set up to invite the listener to participate in the experience. With regards to soundscape composition, it is precisely the environmental context that is preserved, enhanced and exploited by the composer. The listener's past experiences, associations, and patterns of soundscape perception are called upon and influenced me to integrate this within the compositional strategy.¹⁴ Part of the composer's intent may also be to enhance the listener's awareness of environmental sound. My intention with this folio work is to allow the narrator to enhance the listener's awareness of the environmental sound to encourage immersion in the story.

Folio Work No. 2, Stripped of My Human Identity and *Folio Work No. 4, Crying on my Pillow* also use concrete music but without the assistance of narrational contextualization, resulting in a more abstract listening experience. There may be some recognizable sounds, but the association of the listener is intended to be more psychological and open to interpretation in relation to the story. The assaulting sounds of glass smashing, liquid spilling and matches striking are interwoven with spoken words of “*It was like hell on earth*” and “*I was stripped of my human identity*” suggesting trauma and hopelessness, giving the listener a subjective immersive experience in a dark and confronting world of sound within the story. The communicational issue with this doesn't have a concrete context and exists in a more abstract soundscape environment, moving away from Truax's set of principles and

¹⁴ Barry Truax, *Acoustic Communication*, Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1984, p207

giving the listener authority to provide their own contextual understanding. However, my creative decision remains in creating an immersive storytelling environment and the narration of the text is set to provide the objective experience.

Steve Reich is another iconic composer known for his use of sample sound and elaborations on concrete music. This can be evidenced in his work *WTC/911* (2011)¹⁵. Reich uses audio samples from a variety of sources to capture a loose narrative based on the events of the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. The piece begins with an alarm noise that a landline phone makes when it is left off the hook. This then introduces the violins of the string quartet mimicking this alarming tone. In the first movement there are sampled voices from air traffic controllers, panicking that a flight was off course. The movement then shifts to recordings of the New York City Fire Department archives of that day telling what happened on the ground. The strings double and harmonize the speech melodies and the prolonged vowels of the recorded voices, creating an instrumental emulation of the sequences of audio samples.¹⁶ These samples suggest a narrative that climaxes in this historical event and invites the listener into an immersive experience, enhanced by live instrumentation, creating a hybridization of concrete music and traditional notated instrumentation.

This “speech-melody” technique was pioneered in earlier works such as *Different Trains* (1988)¹⁷ which uses recordings of spoken phrases from three Holocaust survivors. These fragmented phrases are then echoed and layered by musical instruments. Reich manages to find music in speech, hearing melody in the flow of words. The musical landscape behind these melodies consist of steam whistle sounds, train horns and railway track noises as well as an air raid sound sample, which are all mimicked by the string quartet. Reich states in an interview that he’s not making an interpretation or fantasy of the narrative but presenting

¹⁵ Steve Reich and Kronos Quartet, *WTC/911*, Warner Music Group, 2011, CD

¹⁶ “Steve Reich at 75: World Premiere of WTC 9/11, Program Notes.” Retrieved March 8, 2011.

¹⁷ Steve Reich and Kronos Quartet, *Different Trains*, Warner Music Group, 1988, CD

people talking about their own lives and as they speak, so does the music.¹⁸ The composers intention of *Different Trains* works because the documentary reality and the musical reality are one and the same thing.¹⁹

I sought to experiment with this 'speech-melody' technique in *Folio Work No. 3, Numbers and Letters*. This is an audio sample from a podcast called *The Messenger* about Abdul Aziz Muhamat and his life in an immigration detention centre.²⁰ The audio sample of his voice states '*Numbers and letters, three letters and three numbers for the last three years*' which led me to the decision to focus on using this sample as the basis for the entire composition. The spoken words have their own rhythm and melody and inspired the idea to use these musical elements to express the narrative. As a text, *Numbers and Letters* evoked the creative decision to play with the words 'numbers and letters' to convince the ear to find meaning in the phrase. This is magnified when the two tape loops of the same audio sample fall out of sync, leading to the idea of finding a three-beat pulse within the disorientating canon of voices. By using fragments of the phrase, the attempt was made to try and confuse the listener and provoke the phrase into something of an argument between three people (*Folio Work No. 3, Numbers and Letters, 0.10 secs*). I will discuss this in further detail in the following chapter.

¹⁸ Steve Reich – Rhythm and Minimalism (video), ABC Arts, May 6th, 2010. retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFS8Ru27rqs>

¹⁹ Steve Reich – Rhythm and Minimalism

²⁰ *The Messenger*, Behind the Wire and The Wheeler Centre. Podcast, 7th July, 2017

Chapter Two: The Incorporation of Recitative Text Samples as an Instrument

I mentioned Steve Reich's work *Different Trains* and *WTC9/11* in the previous chapter and point out that his creative compositional decisions were influenced by the incorporation of the spoken words into the work by using the techniques of concrete music and evolving these ideas by mimicking the spoken words with notated instruments. Other works such as *The Cave* (1993) and *City Life* (1995) explore the same use of this speech-melody technique. Reich's procedure involves isolating short bits of recorded speech with an appealing melodic and rhythmic quality by using a digital sampler to analyse and transcribe the melodic contours of the spoken words²¹. It's these sampled speech fragments that provide a set of ready-made melodies that Reich integrates into the instrumental and vocal texture of these works. In his pieces *It's Gonna Rain* (1965) and *Come Out* (1966), Reich uses taped recordings of spoken texts as the basis for the entire composition to explore melody, rhythm and the emotional power of speech, presenting them as examples of the creation of 'music as process'.

In his book *Writings on Music, 1965-2000* Reich discusses that in leading to his composition of *It's Gonna Rain*, he was intrigued by the melodic quality of a preacher's speech and began making recordings of his voice. This made the musical quality emerge even more strongly and the incessant repetition of the words intensify their meaning and melody at the same time. Reich explains that by using recorded speech as a source of electronic music, speech-melody and meaning are presented as they naturally occur.²² He goes on to say that in the process of trying to line up two identical tape loops in unison, he discovered that by letting them slowly shift out of phase with one another presented an extraordinary form of musical structure. It was a seamless, uninterrupted musical process.²³

²¹ Steve Reich – Rhythm and Minimalism (video)

²² Reich, Steve. *Writings on Music 1965-2000*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2002

²³ *Writings on Music 1965-2000*

This asynchronous spoken phrase seems to reveal the possibilities of what the listener can take from the experience. Reich's more refined follow-up, *Come Out* is built on the voice stating 'I had to like open the bruise up and let some of the bruise blood come out to show them' describing a beating the narrator took from Harlem's 28th police precinct during the riots of 1964. First the vocal loop is in unison with itself before going out of phase and a slowly increasing reverberation is heard. This gradually passes into a canon or round for two voices, then four voices and finally eight.²⁴ The words themselves are quite confronting when put into context and Reich's creative decision to magnify their intensity from his experience with his techniques of *It's Gonna Rain* gave me the ideas to explore them in my own work in using the recorded voice. Below is another table that presents selected vocal phrases from the body of creative work and reveals the creative responses and intentions of focusing on the melodic and rhythmic qualities of the vocal phrases within my own works.

<u>Folio Work Title and Timing of Moments</u>	<u>Line of Text</u>	<u>Creative Response</u> Speech-Melody/Rhythm	<u>Intention</u>
Number and Letters (0:01)	<i>"Numbers and letters, three letters and three numbers for the last three years"</i>	Creating an out-of-sync vocal cannon.	The three channels of voices begin to play in tandem before slowly falling out of sync as the pieces progresses, creating an ever-changing indeterminate rhythmic pattern.
Number and Letters (4:12)	<i>"Numbers and letters, three letters and three numbers for the last three years"</i>	Using the 'Time stretch and scroll' vocal creation and mimicking the melodic qualities with strings.	The mimicry of the vocal sample with live instruments is used to draw the listeners awareness to the melodic contour of the voice.
The Noises That I Heard (0:37)	<i>"Well I still remember the noises that I heard on the boat"</i> <i>"Cutting something with a sharp thing"</i>	Taking a snapshot of specific words. from each line and repeating them.	To magnify the meaning of the phrases and words to the listener and highlight the rhythmic and melodic properties.

²⁴ Writings on Music 1956-2000

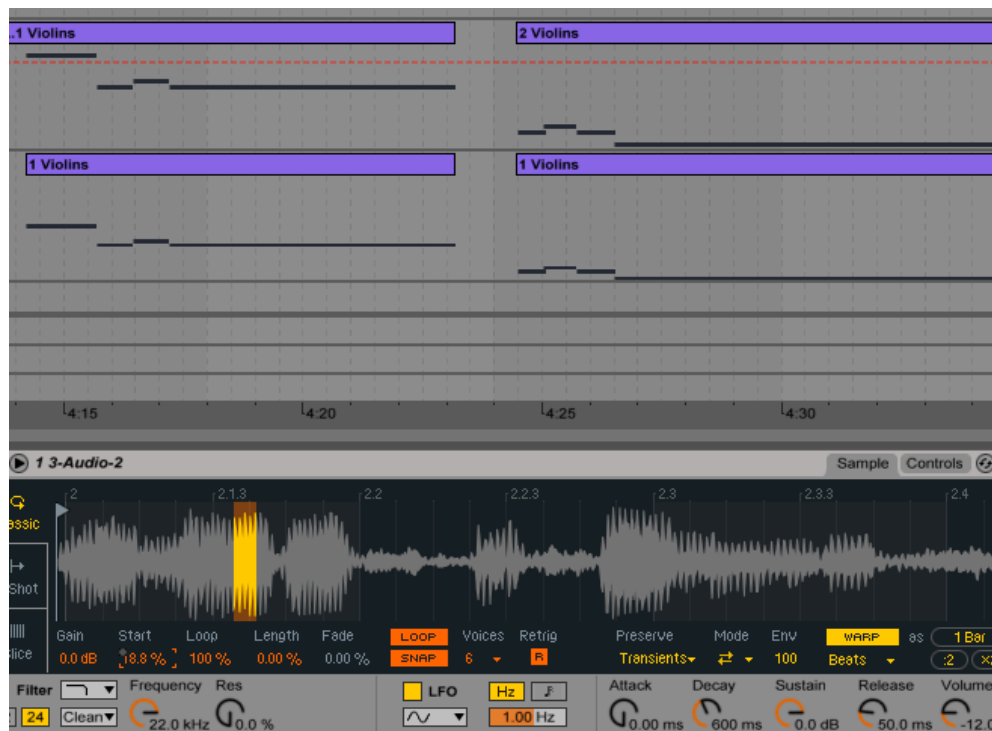
The Noises That I Heard (3:15)	<i>"I was thinking about home"</i>	Taking a snapshot of specific words from each line and repeating them.	To magnify the meaning of the phrases and words to the listener and highlight the rhythmic and melodic properties.
Stripped of my Human Identity (2:14)	<i>"Identity"</i> <i>"Particular Number"</i>	Taking a snapshot of specific words from each line and repeating them.	To magnify the meaning of the phrases and words to the listener and highlight the rhythmic and melodic properties.
Crying on my Pillow (0:05)	<i>"Day and Night"</i>	Automated panning between stereo speakers repeated to a set tempo.	The word 'night' fades in over the soundscape. The repetition overlaps and crossfades between speakers to create a dizzying effect.
I Will Rise (1:29, 2:24, 2:57, 3:48)	<i>"Why can't you help me"</i> <i>"One day"</i> <i>"Full of thoughts"</i> <i>"I Will Rise"</i>	Repeating each phrase strategically with the rhythmic flow of the galloping piano motif.	To make the placement of each vocal phrase more musical and to follow the tempo and rhythm of the other instruments.
Hope (2:50)	<i>"Hope has no end"</i>	Taking a snapshot of specific words from each line and repeating them.	To magnify the meaning of the phrases and words to the listener.
A Stingray Story (5:29, 6:15, 8:45)	<i>"My feet are in the dirt and the dirt it speaks in dust and the trees they speak in leaves like the people speak in trust"</i> <i>"The water speaks in waves and the dust is in the wind"</i> <i>"They're asking me to speak"</i>	Unedited sample. The sound design and musical ideas were in service to the organic rhythmic flow.	The rhythmic placement of the sounds and beats are to create a flow that follows the words in order to bring a musicality to the voice.

The raw recordings of spoken word were void of musical context, leaving the composer to implement rhythm and highlight melodic contour to specific phrases and key words that summon an emotional undercurrent in the narrative. By cutting and editing the raw material into metronomically organized phrases, a rhythmic flow eventually presented itself

which in turn gave way to hearing melodic shapes within speech. The idea was to expand the communicational scope of the words with an emphasis on the emotional content by dwelling on the musical aspects of rhythm and melody. The unedited raw material delivered the narrative but with less emphasis on words that, to me as the composer, was attracted to for their emotional qualities and saw the opportunity to enhance the narrative by hybridizing speech-melody techniques alongside emotive instrumental music to underline these qualities and enrich the storytelling experience.

I refer again to *Folio Work No. 3, Number and Letters* which uses Reich's technique in the first half of the piece. My creative decisions were affected by using this method of capturing an attractive vocal fragment of recitative text and focused on the rhythmic and melodic properties of the phrase. I used the exact same methods of recording the sampled speech on three recording channels, playing them all slightly out of sync with one another. This created a canonic backdrop to layer other samples of vocal fragments as percussive beats to provide a rhythmic pulse underneath the sampled voices. The next section of the work takes direct influence from Reich's *Different Trains* and *WTC/911* and incorporates notation for strings to replicate the recorded sample in pitch and rhythm using the Ableton Live sequencer. (Fig. 1)

(Fig 1.- *Folio Work No. 3 - Numbers and Letters* sequencer view at 4min, 12sec)



Ableton Live operates as an easy tool for sampling within its sequencer interface. *Simpler* is a plugin that allows the composer to drag and drop an audio sample into it to play the sample on a MIDI controller into Ableton Live. This gives the composer an easily controllable audio sample to change pitch and speed. By playing this sample at a lower register on the MIDI controller I was able to bring out a melodic quality which followed a set tempo, played in sync with the template of the entire composition. The narrative is still preserved but is magnified using a musical language to enhance the rhythm and pitch of the words. The intention is to force the listener to focus on the phrase in the hopes of creating immersion in the short 'speech melody' story.

From the experiences in my own work, using the recorded spoken word material as an instrument to communicate the narrative has the power to immensely influence the composer's creative decisions. Editing, repeating and strategically placing the recorded audio of the words and phrases on the timeline within each composition gave me the authority to control the dynamics of the narrative at carefully selected moments for narrational enhancements. Some of the recorded source material already had a natural tempo, melodic shape and rhythm based on the person's delivery of the speech, which I found to be responsible for choices in tempo, timbral colour, dynamics and texture. *Folio Work No. 6, I Will Rise* is a poem by asylum seeker, Hani Abdile to which the raw material had a natural tempo, rhythm and flow. This sparked the idea to compose around this template with instrumentation and sound design. The minimal editing of vocal phrases and use of repetition was intended to give an uplifting, organic, human identity that would coincide with the content of the poem.

Folio Work No. 8, A Stingray Story features a recorded spoken word piece by Aboriginal Australian activist, Alice Eather and is used as the source material to which the musical ideas are inspired but also features the recitative text as the leading voice in the piece. The poetic form of the text again, gives a natural rhythm, flow and tempo which allows it to be segmented and compartmentalised into metronomically equal phrases and sentences. The opening line is in native language: '*Djiya wiba yinyirra Ngana Maningrida yo Djiya wiba yinyirra.*' The lack of understanding in the translation of the phrase invites the listener into hearing the words for their contour and rhythm rather than their meaning. It is the

repetition of the sample that then seems to reinforce these qualities. It is also important to pay close attention to the spacing of the spoken phrases, which places them at specific moments in the timeline grid to create a consistent pulse between each line in order to set the rhythmic foundations for the entry of the motif on the piano. (*Folio Work No. 8, A Stingray Story, (5min, 10sec)*) The rhythm and repetition then must coincide with the visual choreography which I will discuss in chapter 4. The syllables within the opening line are also of particular interest as they are sliced out from the sample and performed as an additional percussive layer, carefully threading in with the bell-like droplet sounds. The piano then begins to pay attention to these syllables and as the lower chords develop in intensity, the motif slowly obeys the rhythm of the fragmented samples before emerging in a set arpeggio ostinato. This then sets the tone for thematic development and string accompaniment before moving into the B section, which now has a percussive beat to a set tempo. It is here that the voice enters for the first time in English, with each line strategically placed against the percussive beat to create a rhythmic flow that is reminiscent of a rap or slam-poem. The last words of each line are magnified through repetition and the K's, P's, S's and T's are attractive in their contribution to the beat with their sharp pronunciation. (Fig. 2)

The image displays two musical staves. The top staff is labeled 'Drum Set' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Voice'. Both are in 4/4 time. The Drum Set staff shows a consistent rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The Voice staff contains two lines of lyrics. The first line is 'My Feet are in the dirt And the dirt it speaks in dust'. The second line is 'And the trees they speak in leaves Like the people speak in trust'. The lyrics are written in a simple, sans-serif font below the staff.

Fig. 2 (*Folio Work 8, A Stingray Story at 5min, 29sec*)

Certain effects to words also seem to emphasise their meaning such as 'the water speaks in waves' phrase being treated with an echo delay that pans across the speakers in an attempt to emulate the imagery. Another example of this is in the phrase 'the dust is in the wind' with a carefully automated reverb tail on the word 'wind' which works at creating a blowing

sensation. The following lines of spoken words are in call and response to string interjections and progress into the C section of the piece. The phrases of each line then become more frequent and a more linear narrative develops. The music plays the supporting role before finishing on a reiteration of the A section with a repeated line '*I can read the storms*' which somewhat serves as a chorus to the piece. The outro then pitters out with native language lines '*Koma Ngika no!*' as a repeated phrase to coincide with the pulse and placement of the beat before descending into a reversal of how it was introduced, only this time allowing a more condensed delivery of the poem to give the listener a more cohesive narrative. (*Folio Work No. 8, A Stingray Story – 13 min, 33 sec*)

Folio work No. 6, I Will Rise relies on a similar strategy of the placement of vocal phrases. The first half has no set pulse which has no real effect on the choices of phrase placement but puts more emphasis on specific words. Much like *A Stingray Story*, there are descriptive elements such as the word '*dust*'. The impact of this word is magnified with a long reverb tail, layered with a deep drum hit and sprinkling of granulated piano droplets in an attempt at a sonic representation of musical dust settling after being disrupted by the drum hit. The actual title of the piece inspired a musical 'rising' effect to create the melodic contour of the rising arpeggio piano motif. The second half of the piece is set to a reiterated galloping version of the motif, creating a pulse and focuses on a more rhythmic arrangement of vocal phrasing of poetic verse (*Folio Work No. 6, I Will Rise – 2min, 20sec*). The rising intensity of the musical accompaniment is the servant of the vocal phrases, with a strong emphasis on the reoccurring and rhythmic use of the word '*Rise*' to lead the piece to its climax. The audio samples in each of these works have been carefully manipulated using certain audio processing techniques in order to bring out the strength and meaning of words, phrases and sounds. One specific technique involves sample-based granular synthesis to explore the possibilities of de-humanizing the voice and sound design by destroying its sonic identity. This raises the question of how can this technique provide the desired outcomes?

Chapter Three: Granular Synthesis and Audio

Processing Techniques

Granular synthesis is a method by which sounds are broken into tiny micro snippets or 'grains' often of a length between 10-50 milliseconds which are then redistributed and reorganised to form other sounds. The result is a kind of audio fragment collection that is manipulable to form completely new sonic textures by layering new arrangements of sound grains on top of one another.²⁵ The origins of granular synthesis as a compositional technique can be credited to 20th century composer, Iannis Xenakis and can be heard in the piece *Analogique A-B* (1958) for string orchestra and tape²⁶. The piece uses a call and respond method between orchestra and a more primitive method of the technique using hand crafted fragments of sliced tape of recorded sine wave tones, reorganized and pieced together. The resulting piece offers the listener a conversational narrative between the granular collage and scattered sounds of the orchestra.

Composer Curtis Roads built upon the ideas of Xenakis, studying the formulas in his books and coining the term 'microsound'.²⁷ Using the more modern computer technology that was available, Roads developed a series of computer programs to test these techniques and formulas. By using Xenakis's theory of granular synthesis, he developed a variant based on a model of scattering digital grains into 'sound clouds'.²⁸ This visual metaphor of granular synthesis has often been used to describe the soundscapes that it creates such as a cloud, stream or spray of grains. The visual representation of this can be used in a time/frequency plane on numerous granular software plugins such as Roads own *Cloud Generator* or U&I's

²⁵ "What is Granular Synthesis?," *Subaqueous Music*, last modified February 25th, 2014, <https://subaqueousmusic.com/granular-synthesis-in-ableton-live/>

²⁶ Iannis Xenakis, *Alpha & Omega*, Universal Music France, 1964, CD

²⁷ Curtis Roads, "From Grains to Forms" (Symposium Thesis Presentation) Retrieved from http://www.cdmc.asso.fr/sites/default/files/texte/pdf/rencontres/intervention16_xenakis_electroacoustique.pdf

²⁸ Curtis Roads, "From Grains to Forms"

MetaSynth software.²⁹ This visualisation of granular synthesis would seem to make the sound feel tangible and attempts to summon a visual image, even if it is abstract.

The following table below shows a collection of folio works that use the technique of granular synthesis to communicate the ideas in my own work and the creative responses to specific lines of dialogue.

<u>Folio Work Title</u>	<u>Line of Text</u>	<u>Creative Response</u> Granular Synthesis	<u>Intention</u>
The Noises That I Heard (1:48)	<i>"The noise of the waves splashing on the boat"</i>	Granulation of ocean sound sample.	To create a stuttering, glitched pad sound as a sonic mimicry of the ocean sample.
The Noises That I Heard (3:14)	<i>"I was thinking about home, how I'm going to see my family again"</i>	Time Stretch and scroll on the voice sample.	The stretching and glitching effect on the voice is intended to magnify the words and intertwine them with the synthetic backdrop of strings, ocean and engine.
Stripped of my Human Identity (1:33)	<i>"It was like hell on earth"</i>	Granulation on fire crackle sample.	To create an abstract introduction to set up the first line of text.
Numbers and Letters (9:10)	<i>"Numbers and letters for the last three years"</i>	Time Stretch and scroll on phrase.	This was done to a tempo and pitch to bring out the melody and meaning of the phrase to be mimicked with

²⁹ Curtis Roads, "From Grains to Forms"

			instruments at a slower pace.
Screaming in the Night (0:04)	<i>"I hear screaming in a silent night"</i>	Real-time granular synthesis using multilayered micro-grains with delay effects.	To represent the slow fade in of a human scream. This sound was then re-pitched and resampled to be set as the foundation for the work.
Screaming in the Night (2:56)	<i>"It sounds like a storm on a summer night"</i>	Real-time granular synthesis using multilayered micro-grains with delay effects.	To represent the haze of a storm on the horizon. Similar use to the scream but utilizing Ableton Grain Delay for pitch unpredictability.
Crying on my Pillow (0:10)	<i>"Day and night will pass"</i>	Granulation and stereo panning of cricket sound sample.	The raw sample and granular layer scattered from speaker to speaker creates a surround sound spectrum for the listener to become the character at night in the story.
Crying on my Pillow (2:20)	<i>"An ocean of sadness is surrounding me"</i>	Granulation and re-organization of ocean sound sample.	To create a beat that gives the work a pulse using a fragmented ocean splash drum rhythm.
I Will Rise (0:26)	<i>"You now lock me in detention and damage my hope but is like dust"</i>	Granular spray effect on voice.	A deep drum hit disrupts the grains as they scatter back down onto the

			ground, creating a shimmering effect.
Hope (0:18)	<i>“Hope has no end, it begins like a new day, stand fast and sure for me and you, continues forever”</i>	Granular effects on the endless drone of a bowed guitar.	The static harmony and granulation of the drone mixed with vocal phrases is meant to represent the endlessness of hope.

The conceptual idea of the entire body of work is to present a continuum of concrete sound to represent the establishment of identity (the spoken voice and environmental sounds) and granular synthesis to represent the destruction and dehumanisation of that identity. This is to coincide with the thematic material of each story which features topics of loss, hopelessness, trauma and despair on one side of the spectrum and hope, optimism and strength on the other. On a macro level, the linear narrative that threads across all of the works follows this spectrum in the order of how these works are intended to be experienced by their number. On a micro level, I refer to this concrete/granular continuum that I have used to compositionally reflect this concept.

The concrete music samples of environmental sounds are recognisable to my ear when left unprocessed and are intended to create a sonic environment for the human voice to exist in to invite the listener into the world of the narrative on a personal level. Each voice is broadcasting their identity through their journey of arriving in Australia and describe in detail their trials and trauma against the backdrop of a concrete soundscape. This establishment of identity is created for the listener to recognise before audio processing of the voice and environment is applied to destroy the recognisability of it and create a new dimension where these compositional techniques have stolen their identity. Granular synthesis and glitching effects were then applied to the audio samples themselves to disassemble and reconstruct them into more obtrusive and disfigured sounds.

The context of each of these works is given to the audience through spoken-word narration and environmental soundscape recordings. Converging concrete music, granular synthesis and audio processing of traditional instruments create a synthetic and unnatural

soundscape which is intended to remove human or environmental identity from the source material. The unprocessed spoken word voice and raw soundscape audio samples allow the participant to understand the narrative before granular synthesis and glitch techniques take effect. This allows the listener to create and develop a personal meaning from the experience.

Folio works 1 – 5 deal with similar narratives from different voices - the journey, the arrival, the treatment and self-reflection. Each of these works follows the same formula of a progressive destruction of identity, first using concrete music samples and emotionally charged instrumentation before gradually becoming more granulated and disorientating to coincide with the narrative. Folio works 6 – 8 features a more optimistic view from each narrator – the summoning of strength and the hope for a better future. While these works follow the same formula, the process of deconstructing identity is overruled by the message of the words. The emphasis relies more on the musical instrumentation and emotional response to the narrative. Granulation and glitching effects are now playing the role to highlight and transform these optimistic words and replenish some form of identity in the hope of reverse engineering the loss of identity of the narrators.

Some specific examples of the micro process can be heard in *Folio Work No. 4, Screaming in the Night* which presents the title of the poem as a basis for initial creative ideas and focuses on shaping timbral colours to emulate the sound of screaming. The small grain of 'ea' that I extracted from the vocal recording became the starting point of creating a granular pad of sound. I began duplicating the grain into a linear sequence on one channel. This created a stuttering effect that had a two-dimensional result, however by taking the sequence of grains and altering their pitch (Fig. 3) and adding a second and third duplication of the sequence, resulted into a multilayered blanket of static noise (Fig. 4)

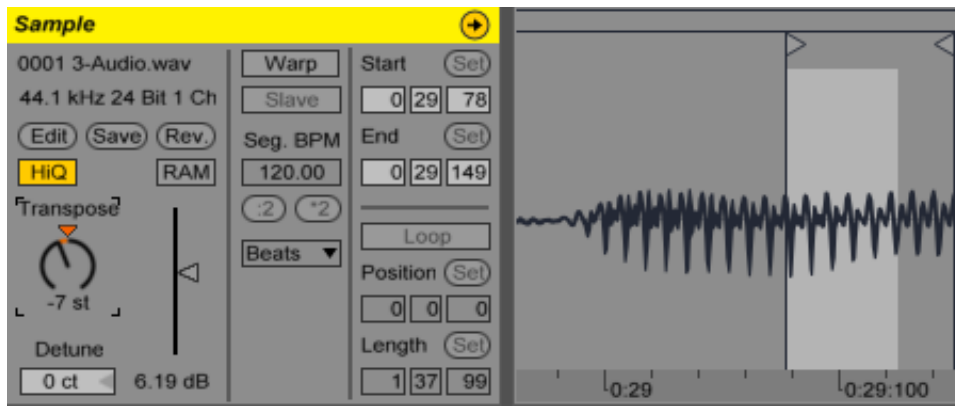


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Folio work No. 5, Crying on my pillow features concrete music as the foundation of sound but explores how granular synthesis can be used on the environmental samples to create an unnatural sonic environment for the spoken story to be told. The tone of the poem is describing a restless night of insomnia, weeping into a pillow, feeling isolated and afraid. One of the main sounds I often associate with the night is the purring of crickets and layering this sample with the ticking of a clock, I felt best resembled a soundscape of a sleepless night. By using a combination of the traditional concrete music technique of slicing samples of sound and reassembling them together, I executed this along with the granular synthesis technique and duplicated the sampled sound to produce a glitched cricket effect. The final touch was to strategically pan the sounds across the speakers in order to broaden the width of the spatial spectrum to create the illusion of a claustrophobic surround sound environment for the listener to exist. (*Folio Work No. 5 Crying on my Pillow - 30 seconds*)

This is then further elaborated on with the introduction of the ocean sound. By experimenting further with the concrete music / granular technique and panning effect, a vague drumbeat is created using only the ocean and cricket samples – set to the tempo of the ticking clock. The line of text '*An Ocean of sadness is surrounding me*' was the instigator for this particular creative decision. (Fig. 5)

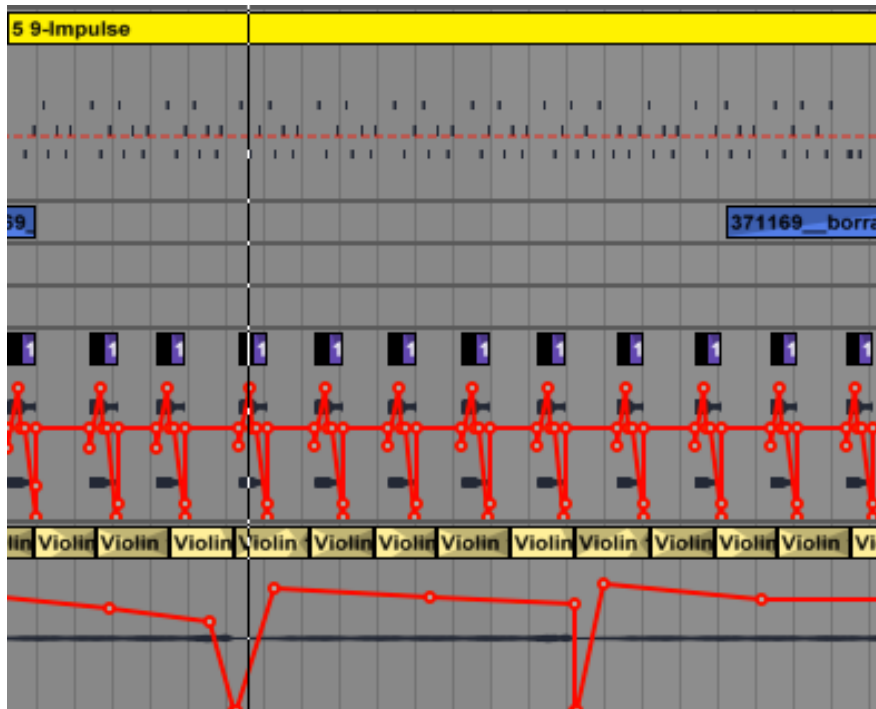


Fig. 5 (*Folio Work No. 5 Crying on my Pillow* sequencer view at 2 min, 49 sec)

In the later works of optimism, *Folio Work No. 7, Hope* Features the same glitched rhythm and granulation techniques on the voice as a foundation alongside the musical instrumentation. The result is an unrecognisable backing voice, void of sonic identity. The content of the poem being 'hope' inspired the idea to re-record and re-layer a clear comprehensible voice that interprets the un-human voice and re-inserts the human identity in the spirit of the poem's theme (*Folio Work No. 7, Hope – 17 secs.*) As mentioned, the latter half of the body of folio works begins to rely more on musical instrumentation to summon an emotional response from the listener. This final exploration starts to borrow from film music aesthetics which I will discuss in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Film Music Aesthetics and The Visual Relationship

*"I feel that music on the screen can seek out and intensify the inner thoughts of the characters. It can invest a scene with terror, grandeur, gaiety, or misery. It can propel narrative swiftly forward or slow it down. It often lifts mere dialogue into the realm of poetry. Finally, it is the communicating link between the screen and the audience, reaching out and enveloping all into one single experience."*³⁰ – Bernard Herrmann

My background in writing music to film has also had an impact on my creative response to sound-making for other narrative-driven media. In the case of this practise-led research, the source material is the text rather than the visual. My application of knowledge and experience in writing to traditional film is valid for this creative work but by interpreting the imagery after listening to the narrator tell each story. According to author Tony Thomas, there are a specific number of ways in which music serves the screen:³¹

1. Create an atmosphere of time and place
2. Underline psychological refinements
3. Serve as a neutral background filler
4. Create a sense of continuity
5. Enhance theatrics
6. Voice the internal feelings of a character
7. Create a mood

Each piece of my folio work has a common thread of incorporating musical instrumentation which is then interwoven with the voice and sound design. The most prominent instruments that have been selected are piano and strings. These are used in a film music scoring context to bring some emotional quality and atmosphere to the stories. The use of music in film presents an argument that music can contain a narrative, but this is faced with the dilemma that music is abstract and therefore has no meaning. Leonard Bernstein and many others argue that the expressive power of music is uniquely different from the meaning of

³⁰ Thomas, Tony *Film Score: The View from the Podium*, New York, A.S. Barnes, 1979

³¹ Thomas, Tony *Film Score: The Art and Craft of Film Music*, New York, A.S. Barnes, 1991

music. Music is expressive and does not have any literal meaning. It is pure emotion.³²

However, just as emotion has meaning then perhaps so does music and so I propose that the listener is the ‘meaning maker’ of music through memories, associations and most particularly, conditioning to *how* the music makes them feel, giving the listener an opportunity to create a narrative based on these psychological presets. The following table shows the musical approaches and rationale for using them.

<u>Folio Work</u> <u>Title</u>	<u>Line of Text</u>	<u>Creative Response</u>	<u>Intention</u>
The Noises that I Heard	<i>“The noise of the waves splashing on the boat”</i>	Violins playing sul ponticello in mimicry of the ocean sound.	To create a musical accompaniment to the environmental palette.
Stripped of my Human Identity	<i>“I was stripped of my Human Identity”</i>	Strings play atonal chords and pizzicato plucks which microtonally descend.	To remove any tonality from the music as a response to the removal of identity from the narrative and create an unrelenting and unresolved tension.
Numbers and Letters	<i>“numbers and letters for the last three years”</i>	Strings playing in mimicry to the speech.	To magnify the emotional meaning of the words and punctuate the shape of their sounds.
Screaming in the Night	<i>“I hear screaming in a silent night”</i>	Random high register piano notes.	To be interwoven with granular synthesized audio.
Crying on my Pillow	<i>“an ocean of sadness is surrounding me”</i>	Emotive legato cellos play as underscore.	To bring an emotional sensibility to the narrative.

³² Frank M. Lachmann, “Music as a Narrative,” in *Narrative and Meaning: The Foundation of Mind, Creativity and the Psychoanalytic Dialogue* ed. Joseph D. Lichtenberg, Frank M. Lachmann, James L Fossage. London, Routledge, 2017. 89--116.

I Will Rise	<i>"I will rise"</i>	Piano arpeggio played in a slowly rising register.	To musically respond to the theme of the narrative. The constant rise in register of the piano motif is intended to amplify the emotional and literal meaning of the phrase.
Hope	<i>"Hope has no end"</i>	A bowed guitar drone throughout the piece followed by a kick drum moving into a cadential climax.	To create an initial modal environment which has no end and static harmony. The kick drum gives the piece a pulse as it breaks away into tonality towards the end to capture the concept of hope.
A Stingray Story	<i>"my story is your story"</i>	Synthetic water-like bell droplets and piano motif development accompanied by large force emotive string arrangement and percussive beats.	The piano motif is the protagonist's theme and the emotive string arrangement is intended to bring a heart-rending quality to the story. The percussive beats synchronize with the natural flow of the voice.

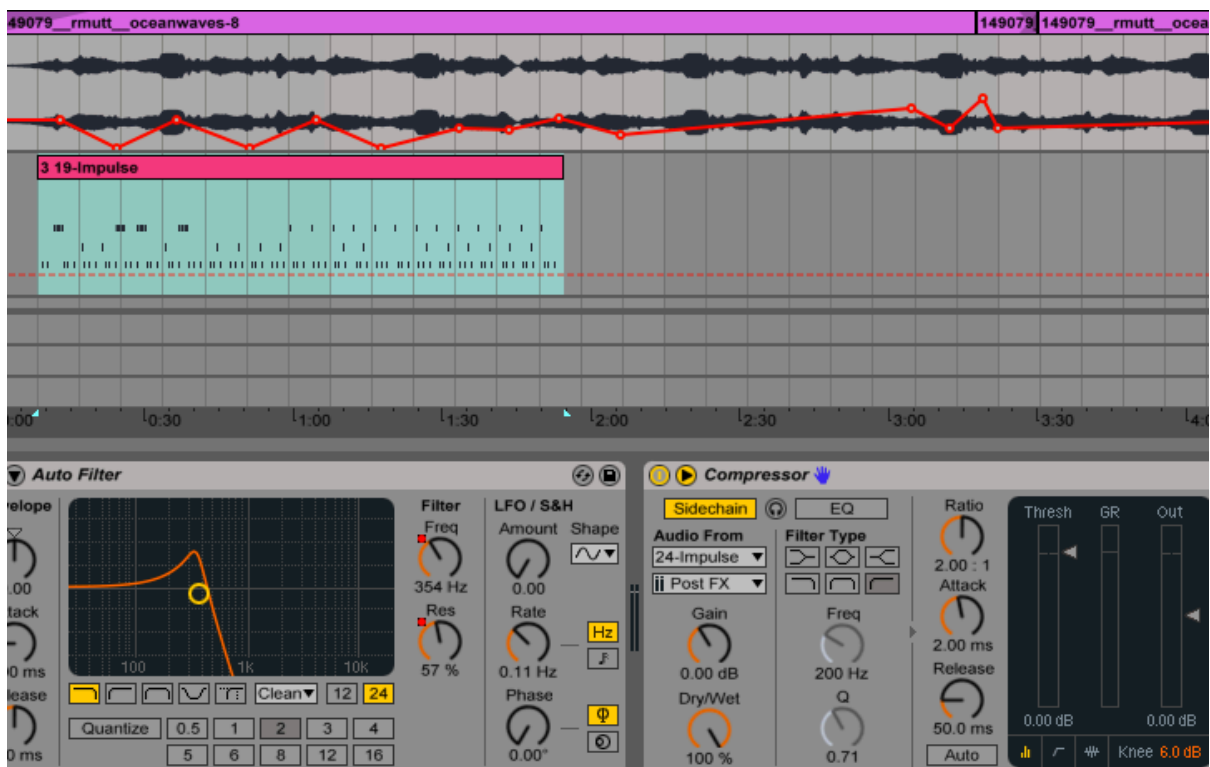
When combined with the visual component, the musical arrangement seeks to provide a more conventional soundtrack to the film. However, the narration still exists in the foreground and the environmental sound design still supports the narrative. The relationship between the instrumental music and the sound design can work in parallel motion and at other times in oblique motion. As mentioned in the previous chapter, certain works such as *Folio Work No. 3, Numbers and Letters* features the instrumental music as mimicry, pulling it into the foreground with the spoken-word foundation. Another example of mimicry is in *Folio Work No.1, The Noises that I Heard* where the string arrangement is emulating the combination of sounds of the ocean and engine noise. This is mirrored with the visuals of the ocean and engine, creating a carefully balanced multisensory hybridization. (Fig. 6)



Fig. 6 (Folio Work No.1, The Noises That I Heard, 1 min, 30 sec)

Folio Work No. 8, A Stingray Story is accompanied by a film featuring choreographed characters set against imageries of nature, specifically the ocean, to which the character fades in and out of focus. The story describes a mining company trying to infiltrate the land and ocean of the indigenous people of Arnhem Land and their campaign to stop offshore mining. The words create an environment that places the listener on a shoreline or partially submerged in water. The music is intended to represent the environment being described by using a combination of synthesis and manipulated instrumentation to create a synthetic soundscape resembling an underwater atmosphere. This is achieved by compressing a sine wave synth signal and applying an audio filter to muffle the frequency. A compressor plugin is then side-chained to a muted pulse of random beat hits to create a rumbling effect much like the distorted bubbling effects one would hear under the surface of the water (Fig. 7)

Fig. 7 (Folio Work No. 8 *A Stingray Story* sequencer view at 2 min, 14 sec)



This technique of creating a synthetic soundscape is borrowed from the methods of composition in modern video game music. The role-playing element of digital gaming requires for the player to immerse themselves in the experience and it's this combination of background music (underscore) and the sound design that plays a significant role in achieving this.³³ Video game audio aims to combine usability with presence and immersion in the fictional game world. The overall soundscape contributes to a sense of presence and immersion in a game by creating an illusion of the game world as an actual space.³⁴ The basis of *A Stingray Story* and creating an immersive environment borrows from video game soundscape aesthetics but relies on the text as narrative to contextualize the listening experience. The text and soundscape are then combined with the visual accompaniment of underwater camera footage and crashing of waves on a shoreline to provide the audience with an audio/visual experience. The abstractness of the music, unrecognizable sounds and movements of the character are contextualized by creating a visually recognizable

³³ Karen Collins, *Game Sound: An Introduction to the History, Theory and Practise of Video Game Music and Sound Design* (MIT Press, 2008)

³⁴ Kristine Jorgensen, "Audio and Gameplay: An analysis of PvP Battlegrounds in World of Warcraft. *Game Studies* 8." Retrieved from <http://gamestudies.org/0802/articles/jorgensen>

underwater environment for the audience to associate with the musical soundscape and spoken story. (Fig. 8)



Fig. 8 (*Folio Work No. 8, A Stingray Story*, still at 4min, 45 secs)

My emotionally conditioned association to sweeping string arrangements and piano motifs in *A Stingray Story* were influenced by the large force orchestrations composed by Steven Price in the *Our Planet* television series, featuring similar narrational descriptions from David Attenborough. Price states that “while scoring *Our Planet* I had to carefully orchestrate the music to fit with Attenborough’s narration and choose specific orchestral colours and frequency ranges to avoid collision with the voice.”³⁵ As the creator of *A Stingray Story*, I was inspired to create an emotive piano and string arrangement that I felt reflected the environmental elements described in the story and the complimentary visual accompaniment which were reminiscent of my memories and emotional response to the *Our Planet* television series.

The visuals in *A Stingray Story* also feature a lot of facial close ups of the eyes. The voice in the audio then becomes the voice of the character and creates a protagonist within the story and sees a visual response which focuses on the bodies of characters and crashing

³⁵ *Score: The Podcast* – Interview with Steven Price, March, 2019

waves moving in and out of sync under a moon. This is intended to serve as a metaphor as a 'vessel to carry the message from the ancestors' which is subjective but the abstract nature of the imagery is contextualized by the spoken voice and assists in inviting the listener/viewer into the immersive experience. (Fig. 9)



Fig. 9 (*Folio Work No. 8 A Stingray Story*, still at 8 min, 9 secs)

Another work to mention is *Folio Work No. 7, Hope*. Firstly, the text '*Hope has no end, it begins like a new day*' sets the tone for the imagery of dawn. The sonic intertextuality of an endless drone on a bowed guitar and pulsing synth is meant to create a vast, open environment for the opening recitation of the text. The tonal language of the piece is built on modality and remains static in order to coincide with the visual colour palette. The progression of the piece is guided by the evolution of the poem – *Hope brings peace, it travels a long way*'. The music then introduces a pulse and the imagery of land, travel and movement becomes more frequent. It's at this moment that the narrational hierarchy shifts as the voice becomes a granulated instrumental layer and the music transforms into a cadential harmonic climax. This dynamic contour is matched by the film footage hybridizing with the introduction of animations associated with hope, connection and nature. The voice re-enters '*Hope full of joy, hope to enjoy. Without end.*' It's this closing line that ironically ends the piece. (Fig. 10)



Fig. 10, (*Folio Work No. 7, Hope*, still at 1 min, 45 secs)

So how can a sonic intertextuality effect the audiovisual experience? Another noteworthy example that explores an answer to this question is *Modell5* (1994) by the Austrian duo aptly named 'Granular Synthesis' comprising of sound composer Kurt Hentschlagel and visual artist Ulf Langheinrich. They explain that *Modell5* is an installation in which the face of Japanese performer Akemi Takeya is subject to drastic time-based interventions that create a cyborg like hybrid between human and machine. Using a technique derived from the principles of the compositional technique granular synthesis but applied to the rather fat grains of single video frames (visual content and sound), *Modell5* manages to evoke an intertextual narrative from a few expressions on the face of the performer, resulting in a frenzied exploration of the alter ego within touching distance.³⁶ (Fig. 11)

³⁶ Kurt Hentschlagel & Ulf Langheinrich (Granular Synthesis) - "Modell5", (1994) Retrieved from <http://www.epidemic.net/en/art/granularsynthesis/proj/modell5.html>



Fig. 11 (Granular Synthesis – Model5, still)

The narrative of *Folio Work No.2, Stripped of My Human Identity* tells the story of having your name taken away and being labeled a number while being detained in offshore detention. The creative decisions that were made to create this psychological environment involved a combination of granular synthesis on the voice against a microtonal/atonal instrumental foundation, interwoven with abstract samples of obtrusive sounds in an attempt at removing any kind of harmonic identity with the absence of a tonal centre. The granulation of the voice echoes the work of Hentschlagel and Langheinrich in brief fragments. When this combination of sounds is juxtaposed against the imagery of a character by using similar granulation and glitch effects on the footage, it seems to create a symmetrical rhythmic connectivity. It is this that's intended to produce a jarring and confronting audio/visual marriage to enhance the intensity and anxiety of the dramatic story. (Fig. 12)



Fig. 12 (Folio work No. 2 Stripped of my Identity, still at 2 mins, 50 secs)

The techniques of Hentschlagel and Langheinrich have also been adopted in the creation of my work on *Folio Work No. 4, Screaming in the Night* in a much more direct way. The granulation on both audio and visual fabric, when experienced in tandem creates a mechanical machine – screaming in between each line of text. The huge face on screen borrows from the *Modell5* concept and can bring a new perspective to the idea when re-contextualized with a concrete narrative. (Fig. 13)



Fig. 13 (Folio work No. 4 Screaming in the Night, still at 20 secs)

Folio Work No. 5, Crying on my Pillow juxtaposes a hybrid of footage and animation featuring the country's flag and middle - class Australian characters behaving gluttonously against the spoken word narrative *'Day and night will pass, an ocean of sadness is surrounding me. Distress and tears become my daily work. Flooding my pillow with painful memories'*. I discovered that the visual narrative distracts from the spoken narrative and creates unintended connections in the work. The narrator is expressing anguish, trapped in their own depression but when pitted against the imagery of grotesque Australian citizens, it beckons for an empathetic connection to the narrator and creates an intertextuality between the two narratives. The sonic experience suggests a sleepless night, featuring cricket purrs, a ticking clock and *'an ocean of sadness'* soundscape. This is coupled with the spoken narrative which places the character in a bedroom, suffering from depression and insomnia. The closing line of text *'How did I get to this place? 'I am still blaming myself because it is me now who lives in a tiny piece of hope. That is what they want a girl like me to live in. Sooner or later they want her to return to the horror she came from.'* suggests the will to escape isolation and access paradise. The visuals present the reality of this paradise and mock the narrative with lurid behaviour and unsettling imagery. The dilemma is that the work becomes a subjective experience in that a clear narrative is presented by the spoken text and sound design but when performed with a distractive visual component, it arguably creates a different meaning to the story. (Fig. 14)

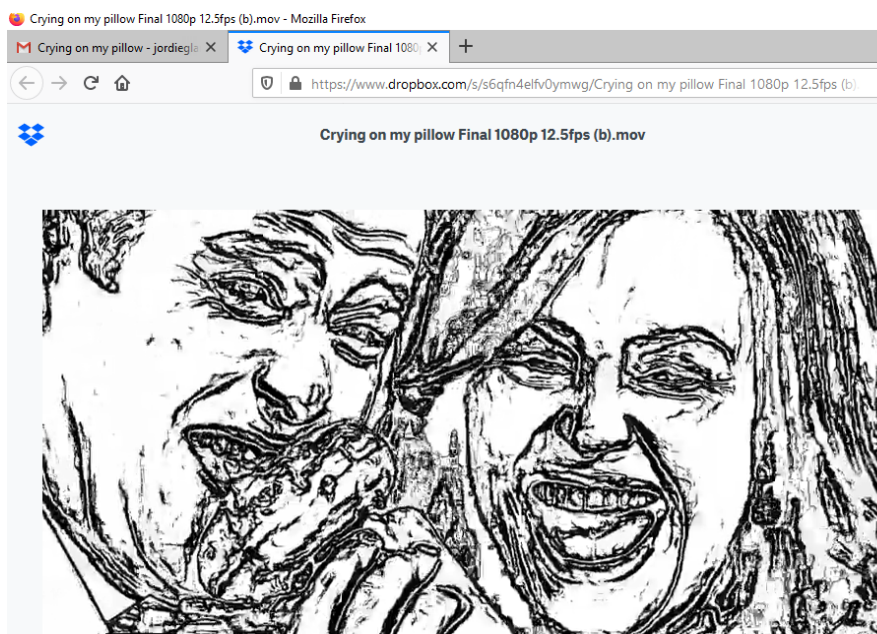


Fig. 14 (*Folio Work No. 5, Crying on My Pillow*, still at 4min, 45 secs)

The visual component to each folio work was created in response to a first-draft spoken-text/sound design foundation. After the first draft of visuals were created and juxtaposed with the audio, a collaborative to-and-fro exchange ensued where edited hit-points and rhythmic organisations were tweaked to produce the final results of the desired audio/visual marriage. This method of working is contrary to the more common ways of scoring to film where the visual content needs to exist as the source material to respond to from the beginning. The method of working in parallel fashion with each filmmaker/ animator allows for a co-operative creative response in tandem. The narrative led the creative approaches of sound-making and visual media design and the interaction between the two practises relied upon using rhythm as the glue. The rhythm of the vocal and environmental sound design placement and granular synthesis creates a glitched and fragmented sonic fabric, giving the creator of the visuals an initial template for editing. Their elaborations on these creative decisions could then be recomposed by the sound-maker for further enhancement of the narrative and hyperactivity of the multisensory experience.

Conclusion

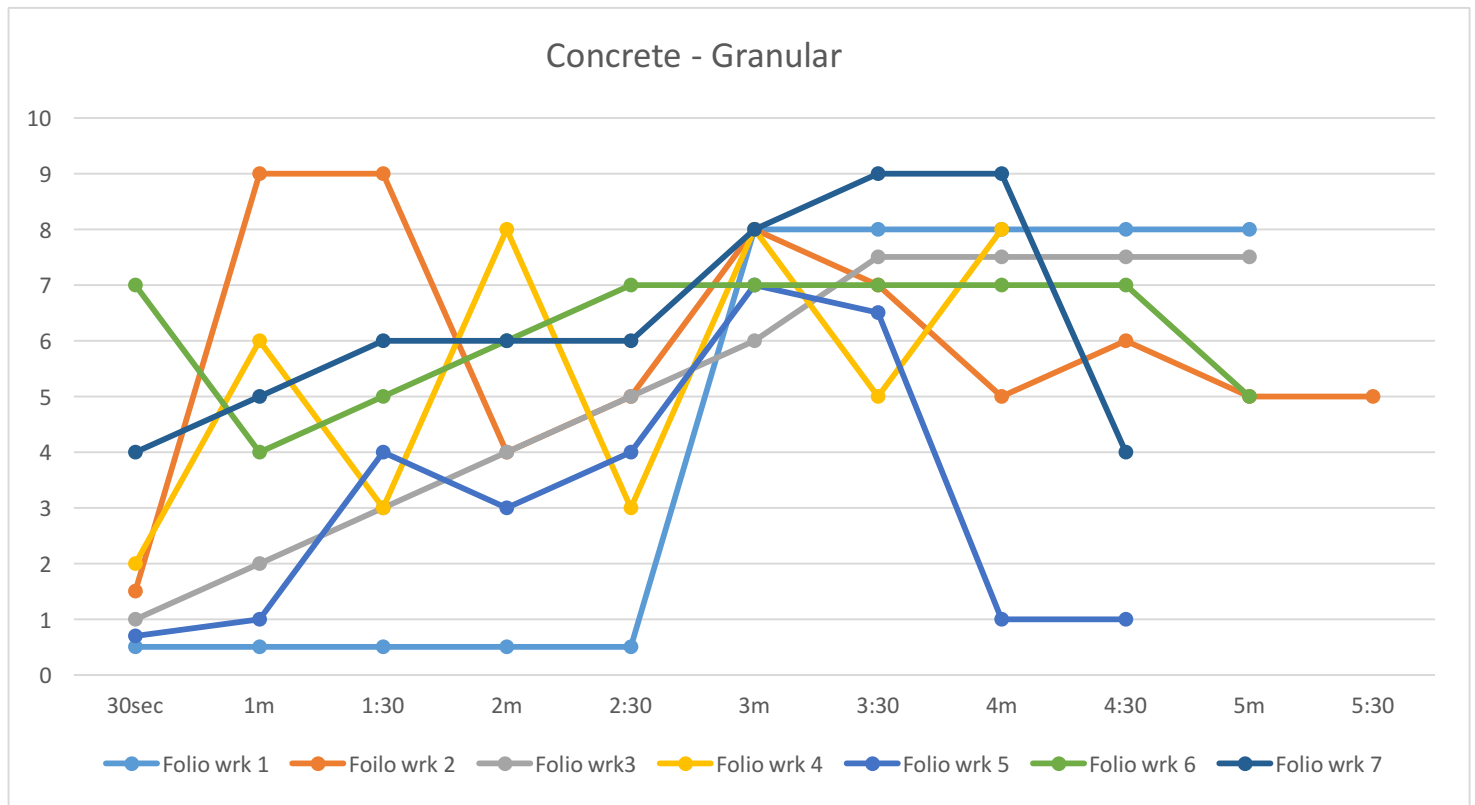
The outcomes of this practice-led research have helped me to understand the relationship between the spoken-word narrative, accompanying sound/music and visual media in a non-conventional context. In the traditional sense of filmmaking, these three elements are what make the anatomy of the conventional narrative-driven cinematic experience. The story begins as a text (script) and is spoken as dialogue and filmed from a visual storyboard. It is then usually edited and scored with music as a final element to assist the narrative to be released as the final product. My creative experiments led me to use the spoken-word story as the leading vessel to present the narrative. This provided the viewer clear context and meaning for the story. As the sound-maker, my knowledge of this context then influenced the shape of each composition. The creative response to the narrative was to source recognizable environmental sounds that were associated with the descriptive surroundings of the storyteller to encourage the listener into an immersive sonic environment. The results revealed that the unaltered recorded samples of the voice alone, provided a clear narrative by combining it with environmental sounds associated with each story. I was able to enhance these stories by incorporating the natural, unaltered sounds of the environment and preserve the human identity of the narrators through these organic soundscapes and concrete narratives.

On a micro level, each work presented a vocal statement, triggering a creative response using a technique mentioned in each chapter. The intention behind using primary organic sounds was to organize a sonic environment associated with the narrative. Next was to edit the spoken voice according to rhythmic phrasing and melodic contour to magnify specific words through rhythmic repetition and emphasize the sonic identity of the narrator. The incorporation of the recitative text into each work contextualized the stories but it was using concepts trialed by composers such as Steve Reich that enhanced the immersive experience. The focus on rhythm, rhyme and repetition of specific words which were important to the stories, were chosen to reinforce their qualities and magnify their meaning and emotional power. Editing the recorded voice into separate phrases and single words

allowed the freedom to place each within the composition. The percussive placement of certain phrases at key moments within each piece was integral to maximize their impact and draw a focus onto them to control the contour and dynamic of the narrative. This was sometimes unnecessary due to the natural rhyme and rhythmic flow of poetry within certain works and posed a problem when using the unedited voice due to the restrictions of composing ideas around it. However, the less control meant that the creative responses revolved around the tempo and rhythm of the natural delivery of the raw recording. This resulted in a truly organic composition in service to the sonic identity of the vocal performance in its natural form.

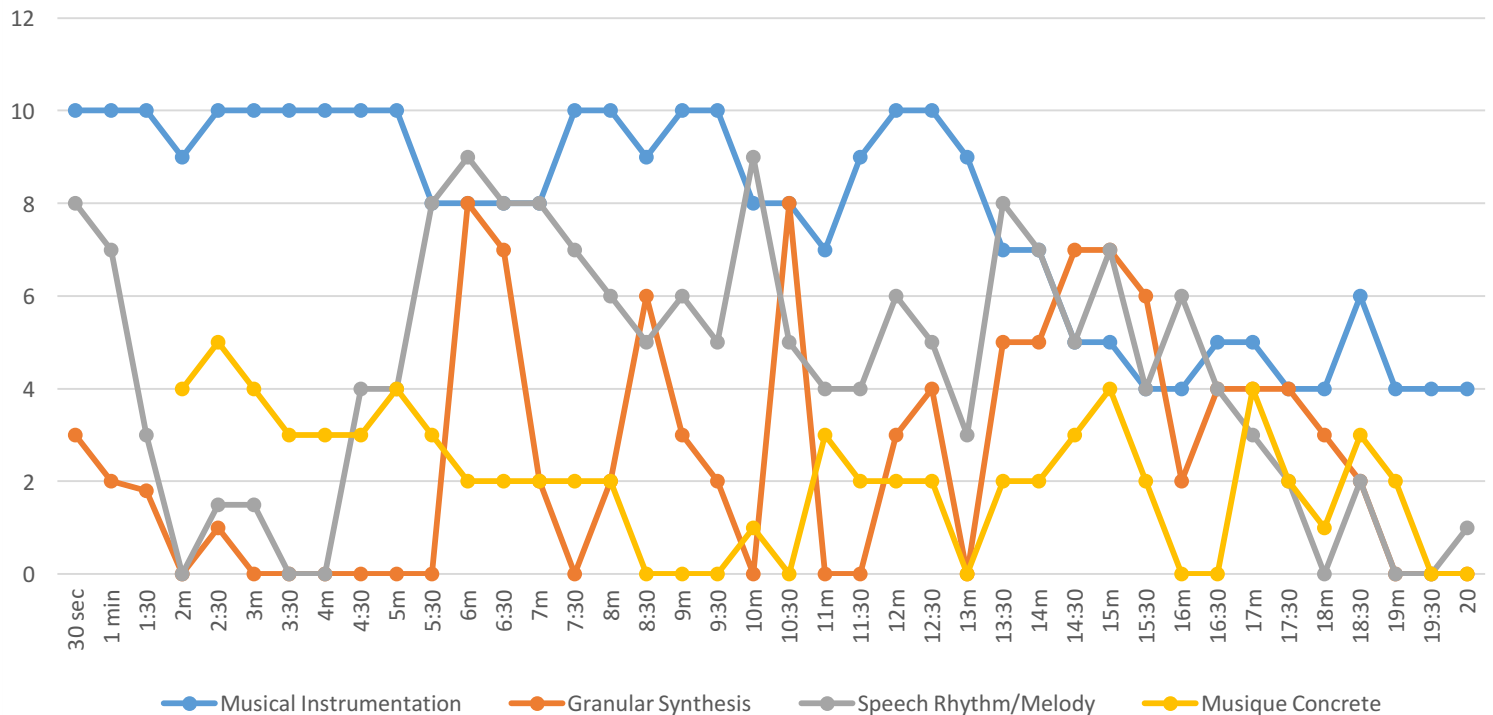
In contrast to one side of the spectrum on granting these voices a sonic identity to both the voice and environment, I was able to use granular synthesis to destroy it. As each story developed, each narrator talked about losing identity, losing their land and becoming isolated. Whilst there may have been a variety of compositional techniques to represent these concepts, my decision to use granular synthesis was based on the technical process that it involved on the raw sampled sounds. Granular synthesis as a process relies on the deconstruction and reconstruction of sampled audio. The organic sampled audio I had as my foundational material was the recorded voice and environmental sound sources. My intention was to destroy the recognizability of these sound sources to de-humanize the voice and re-create an abstract sonic environment for the listener to become immersed. This transformation between a concrete human identity and sonic environment into a malfunctioning, unhuman voice and foreign landscape was an attempt to creatively represent the descriptions of identity theft and hopelessness in each story. Certain environmental sounds mentioned in the stories were amplified through the sprayed and screeched micro-grain sound streams applied on specific spoken words to underline their meaning. Each story initially existed in a concrete sonic environment to invite the listener into an easily recognizable immersive world, in context. As the compositional craft leaned into morphing this concrete world into an abstract, granular soundscape, the immersive world was transformed into a sonic territory to coincide with the environmental, emotional and psychological undertones of each story.

The graph below highlights the contour of organic concrete sound design to abstract granular soundscapes within each work, 1 being concrete and 10 being granular across the time of each individual piece.



The pattern that emerges is that each work begins in a realm of recognizable environmental sounds and/or a natural human voice to give the listener context. Each piece then has a similar climax of granulation and audio processing around the 3-minute mark. There are obvious spikes of granular flirtation in some pieces, but they all share the same contour of statement of context through the voice or concrete music before transforming through audio manipulation, granulation and abstraction. Each piece would then also calm down to some extent and return into a somewhat recognizable sonic territory with a concrete vocal or natural sounding exit. Note that *Folio Work No. 8, A Stingray Story* has been deliberately left out due to its length. The chart on the following page offers a closer look at it as a stand-alone graph and presents a more detailed contour of a specific piece from the entire body of work.

A Stingray Story - Contour of Techniques

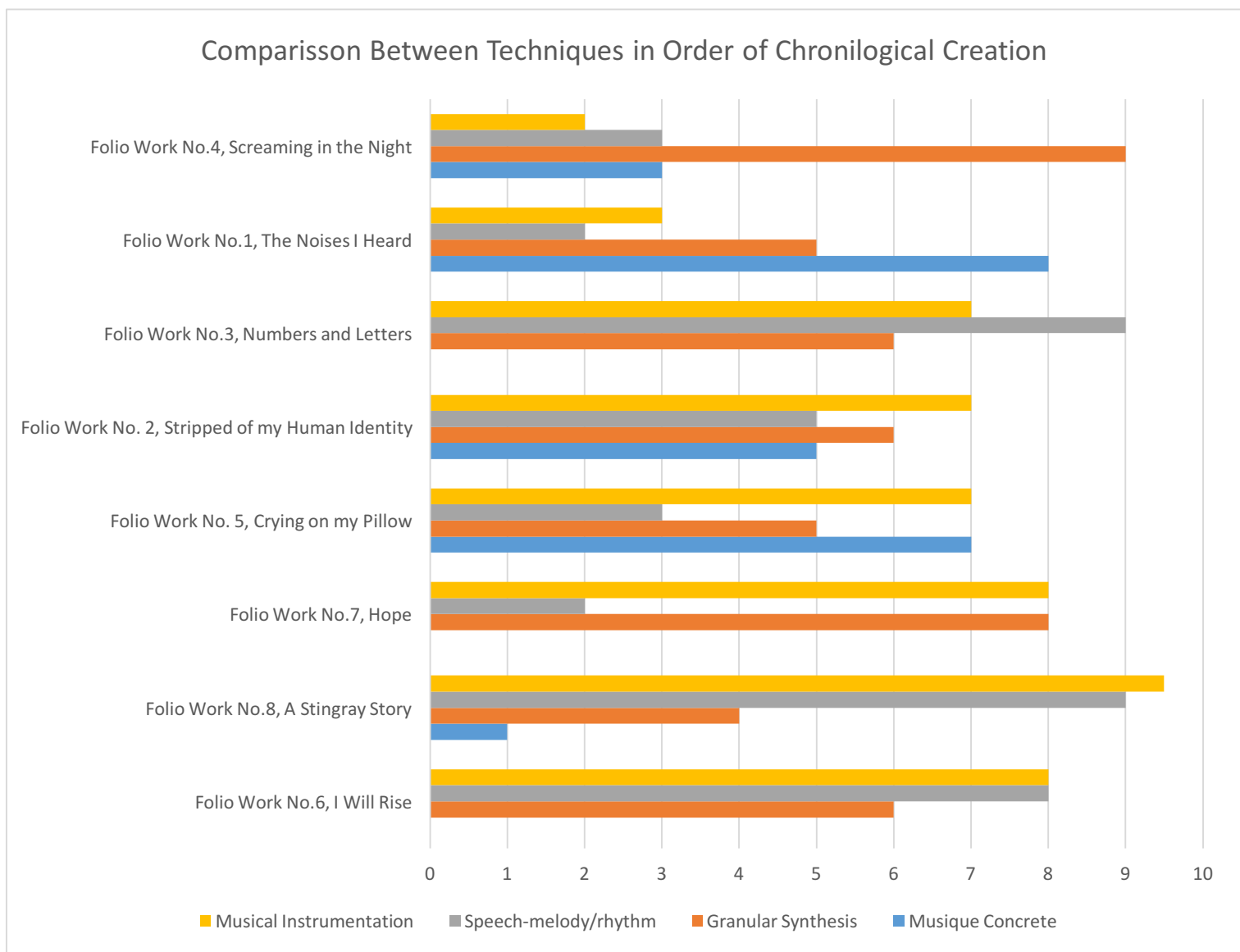


As the graph shows, *Folio Work No. 8, A Stingray Story* features heavy usage of incorporating musical instrumentation that is interwoven into the other creative techniques. It indicates that the other techniques were not at the forefront of use for enhancing the narrative. It also shows that there is no concrete/granular arch like in the other works and presents no obvious peak as a result of being overshadowed by the heavy use of instrumentation.

The additional layers of musical instrumentation were intended to merge the other elements into a more immersive soundtrack but resulted in becoming a decorative element which borrowed from the aesthetics of film music composition. While this may have given a more cinematic and emotional quality to each work, its usefulness wasn't as important to developing the narrative and existed purely as a conventional assistant to the voice and sonic environment. The use of piano and strings in certain works provided a dark and delicate musical undercurrent to support the narrative but lacked the ability to portray the

sonic identity of the voice or environment. However, the application of mimicry to the sampled voice such as in *Folio Work 3, Numbers and Letters* was the closest result in using it as a tool to amplify the melodic contour of the voice, thereby assisting the listener to focus on the vocal phrase for its shape and emotional meaning.

The final graph below highlights, on a scale of 1-10, the amount each creative technique was used in each work in order of when they were chronologically created (from top to bottom) to compare how certain approaches became more frequently used based on the effective results as the body of work developed.



The chart shows that the incorporation of musical instrumentation became more frequent as I progressed with the body of work. There was initially a preference for using granular

synthesis and concrete music but with each new work, there presented different creative responses to each story. This analysis points to some balance between each technique, indicating a collective approach to enhance the narrative of the overall body of work. The hierarchy of the creative process was narrative, sound then visuals as an initial foundation for every piece. The voice delivered an objective, concrete story to serve as a basis for creative response in both sound-making and visual media. On a primary level, the results saw all approaches aiming at representing the narrative as clearly as possible to create a literal translation of each story for the listener/viewer to experience. However, the more rhythmic glitches and granulation that unraveled in the sonic realm, the more the visual media mirrored these directions. The visual component was originally intended to ground the abstractness of the surrogate soundscape design and provide a crutch for the audience to lean on during the audiovisual experience at key moments but this visual stimulus gave the listener/viewer an opportunity to find an intertextual meaning within each story as the imagery sometimes followed the narrative in oblique motion and at other times, in parallel motion. This created the dilemma of subjectivity of the narrative, giving the audience authority to re-contextualize the meaning of each story. It's this intertextuality that could also have provided a new dimension to the original narrative, thus solidifying my intentions of creating a multisensory storytelling experience.

The results of this research revealed that the creative hierarchy of a spoken-word narrative, soundscape design and visual accompaniment created a hyperactive multisensory experience in the technical and creative sense but the participation of the listener/viewer is relied upon for 'meaning' in the transformation of the narrative. However, due to the objectivity of the concrete spoken-word narrative presented during the audiovisual experience, the listener/viewer is given knowledge of the context of each story and can therefore share this perspective with the creator of the work. From this study of practice-led research, I have discovered that the creative response of the sound-maker is influenced by an attraction to keywords that represent particular concrete sounds on a primary level. This is made clear in my use of concrete music and the association between words and sounds. On a secondary level, this dives deeper into exploring sounds that are transformed from their source material into granular soundscapes.

The relationship between linear presentation of folio works coincides with the concrete/ granular continuum in that the emotional spectrum ranks from hopelessness and loss to hopefulness and optimism. The concrete/abstract continuum has succeeded in conceptually reinforcing this in reverse order on a micro level by preserving human identity through the natural voice and concrete sounds and subsequently destroying and de-humanizing it through granular synthesis and glitch techniques. The editing of the visual component compliments this and serves to the placement of the vocal phrases and granular fabric. This research opens the door to new possibilities of narrative-driven multimedia, offering new explorations into the transformation of narrative by understanding how to control the relationship between the three elements of spoken-word narrative, sound design and visual media.

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Credits

1. The Noises That I Heard

Jordan Gilmour – Composer

Abdul Aziz Muhamat – Writer and Narrator

Krystal Schultheiss – Motion Graphics Designer

2. Stripped of My Human Identity

Hani Abdile – Writer and Narrator

Eddie Diamandi – Visual Artist

Jordan Gilmour – Composer

Lerato Masiyane – Choreographer and Dancer

Munjed Al Muderis – Writer and Narrator

Abdul Aziz Muhamat – Writer and Narrator

3. Numbers and Letters

Eddie Diamandi – Visual Artist

Jordan Gilmour – Composer

Lerato Masiyane – Choreographer and Dancer

Abdul Aziz Muhamat – Writer and Narrator

4. Crying on My Pillow

Hani Abdile - Writer

Jordan Gilmour – Composer and Narrator

Christopher Lichti – Visual Artist

5. Screaming in the Night

Hani Abdile - Writer

Jordan Gilmour – Composer, Narrator and Visual Artist

Rheannan Port – Choreographer and Dancer

6. I Will Rise

Hani Abdile – Writer and Narrator

Lauren Beck – Visual Artist

Jordan Gilmour - Composer

Lerato Masiyane – Choreographer and Dancer

7. Hope

Hani Abdile – Writer

Jordan Gilmour – Composer and Narrator

George Ironside – Visual Artist

8. A Stingray Story

Alice Eather – Writer and Narrator

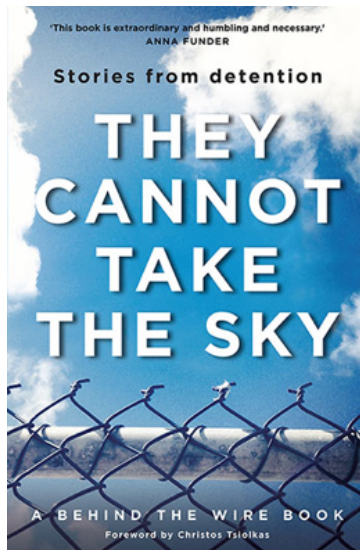
Drewe Clarke – Motion Graphics Designer

Jordan Gilmour – Composer and Visual Artist

Shermaine Heng – Choreographer and Dancer

Rheannan Port – Choreographer and Dancer

Transcripts taken from –



They Cannot Take the Sky Published by Allen and Unwin, 2017

Behind the Wire is an award-winning oral history organisation. It works with men, women and children who have sought asylum in our community and who have experienced mandatory immigration detention in Australia, Papua New Guinea or Nauru. Its projects include a book, audio book, podcast, museum exhibition, listening parties, and photographic portraits. For more information, see:

www.behindthewire.org.au



The Messenger (podcast) produced by The Wheeler Centre, 2019.

From Behind the Wire and the Wheeler Centre, *The Messenger* brings you into the Australian immigration detention centre on Manus Island – and reveals, in intimate detail, one man's experience of what it's like to flee tragedy and seek asylum by boat.

I Will Rise Published by Writing Through Fences, 2016.

I WILL RISE



Hani is an incredibly brave writer. This book is a cathartic journey, purging her hardship through the creation of beauty. Hani throughout the pain of her experiences has kept hope and joy alive through her poetry. From Somalia to Christmas Island detention to Sydney, the theme of Hani's challenging life has been and still is "I Will Rise." The poems are full of passion, emotion and intellectual depth. The kind of passion that tears at the reader/listener and forces us to question our own role in keeping prolific artists like this locked away from Australian shores. The richness of her language and the vividness of her imagery signals the beginnings of a great writer. Keep watching this poet." - Miles Merrill Word Travels.

Appendix

Source Material Texts:

1. The Noises That I Heard – Abdul Aziz Muhamet

Well I still remember the noises that I heard from my trip on the boats.

Honestly, there were only three types of noises I can picture in my head.

Which is number one, the noise of the engine.

And then the second is the noise of the waves splashing on the boats and the third noise I can remember is going through the water like you're cutting something with a sharp thing.

When I came here, I was twenty years old and now I'm twenty-five.

The first time I fled Indonesia our boat sank. I lost five of my friends. I still see their faces everyday but I just trying to figure out what happened to these people.

I had been arrested by Indonesian police and they were trying to deport me back to Sedan. I made it to Christmas Island. The day when we were removed from Australia from Christmas Island to Darwin, from Darwin to Papua New Guinea, I was not even shocked, I was terrified.

I was thinking about home...how I'm going to see my family again.

2. Stripped of My Human Identity – Munjed Al Muderis

It was like hell on earth.

After arriving to Australia on a boat, I was put in Curtin detention centre in North-Western Australia. The first thing that happened to me in the detention centre, I was stripped of my human identity.

Living on Christmas Island was also a challenge because your own identity was changed into numbers. Immigration will give you a particular number.

I was marked with a permanent marker on my shoulder with a number. My name was taken away from me and I was given the number ninety-two as a new name for the rest of the time I spent in detention centre.

And at the end of the day that is your name and you can't change it.

Three years I never heard someone call me my name. I been called with numbers and letters - QUA002.

My parents they sacrificed for me to have this name, not to have the boat number.

3. Numbers and Letters – Abdul Aziz Muhamet

Numbers and letters, three letters and three numbers for the last three years

4. Crying on My Pillow – Hani Abdile

*Day and night will pass.
An ocean of sadness is surrounding me.
Distress and tears become my daily work
Flooding a pillow with painful memories.*

*Been here for a while now.
I am still crying on my pillow.*

*I cannot move left or right.
My room has turned into my grave.
Only my pillow knows
What happens after I lay my head down.*

*Late in the night
My eyes will start calling,
Silent tears rolling
Until tiredness knocks me out.*

*Still only my pillow knows
Because my diary is hidden under it.*

*How did I get to this place?
I am still blaming myself
Because it is me now
Who lives in a tiny piece of hope.*

That is what they want a girl like me to live in.

*Sooner or later they want her to return
To the horror she came from.*

*Now I feel alone in the world.
Crying on my pillow.*

5. Screaming in the Night – Hani Abdile

I hear screaming within a silent night.

The one that you can hear but can't see.

The one that you know is a human voice but can't help.

The one that you feel is suffering but can't share their pain.

You hear their steps but you are waiting for the time

They appear

To talk

To be heard and be helped.

They are still screaming.

It sounds like a storm on a summer night.

Their world is dark and everyone around them

Pretends to be blind or deaf to the reality.

They talk carefully when they tell their awful past.

This is their story.

It's part of their history.

This is what is worthy to write:

Screaming.

Screaming.

6. I Will Rise – Hani Abdile

*You now lock me in detention and damage my hope but that is like dust
and one day I will rise.*

You may avoid my sadness and send me to Manus but one day I will rise.

You may hide the reality and break my heart but one day I will rise.

Why can't you help me?

I am a female underage who needs assistance from you.

*You may send me to other countries and shoot me with your words
but one day I will rise.*

You may punish me by saying lies but one day I will rise.

*You may kill me with your hateful action but that is like air
and one day I will rise.*

*You may never care about my awful past and enjoy my tears
but one day I will rise.*

*I may have bad memories rooted in pain
but one day I will rise.*

*I may have left a fear-filled life full of horror
but one day I will rise.*

Does my mind upset you so full of thoughts?

I am an asylum seeker who seeks freedom.

I don't have anywhere else to go.

*Does it come as a surprise to you that no matter what you have done to me I will forgive
you?*

*Wherever you send me as long as I see the sun rise
and the moon comes up*

I will rise, I will rise, I will rise.

7. Hope – Hani Abdile

Hope has no end.

It begins like a new day,

Stands fast and sure

For me and you.

Continues forever.

Hope for the hopeless.

Hope for the lost.

Hope brings peace.

It travels a long way

For a better tomorrow,

To find the right thing,

To stay unified together.

Hope full of joy.

Hope to enjoy

Without end.

8. A Stingray Story (My Story is Your Story) – Alice Eather

Djiya wiba yinyirra

Ngana Maningrida yo

Djiya wiba yinyirra

People ask me for my story

but my story is your story

My feet are in the dirt

and the dirt it speaks in dust

and the trees they speak in leaves

like the people speak in trust

and the water speaks in waves

and the dust is in the wind

so the Country covers my skin

and this skin covers this body

*And this body has a message in this chest that carries messages from my ancestors on what
to do against a threat*

And these messages come to me in dreams

and I've collected so many now

they're asking me to speak

People ask me for my story

but I thought my story was your story

When I see a map of Country

I see land, sea and family

When they see a map of Country

they see mining fantasies

When I see the sea-beds

I see sacred sites

When they see the sea-beds

they see dollar signs

When I see exploration permit 266

I see them trying to reduce my country into three digits

When I see Yirridja and Dhuwa Country

I see everything that is our Moiety

When they see Yirridja and Dhuwa Country

They see the future of the oil and gas industry

When I see the tides rise and fall

Kabalala karapa kakaja

I can read the storms

When they see the tides rise and fall

They just want to find out

what's under it all

It's funny how they want to dig deep

but act so shallow

So I say

Koma!

Ngika!

No!

Saltwater people say

Koma!

Ngika!

No!

Wùnal Clan say

Koma!

Ngika!

No!

People ask me for my story

but my story is your story

When you cry

Don't you cry the ocean?

When you sweat

Don't you sweat the ocean?

When you drink

Don't you drink the rivers and the rain

And when you wash

Don't you wash into that ocean

so the cycle can start again?

When we cry

We cry the ocean

When we sweat

We sweat the ocean

When we drink

We drink the rivers and the rain

and we wash into that ocean

so the cycle can start again.

