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**The Performer/Curator: Expanding the Parameters of
Artistic Expression and Creativity in a Concert**

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of

Doctor of Philosophy in Music (Performance)

by creative work and dissertation

March 2022

Melbourne Conservatorium of Music

Faculty of Fine Arts and Music

University of Melbourne

Dedication

To Ian Godfrey,

for teaching a generation of musicians with kindness, selflessness, and wisdom,
and always seeing the person in front him.

Abstract

The focus of this research is the performer/curator, and the search to reimagine the presentation of the musical and extra-musical elements of a concert. Five live concerts, designed and presented using a range of conceptual methods, serve to provide insight into the creative processes of the performer/curator. An examination of the concert frame – the parameters within which a concert is organised and experienced – reveals the factors that most influence concert design and presentation. Identifying these factors gives performers a structured way of recognising their creative freedoms and identifying the aspects of the concert experience they can shape as part of their artistic expression and creativity. The process of using a meta-narrative to guide the curation of the concert frame is shown to expand the performer's potential to create innovative and personal musical experiences and provides a coherent and unifying method to curate a concert.

Declaration

This is to certify that:

- i. the thesis comprises only my original work towards the Doctor of Philosophy in Music (Performance),
- ii. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
- iii. the thesis is 20,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, bibliographies, and appendices.

Joseph Lallo

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the Boonwurung and Wurundjeri people of the Eastern Kulin nation as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which I conducted this research, whose cultural, spiritual, and educational practices have continued across countless generations, and I pay my respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

This research was generously supported by the Australian Commonwealth Government and the University of Melbourne through a Research Training Program Scholarship (Stipend and Fee offset, Application Reference Number: 289617) for which I am extremely grateful.

My research has been supported by so many incredible people without whose guidance, encouragement, and knowledge it would not have been possible. I extend to you all my deepest gratitude and thanks.

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I extend my sincere thanks to Professor Richard Kurth for your trust and support, and for your inspiring vision for the role of music in our lives. To all my colleagues at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, thank you for fostering such an inspiring and creative place to work. I would like to express my gratitude to Peter Neville and the Melbourne Conservatorium New Music Studio for helping my ideas become reality.

To Sue Cole, thank you for being so generous with your time, for your questioning and insight, and for your invaluable help in getting me over the finish line.

To Doctor Zechariah Goh and the Singapore Saxophone Symposium, Mary Lou Jelbart AM and fortyfivedownstairs, the team at Montsalvat, and everyone involved with the Melba Hall Lunch Hour Series, thank you for your incredible support and hard work.

To the amazing team of artists involved in these projects, words cannot express how grateful I am. Thank you to Tahlia Klugman, Momoko Nanri, Wilma Smith, Lin Chien-Kwan, I-An Chen, Katriona Tsyrlin, Tarko Sibbel, Stuart Brownley, Emily Clarke, Nicole Marshall, Al Fane, Harry Potocnik, Laura Smith, and Siobhain Geaney for your collaborations in bringing these concerts to life.

I would like to sincerely thank my dear friends Yelian He and Yasmin Rowe for your incredible musicianship and creative energy; performing with you has been a highlight of my musical life, and I could not have done this without you.

Thank you to all the composers whose music I had the pleasure of performing as part of this research, and to May Lyon, Kate Tempany, Luke Severn, Nicholas Russoniello, Keyna Wilkins, and Ross Edwards, for allowing me the honour of premiering your extraordinary music.

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To Janet, I extend my most heartfelt thanks for your compassionate guidance and wisdom. I am infinitely blessed and owe you so much.

To Luke Severn, thank you for your profound creativity and perspicacity, and for giving me the gift of the 'The Wayfarer'.

To Kate Tempany, thank you for our conversations and for sharing your wisdom, dreams, and ideas with me.

Thank you to Jade Norfolk, for your friendship and creative partnership. I look forward to our next leap into the unknown.

To Briana, the love of my life, thank you for your unwavering support and belief, and for bringing brightness, thoughtfulness, care, and warmth into every day we share.

You are everything.

Preface: Scope of Thesis

This PhD thesis portfolio comprises a written dissertation of 20,000 words, and a creative component consisting of 210 minutes of live concert and studio recordings. The live recordings include concerts that range from the more conventional classical concert experience to the more conceptual. Each concert employs different curatorial methods from the performer. The live recorded concerts and studio recordings are listed below, and performances discussed in this thesis are marked with an asterisk.

***Momentum**

Melba Hall Lunch Hour Concert Series, 26 February 2018.

Featuring Collide: Yelian He (cello) and Yasmin Rowe (piano).

Duration: 37'20"

Audio and Video Recording by David Collins.

Melba Hall, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne, Parkville.

Keyna Wilkins, *Titan Tango*, 2015 (Arranged in 2018 by the composer for Collide)

World Premiere Performance for Alto Saxophone, Cello, Piano. 4'20"

Franz Joseph Haydn, *Piano Trio in D Major*, Hob. XV:16, 1790

Arr. Joseph Lallo for Soprano Saxophone, Cello, Piano. 16'05"

I. Allegro II. Andantino più tosto allegretto III. Vivace assai

Max Bruch, *8 Pieces for Clarinet, Viola and Piano*, Op.83, 1910

Arr. Joseph Lallo for Soprano Saxophone, Cello, Piano. 6'20"

VI. Nachtgesang (Andante con moto)

Nikolai Kapustin, *Duet for Alto Saxophone and Cello*, Op. 99, 1999

Alto Saxophone and Cello. 3'25"

I. Allegretto

Svante Henryson, *Off Pist*, 1996

Soprano Saxophone and Cello. 4'10"

Adam Caird, *Rung*, 2011

Soprano Saxophone, Cello, Piano. 3'00"

***Her Lover's Shadow**

Grant Street Theatre, 22 September 2018.

Featuring Tahlia Klugman and Momoko Nanri (dance and choreography),
Briana Leaman (oboe), Katriona Tsyrlin (violin), Yelian He (cello), Yasmin Rowe (piano),
Tarko Sibbel, Stuart Brownley, and Emily Clarke (saxophone), Al Fane, Harry Potocnik, and
Laura Smith (percussion), and Nicole Marshall (conductor).

Duration: 53'43"

Audio Recording by Alistair McLean, Video Recording by Polyphonic Pictures.

Grant Street Theatre, The University of Melbourne, Southbank.

Paul Stanhope, *Morning Star II*, 1993

Oboe, Soprano Saxophone, Violin, Cello, Piano. 8'14"

Brenton Broadstock, *I touched your glistening tears*, 2000

Soprano Saxophone, Cello, Piano. 8'55"

Tim Dargaville, *Crossing the Borderland*, 2007/8

Soprano Saxophone, Violin, Cello, Piano. 11'50"

May Lyon, *Dash*, 2009, Arr. by Joseph Lallo in 2018

World Premiere Performance for Solo Alto Saxophone. 3'00"

Kate Tempny, *Samudra Manthan, The Churning of the Oceans*, 2018

World Premiere Performance. Saxophone Quartet, Piano, Percussion. 21'33"

Collide

Melba Hall Lunch Hour Concert Series, 20 May 2019.

Featuring Collide: Yelian He (cello) and Yasmin Rowe (piano).

Duration: 26'15"

Audio and Video Recording by David Collins.

Melba Hall, Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne, Parkville.

Francis Poulenc, *Trio for Oboe, Bassoon and Piano, FP 43*, 1926

Arr. Joseph Lallo for Soprano Saxophone, Cello, Piano. 13'15"

I. Presto II. Andante III. Rondo

Nicholas Russoniello, *Dawn Searching*, 2013

Solo Soprano Saxophone. 3'30"

Vincent D'Indy, *Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano, Op. 29*. 1887

Arr. by Joseph Lallo for Alto Saxophone, Cello, Piano. 5'30"

III. Chant Elégiaque (Lent)

Percy Grainger, *Molly on the shore*, 1907

Arr. Joseph Lallo for Soprano Saxophone, Cello, Piano. 4'00"

***Quartet for the End of Time**

Montsalvat, 27 October 2019.

Featuring Wilma Smith (violin), and Collide: Yelian He (cello), Yasmin Rowe (piano).

Duration: 32'34"

Audio and Video Recording by Polyphonic Pictures.

Barn Gallery at Montsalvat, Eltham.

Olivier Messiaen, *Quatuor pour la fin du temps (Quartet for the End of Time)*, 1941

Arr. for Alto Saxophone by Mary Osborne

I. Liturgie de cristal (Crystal liturgy), 2'55"

II. Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps

(Vocalise, for the Angel who announces the end of time), 5'36"

III. Abîme des oiseaux (Abyss of birds), 7'58"

IV. Intermède (Interlude), 1'52"

**V. Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus (Praise to the eternity of Jesus), 7'48"

VI. Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes

(Dance of fury, for the seven trumpets), 6'39"

VII. Fouillis d'arcs-en-ciel, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps

(Tangle of rainbows, for the Angel who announces the end of time), 7'34"

**VII. Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus

(Praise to the immortality of Jesus), 8'03"

** Only the movements featuring saxophone have been counted in the submission recording minutes.

***Duo Obax and Yasmin Rowe Recital at the Singapore Saxophone Symposium**

Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore, 3 August 2019.

Featuring Briana Leaman (oboe) and Yasmin Rowe (piano).

Duration: 19'11''

Audio and Video Recording by the Singapore Saxophone Symposium.

Lee Foundation Theatre, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore.

Nicholas Russoniello, *Werri Dance*, 2018

Soprano Saxophone and Oboe. 3'34''

Luke Severn, *Little Birds of the Night*, 2018

Saxophone, Oboe and Piano. 4'05''

Tim Dargaville, *Three Invisible Dances*, 2015

Soprano Saxophone and Piano. 6'31''

Ross Edwards, *Love Duet*, 2019

Arr. for Alto Saxophone, Oboe and Piano. 5'01''

Our live recording of Luke Severn's 'Little Birds of the Night' in Singapore was later submitted to the Australian Broadcasting Company's (ABC) 2020 Fresh Start Fund,¹ as part of a proposal to extend the piece into a seven-movement work called *and other lines*. The proposal was accepted, and the full recording has been including as part of the creative folio of this PhD.

¹ The Fresh Start Fund supported independent Australian musicians to compose and record new works during the COVID-19 pandemic. More information can be found at <https://www.abc.net.au/events/freshstart/>

‘Paganini Lost’ at the Singapore Saxophone Symposium Showcase Concert

Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore, 4 August 2019.

Featuring Lin Chien-Kwan (Alto Saxophone) and I-An Chen (Piano).

Duration: 9’21”

Audio and Video Recording by the Singapore Saxophone Symposium.

Lee Foundation Theatre, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore.

Jun Nagao, *Paganini Lost*, 2011

Two Alto Saxophones and Piano. 9’21”

Unity

fortyfivedownstairs, 20 January 2021.

Featuring Collide: Yelian He (cello) and Yasmin Rowe (piano).

Duration: 18'13"

Mikhail Glinka, *Trio Pathétique*, 1832

Arr. by Joseph Lallo for Soprano Saxophone, Cello, and Piano. 7'51"

III. Largo IV. Allegro con spirito

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Trio in Eb Major K. 498*, 'Kegelstatt Trio', 1786

Arr. by Joseph Lallo for Soprano Saxophone, Cello, and Piano. 8'15"

III. Allegretto

Darius Milhaud, *Scaramouche*, 1937

Arr. Mary Osborne for Alto Saxophone, Cello, and Piano. 2'07"

III. Brasileira

and other lines, by Luke Severn

ABC Classic

Featuring Briana Leaman (oboe) and Yasmin Rowe (piano).

Duration: 15'57'

Iwaki Auditorium, ABC Southbank, Melbourne, 5 and 6 February 2021.

Producer: Jennifer Mills.

Engineers: Russell Thomson (recording), Alex Stinson (mixing), Virginia Read (mastering).

This project was commissioned by ABC Classic as part of the Fresh Start Fund.

Luke Severn, *and other lines*, 2020

for Soprano Saxophone, Oboe, and Piano.

**I. Little birds of the Night, Soprano Saxophone, Oboe, and Piano. 5'08"

II. The wayfarer, Soprano Saxophone and Piano. 4'10"

III. I met a seer, Soprano Saxophone and Oboe. 2'46"

IV. Places among the stars, Soprano Saxophone, Oboe, and Piano. 4'50"

**V. Should the wide world roll away, Oboe, and Piano. 2'53"

**VI. Yes, I have a thousand tongues, Piano. 3'55"

VII. Unwind my riddle, Soprano Saxophone, Oboe, and Piano. 4'11"

** Only the movements featuring saxophone have been counted in the submission recording minutes.

Total Duration of Audio and Video Recordings for Creative Folio: 212'35"

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Citation Information for Third Party Copyright Material	Location of item in thesis	Permission granted Y/N
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Chapter 1. Introduction and Review of the Literature

In 2014–2015, I worked as the Programming and Artistic Assistant for *SaxOpen*, the 2015 World Saxophone Congress and Festival in Strasbourg. The vision of the Artistic Director, Philippe Geiss, was to fill the city with music and create a festival and congress that was open for anyone to attend. Philippe created a range of unconventional indoor and outdoor public performances throughout the city, including the ‘World Streaming Show’, a multimedia performance that simultaneously connected musicians from around the globe in concert, and *Les Orgues des Sax*, a world-premiere performance for twenty-four saxophones spatialised throughout the thousand-year-old Strasbourg cathedral. These concerts were hugely successful, not only for their innovative designs, but for their creative vision and artistic depth.

Part of my role was to listen to over 650 concert applications, and then assist in selecting and programming 350 of those concerts to take place over four days. This gave me a fascinating overview of saxophone concerts around the world, and the practices of performers when they design and present their performances.

I realised that *SaxOpen* was unique among the world saxophones congresses in that it did not limit participants to conventional classical concerts, and was able to accommodate a variety of different types of performances. Despite this, most applicants continued to create fairly conventional classical concerts, and I wondered to what extent performers, including myself, design and present our concerts this way out of habit. Working for the festival, I saw how concerts are shaped by the institutions, venues, and organisations that present them, and I began to consider how this might consciously or unconsciously influence our artistic processes as performers. Furthermore, I started to question how the design of a classical concert shapes our

creative and expressive parameters as performers, and influences what we share with an audience. If as performers we were to begin to approach concerts differently, what would it look like?

Around the same time, I noticed some museums rearranging their artworks according to themes or narratives rather than by period. In 2014, for example, philosopher Alain de Botton and art historian John Armstrong rehung Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum Museum by themes such as Love and Relationships, Status, and Mortality, rather than by period.¹ Their curation connected the art in personal and subjective ways, which 'framed' the public's experience of the art. In *Art as Therapy*, De Botton and Armstrong implore curators to 'dare to reinvent their spaces so that they can be more than dead libraries for the creations of the past'.² I found this to be a fascinating approach to reimagining an artistic experience steeped in tradition and history and began to wonder what it might look like to apply these curatorial ideas to the classical concert.

Curatorship is most strongly associated with visual arts, with the primary role being to bridge the gap between the art and the viewer. In an effort to engage the viewer effectively with a piece of art, the curator arranges displays of collections, writes or oversees exhibition labels and captions, develops the public image of the exhibition, and decides on the title or name of the exhibition and its theme or subject.³ Positioned between the art, the artist, and the viewer, the curator works to provide as much or as little interpretation as they deem the material to need. In a step further than this, there is a moment where curation becomes an artistic act in and of itself, an approach pioneered by the ground-breaking Swiss visual art curator Harald

¹ 'Art as Therapy Welcomed at the Rijksmuseum,' Phaidon, published April 2014, <https://www.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2014/april/28/art-as-therapy-welcomed-at-the-rijksmuseum/>.

² Alain De Botton and John Armstrong, *Art as Therapy* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2013), 84.

³ Kate Fowle, 'Who Cares? Understanding the Role of the Curator Today,' in *Cautionary Tales: Critical Curating*, eds. Steven Rand and Heather Kouris (New York: apexart, 2007), 12.

Szeemann (1933–2005). Szeemann developed the idea of the ‘great exhibition’, in which often non-chronological and cross-disciplinary works ‘were brought together by a central cross-disciplinary theme’. He sought to create exhibitions that were ‘poems in space’, where the curator is a kind of ‘meta-artist’.⁴ Here, the experience of the art becomes the art of the curator. The possibility of exploring this type of artistic expression in relation to a concert was the catalyst for this research.

In a 2018 article ‘Challenging the Listener: How to Change Trends in Classical Music Programming’, Miguel Ángel Marín describes what concert programmers might learn from the approaches of a museum curator:

The former would do well to imitate the latter in proposing new or unfamiliar ways of engaging with their art, creating thought-provoking and potentially surprising journeys of experience that are not simply ‘enjoyable’ or ‘nice’. The choice of works, the order in which they are presented to the audience, the perspective encouraged and, ultimately, the ‘narrative’ the program tells are aspects that should be as creatively explored by programmers in concert halls as they are already by museum curators.⁵

This approach is just one example of an increasing interest in re-imagining the classical concert design and challenging its associated conventions and behaviours,⁶ many of which have been driven by concern about global trends in declining audiences.⁷ Attempts to address this fall into

⁴ George Alexander and Tristan Sharp, *40 Years: Kaldor Public Arts Projects, 1971 Harald Szeemann* (Sydney: Art Gallery of NSW, 2009), 4–5, https://kaldorartprojects.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/220kaldornotes_szeemann1.pdf.

⁵ Miguel Ángel Marín, ‘Challenging the Listener: How to Change Trends in Classical Music Programming,’ *Resonancias* 22, no. 42 (2018): 124.

⁶ See also Lars Petter Hagen, ‘Introducing Defragmentation - Curating Contemporary Music,’ *On Curating*, no. 44 (2020): 4. https://www.on-curating.org/files/oc/dateiverwaltung/issue-44/PDF_to_Download/Oncurating_44_WEB.pdf.

⁷ John Sloboda, ‘Musicians and Their Live Audiences: Dilemmas and Opportunities,’ *Understanding Audiences Working Paper 3*, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, 1. https://www.gsmd.ac.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Research/UA_Working_paper_Spring_2013.pdf;

four main categories: blending classical music with more popular entertainment (such as cinema or circus), audience education, changes in marketing, and most commonly, changes in concert venue.⁸ As Canadian flautist Marie-Hélène Breault explains in ‘The work of the musician-curator in relation to the “concert scenario”’, these ‘audience-centred’ approaches for new concert formats are ‘geared toward reaching a larger audience, and revitalizing the concert by proposing alternatives to a more traditional mode of presenting musical works.’⁹

Many of these audience-centred concert designs have been built on the assumption that once members of the non-concert-going public actually hear live classical music, they will want to return; that the main barrier to their engagement with classical music is that they either have not yet had the chance to experience it, have only experienced it in the context of the conventional concert, or do not know enough about it to understand or appreciate it. One response to this has been to perform conventional concert programs in new venues, such as bars, pubs, carparks, or alleyways. Whilst concerts in unconventional venues have seemingly helped address some of the concert hall barriers of formality and coldness for some audiences,¹⁰ we have yet to see concerts in pubs or car parks, even if successful, translate into sustainable models of performance.

Such performances run the risk that their novel settings can almost immediately become *passé*. Music curator Markus Fein argues that ‘new concert formats lacking substance can seem like empty, media-inflated hype. For me, [it] is quite clear: the concert of the future will focus on

Marin, ‘Challenging the Listener,’ 115–116.

⁸ Folker Uhde, ‘Concert Design: Form Follows Function,’ in *Classical Concert Studies: A Companion to Contemporary Research and Performance*, ed. Martin Tröndle (New York: Routledge, 2020), 107.

⁹ Marie-Hélène Breault, ‘The Work of the Musician-Curator in Relation to the “Concert Scenario,”’ in *Curating Live Arts: Critical Perspectives, Essays, and Conversations on Theory and Practice*, eds. Dena Davida et al. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2018), 195.

¹⁰ Mark Gotham, ‘First Impressions: On the Programming and Concert Presentation of New Music Today,’ *Tempo (United Kingdom)* 68, no. 267 (2014): 45, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0040298213001320>; Alan S. Brown, ‘Smart Concerts: Orchestras in the Age of Edutainment,’ 2004, 2, www.knightfdn.org.

the intensive musical experience.’¹¹ I worry that if the fundamental motivation for creating a concert experience is to be new, the format can become artistically void, without the scope for replenishment, particularly if the role of the performer and their artistic expression remains focused on the execution of the work.

This thesis describes the search for a different way for classical performers to design and present their concerts, and to change the view that in a classical music concert the performer must ‘devote all their skill and artistic refinement into the work’s realization.’¹² I believe performers are in a unique position to make changes to classical concert design. Instead of creating new concert formats for the sake of novelty, I would argue that as performers we should strive to design concerts that reflect and frame the intensity of our most powerful musical experiences. I use music to make sense of my life, to understand and explore the deepest parts of my psyche, and to connect with world around me, but at times I have felt limited by the norms of how to present these experiences in a concert. For me, classical music concerts have too often been pitched as an intellectual experience rather than an emotional one. I believe re-examining all aspects of the concert might lead to a more productive approach, and allow us to reimagine how we curate components of the concert that are often not explicitly considered as a way of shaping the audience’s aesthetic and emotional experience of the work. To do this, I believe that performers need to reconceptualise their role as not just interpreter of

¹¹ Markus Fein, ‘Musical Curator and Concert Director,’ in Tröndle, *Classical Concert Studies*, 129 (see chap. 1, n.8).

¹² Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann et al., ‘Music Listening in Classical Concerts: Theory, Literature Review, and Research Program,’ *Frontiers in Psychology*, no. 12 (April, 2021): 4, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.638783>. This view has been widely championed in the twentieth century by major figures including Igor Stravinsky, who in lesson six of his *Poetics in Music* describes the performer as a translator of the musical work into sound who occupies the intermediary position between the composer and the audience. See Igor Stravinsky, *Poetics of Music: In the Form of Six Lessons* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), 121–135, <https://doi.org/10.2307/935923>.

the composer's works, but as a curator of the emotional and aesthetic aspects of the concert experience.

1.1 Research Question and Aims

In this thesis, I will, using my own concerts,

1. examine the ways that approaching concert design as curation opens up possibilities for the performer in developing what I term the 'concert frame';
2. articulate the many factors that create the concert frame that can be used in the process of curating a concert.

I use the term concert frame to refer to the parameters within which a concert is organised and experienced – or the parameters that are potentially available to the performer/curator. The idea of the concert frame has been developed from Erving Goffman's pivotal 1974 work *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, which describes how frame analysis can be used to examine how social, environmental, and cultural components of a situation influence subjective experience.¹³ I will suggest that the concert frame has three main factors: administrative, audience, and artistic. I arrived at my conception of the concert frame by reflecting on and analysing the range of considerations I had when designing and presenting the five concerts discussed in this research. A detailed explanation of the concert frame and the factors that define it can be found in Chapter Two below. Each factor affects the overall design and presentation of a concert and influences the experience of both the audience and the performer.

¹³ Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

After I had started my research, I discovered that the term ‘concert frame’ has also been used in the work of Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann et al. In ‘Music Listening in Classical Concerts’, detailing that concert frames ‘suggest specific listening modes (e.g., attentive, non-attentive, analytical, and emotional), listening behaviours (e.g., sitting still vs. gesturing or dancing), or functions attributed to the music (e.g., for its own sake or aesthetic pleasure vs. mood management, atmosphere creation, or social bonding).’¹⁴ The corollary of this is that by making changes to the concert frame, we can change the emotional and aesthetic experience of music.

They go on to suggest that traditionally, the classical concert frame has been designed to direct and accentuate the audience’s sensory focus on the performance in order to heighten their aesthetic experience and enjoyment of the music.¹⁵ Whilst no two concerts are exactly alike, there are patterns in the factors that make the classical concert frame recognisable. In a classical concert venue, performers and audiences follow ‘an unspoken set of rules’.¹⁶ Audiences are expected to sit quietly while the music is being played, not to clap in between movements, and not to eat or drink during the performance.¹⁷ In comparison to other live music events, such as pop, jazz, or rock concerts, classical music concerts usually have only a small amount of verbal interaction between the performers and audience.¹⁸ With their fixed seating facing an often raised stage, the venues are designed to limit movement and noise during the performance.¹⁹ The aim of creating these concert conditions is to allow listeners to devote their full and

¹⁴ Wald-Fuhrmann et al., ‘Music Listening in Classical Concerts,’ 3. See also Christoph Seibert, Jutta Toelle, and Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann, ‘The Classical Concert as an Object of Empirical Aesthetics,’ in Tröndle, *Classical Concert Studies*, 351–60 (see chap. 1, n.8).

¹⁵ Wald-Fuhrmann et al. ‘Music Listening in Classical Concerts,’ 4.

¹⁶ Julia Lurie, ‘Can Concerts in Bars and Cafés Save Classical Music?’, *Mother Jones*, 3 November 2014, <https://www.motherjones.com/media/2014/11/classical-revolution-music/>.

¹⁷ Uhde, ‘Concert Design: Form Follows Function,’ 108; Maggie Faultless and Robin Michael, ‘Purcell and a Pint - Welcome to a New Kind of Classical Concert,’ *The Guardian*, 7 February 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/musicblog/2012/feb/06/classical-music-in-a-pub>.

¹⁸ John Sloboda and Biranda Ford, ‘What Classical Musicians Can Learn from Other Arts about Building Audiences,’ Understanding Audiences Working Paper 2, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London, 2012, 4, https://www.gsmd.ac.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/files/Research/Sloboda-Ford_working_paper_2_01.pdf.

¹⁹ Stephanie E. Pitts, ‘What Makes an Audience? Investigating the Roles and Experiences of Listeners at a Chamber Music Festival,’ *Music and Letters* 86, no. 2 (2005): 257, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ml/gci035>.

uninterrupted attention to the compositions being performed in order to have the most intense experience of them as possible.²⁰ The role of the performer is to act as a medium between the composer and the audience. Consequently, if the performer reconceives of their role as a performer/curator, the concert frame will change.

By looking closely at the factors that constitute the concert frame, I will explore how the performer/curator can develop more creative freedom in a classical concert, and how the performer/curator might design completely new concert experiences. My aim is to demonstrate how curating the concert frame can expand the performer's understanding of the expressive and creative parameters available to them in a concert. I will articulate how performers curate many aspects of their concerts already, and how understanding the factors of a concert frame can inform our artistic decisions. I am not advocating to replace the classical concert format, but rather I would like to create concert experiences that can exist alongside conventional classical music concerts. As performers, we are often drawn to music because of the intense emotional and aesthetic responses it evokes in us; changes to classical concert design should come from our desire to re-imagine how and what we share with an audience. I consider concerts to be frameworks for ideas, and whilst the music we perform may be fixed in notation by the composer, the stories we can tell as performers are not.

While many aspects of the role of the concert curator can already be associated with those of an artistic director, programmer, or dramatist,²¹ I believe there is an opportunity to distinguish the role of a concert curator through the examination and understanding of the concert frame. Concert curation involves seeing the entire concert as the artistic event rather than a series of

²⁰ Martin Tröndle, 'A Concert Theory,' in Tröndle, *Classical Concert Studies*, 16 (see chap. 1, n.8).

²¹ Hagen, 'Introducing Defragmentation - Curating Contemporary Music,' 4.

discrete artistic entities, and the design of the concert experience involves identifying and shaping the factors of the concert frame.

One might be a concert curator without being a performer, and vice versa, but this thesis will focus on the dual role of the performer/curator, i.e., someone who performs in the concert they are curating. For me, the role of the performer/curator is potentially richer because many of my curatorial ideas come to me whilst I am practising and interpreting the score. For example, when practising, I might make associations with colours which can then form part of my lighting design, or gestures that can influence staging or choreography (I will provide examples of this throughout the thesis). Where performers in the classical concert predominantly express themselves through their interpretation of the work, the performer/curator aims to express themselves through the totality of the concert experience. For the performer/curator, the concert is their work of art, and the components of the frame are the materials with which they create.

There is a significant body of research on the concert, and a number of studies have examined the various factors that have contributed to the formation of the classical music concert frame as it is today.

1.2 Literature Review

The history, structure, and conventions associated with the classical concert have been the subject of significant academic study. Michael Forsyth's 1985 book *Buildings for Music: The Architect, the Musician, the Listener from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day* provides a thorough overview of the development of the classical concert in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Western Europe.²²

²² Michael Forsyth, *Buildings for Music: The Architect, the Musician, the Listener from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

In her seminal 1992 work *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music*, Lydia Goehr describes how the beginning of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of the *Werktreue* ideal, the idea that a musical work has a real and true meaning, and led to the work-centred aesthetic of the classical concert and behaviours associated with it.²³ A belief was emerging that the canonic ‘Great Composers’ of genius created superior music. Anna Piotrowska’s 2007 article, ‘Modernist Composers and the Concept of Genius’ describes how the nineteenth century view of the composer as a ‘god-like’ creator/genius elevated music to a new and revered place in society, with instrumental works occupying a particularly ‘sacred’ place because of their ‘ascribed purity’.²⁴

Purpose-built concert halls were being constructed across Western Europe throughout the nineteenth century to house the classical musical experience.²⁵ Martin Tröndle, in ‘A Concert Theory’, argues that the Great Hall in the Vienna Musikverein that opened in 1870 has served as a prototype and standard for many concert halls ever since. Concert halls such as this were designed to direct and magnify the audience’s sensory focus to the music on stage. The stages were raised, the seating fixed, and the audience capacity greatly increased.²⁶ In ‘Why so Serious? How the Classical Concert Took Shape’, music critic and writer Alex Ross explains that during the nineteenth century audiences quietened and program notes helped guide new listeners, as the new middle-class of the post French Revolution did their best to not disturb their newfound place amongst the cultural elite.²⁷

²³ Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), <https://doi.org/10.1093/0198235410.001.0001>.

²⁴ Anna Piotrowska, ‘Modernist Composers and the Concept of Genius,’ *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 38, no. 2 (2007): 229–31.

²⁵ Forsyth, *Buildings for Music*.

²⁶ Tröndle, ‘A Concert Theory,’ 15–18.

²⁷ Alex Ross, ‘Why so Serious? How the Classical Concert Took Shape,’ *The New Yorker*, 2008.

William Weber's ground-breaking book *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* published in 2008 describes the emergence of the 'serious' listener in the mid-nineteenth century: an educated listener who would find sitting through a 'miscellaneous' concert of excerpts from symphonies juxtaposed with popular music insufferable.²⁸

In 'The Discovery of Listening', Gerhard Schulze summarises how the roles of composers, performers, and audiences in the classical concerts nineteenth century were viewed, arguing that 'Composers have access to a firmament of ideas in which all ingenious musical ideas are archived. The good interpreter expresses this idea, and the good listener perceives it.'²⁹

The idea of the classical performer as a medium through which the ideals of the genius composer could be expressed have been discussed by a number of scholars. For example, in 'Music as Text, Music as Performance', Nicholas Cook argues that performing became

a process of reproducing the composer's meaning, for which the essential criterion of success is faithfulness to the composer's intentions, or— in another version that is at the same time more metaphysical and more positivistic— faithfulness to the music itself.³⁰

In their 2012 working paper 'What Classical Musicians Can Learn from Other Arts about Building Audiences', John Sloboda and Biranda Ford address the impact of the values and

²⁸ William Weber, *The Great Transformation of Musical Taste: Concert Programming from Haydn to Brahms* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁹ Gerhard Schulze, 'The Discovery of Listening in the Concert,' in Tröndle, *Classical Concert Studies*, 41 (see chap. 1, n.8).

³⁰ Nicholas Cook, 'Music as Text, Music as Performance,' in Tröndle, *Classical Concert Studies*, 29 (see chap. 1, n.8).

discourse around classical music's focus on the musical work on the performer. As the primary function of a concert was to allow audiences to experience the works of the 'great' composers, 'the performer became a medium, the conduit for the voice of the composer.' Sloboda and Ford note the effect this had on music pedagogy, as the influential Paris Conservatoire developed its curriculum to encourage single instrument study and the pursuit of technical excellence in order to faithfully interpret a composer's work. By the nineteenth century, conservatories throughout the world could be seen as guardians of technical and interpretative musical standards, with the authors adding:

This worked for nineteenth century audiences who were happy to receive canonical works from great composers via technically accomplished performers acting as mediators, according to the relatively narrow parameters of accepted interpretation.³¹

Many of these programming patterns have continued to this day, with a small group of canonic composers featuring prominently. In the 2018 article 'Challenging the Listener: How to Change Trends in Classical Music Programming', Miguel Ángel Marín's published an extensive analysis of 4,700 international classical music concerts program performed between 2010-2015. Marín identified highly predictable programming patterns in classical music concerts. He argues that more emotionally daring and intellectually challenging programs would help to engage larger audiences, and argues that 'the evidence points to the hypothesis that a highly conservative conception of program can be a significant agent in the apparent crisis of the classical concert and audience decline'.³²

³¹ Sloboda and Ford, 'What Classical Musicians Can Learn,' 7–8.

³² Marín, 'Challenging the Listener,' 115–16.

By analysing an extensive range of recent concert programmes alongside practitioner testimonials, Mark Gotham in ‘Coherence in Concert Programming: A View from the U.K.’, determined that most classical and new music concerts are programmed by creating thematic links between the pieces using the following criteria: Geographical, Temporal, Personal, Extra-Musical or Musical. Geographical programs are built around connections between composers, concert location, or subject matter relating to a particular country or area, temporal programming, which is extremely popular, brings together works from a common era, and personal programs are built around connections between composers or performers. Extra-musical themes might include compositions from a movie or ballet, or music that influenced great writers or artists, whilst musical programs mostly draw on stylistic similarities between pieces. Often any one program might fit into multiple categories. These themes provide a framework for how the concert will be communicated to audiences.³³

While there have been many studies examining the historical development of the ‘traditional’ classical concert, scholarly research into concert programming and the rationale behind programming decisions remains limited.³⁴ The few published guides that describe programming techniques for performers essentially reinforce the status quo. In *The Art & Technique of Performance Practice*, performers are advised to program one major work for each of the four currently conceived western music periods: Baroque, Classical, Romantic, Modern, or develop theme concerts such as ‘Music of the Americas’ or ‘Music from England’, or period or composer concerts such as all Bach or Beethoven music.³⁵ Others stress the importance of contrast in a program to keep the audience focused.³⁶

³³ Mark Gotham, ‘Coherence in Concert Programming: A View from the U.K.’, *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 45, no. 2 (2014): 293–309, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43198649>.

³⁴ Gotham, ‘Coherence in Concert Programming,’ 293.

³⁵ Richard Provost, *The Art & Technique of Performance* (Guitar Solo Publications, 1994), 7.

³⁶ For example, Johnathan Howard, ‘Programming a Concert,’ *The King’s Singers*, 2017, <https://www.kingssingers.com/articles/5757-2/>; Peggy Dettwiler, ‘How to Program a Concert: Planning a Full-

In 1998, Christopher Small published his ground-breaking book *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*, describing music as an activity rather than a thing, and giving an illuminating ethnographic account of the classical music concert and an audience's aesthetic and social experience within it.³⁷ Since the publication, studies of the sociological and psychological aspects of the concert experience have emerged alongside historical musicological studies of the concert, including examinations of audience experience and perception of classical music concerts, audience engagement, social interaction and community, new audience barriers and perceptions, and the effect of embedded information in a concert.

In 'Smart Concerts: Orchestras in the Age of Edutainment', Alan S. Brown examines a range of concert enhancement strategies used by some United States' orchestras, such as contextual information, dramatisation, and visual enhancements, designed for audience members who would 'prefer a more informal, educational and interactive concert experience.'³⁸

In her 2004 article 'Stalking the Culturally Aware Non-Attender', Rebecca Winzenried says that young adults who attend cultural activities, museums, theatre, etc. but not classical music concerts, even though they are interested in them, most often cite the expensive ticket costs of a classical music concert as the main reason they do not attend.³⁹ They also view themselves

Course Meal,' See-a-dot Music Publishing, Inc., 2014, <http://seeadot.com/program-concert-planning-full-course-meal/>.

³⁷ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1998).

³⁸ Brown, 'Smart Concerts,' 2.

³⁹ Rebecca Winzenried, 'Stalking the Culturally Aware Non-Attender,' *Symphony* (January–February, 2004), 27.

as different from what they see as the typical older and wealthier classic concert attendee, and are often put off by the formality and rules.⁴⁰

In his 2007 article ‘Determinants of Listeners’ Enjoyment of a Performance’, Sam Thompson presents the result of a survey of 264 classical musicians and concertgoers in the United Kingdom.⁴¹ Thompson found that an audience’s enjoyment of a concert was directly linked to their level of engagement, and that the perceived engagement of the performers in the music was critical, noting

listeners’ engagement in the performance is causally correlated with the players’ – in other words, performers who appear to be absorbed in the performance and enjoying themselves will engage listeners’ attention and provoke positive affective responses.⁴²

However, Thompson notes that these are only initial findings and that further research is necessary.

Stephanie Pitts’ 2005 article ‘What Makes an Audience? Investigating the Roles and Experiences of Listeners at a Chamber Music Festival’, suggests that current programming strategies and concert hall environments often position the audience as passive spectators, only capable of responding through applause, and that their formal nature can be imposing for new audience members.⁴³ In *Valuing Musical Participation*, Pitts addresses audience and performer motivations for their participation in musical activities, and how audiences perceive their relationship to performers, events, and musical works. Pitts concludes that both the social and musical aspects of concert are critical for an audience to feel invested and engaged in the

⁴⁰ Winzenried, ‘Stalking the Culturally Aware Non-Attender,’ 28.

⁴¹ Sam Thompson, ‘Determinants of Listeners’ Enjoyment of a Performance,’ *Psychology of Music* 35, no. 1 (2007): 20–36, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735607068886>.

⁴² Thompson, ‘Determinants of Listeners’ Enjoyment,’ 32.

⁴³ Pitts, ‘What Makes an Audience?’ 257.

event.⁴⁴ This is confirmed in the 2016 research of Lucy Dearn and Sarah Price, ‘Sharing Music: Social and Communal Aspects of Concert-Going’, finding that chamber music and orchestral audiences in the United Kingdom attended concerts for community and social interactions as well as for aesthetic pleasure.⁴⁵

The problem of the gradual audience decline for classical music concerts was addressed by John Sloboda’s 2013 working paper, ‘Musicians and Their Live Audiences’.⁴⁶ While this research was done in the United Kingdom, Marin has observed trends in declining audiences for classical concerts internationally.⁴⁷ In order to stop and potentially reverse declining audience numbers, Sloboda suggests that ‘musicians require a deeper understanding of their audiences – what motivates and nourishes them – and the willingness to explore new forms of engagement with their audiences.’⁴⁸

Matthias Rebstock in ‘Strategies for Production of Presence’ also emphasises that changes in concert design and presentation are needed to shift what he sees as outdated and irrelevant ideologies around the performance of art music. Rebstock urges that the unchanged aesthetics and listening format of the classical concert is losing its relevance, along with the idea that listening to music in a concert is done in service to the works.⁴⁹

As mentioned above, in ‘First Impressions: On the Programming and Concert Presentation of New Music Today’, Mark Gotham writes about the growing trend for both classical and new

⁴⁴ Stephanie Pitts, *Valuing Musical Participation* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005).

⁴⁵ Lucy K. Dearn and Sarah M. Price, ‘Sharing Music: Social and Communal Aspects of Concert-Going,’ *Networking Knowledge* 9, no. 2 (Feb 2016), <https://doi.org/10.31165/NK.2016.92.428>.

⁴⁶ Sloboda, ‘Musicians and Their Live Audiences,’ 20.

⁴⁷ Marin, ‘Challenging the Listener,’ 115–16.

⁴⁸ Sloboda, ‘Musicians and Their Live Audiences,’ 1.

⁴⁹ Matthias Rebstock, ‘Strategies for Production of Presence,’ in Tröndle, *Classical Concert Studies*, 134–40 (see chap. 1, n.8).

music concerts to move their performances outside the classical concert venue. Gotham observes that this is becoming a more common tactic of programmers and performers to attract new audiences by actively going to ‘where new audiences are or might be’, and by dispelling some of the ‘concert hall stigmas.’⁵⁰

These diverse areas of research have recently been unified under the term concert studies, with the first concert studies compendium published in English in 2020. *Classical Concert Studies: A Companion to Contemporary Research and Performance*, edited by Martin Tröndle, is a milestone publication for concert studies research that comprehensively addresses many aspects of the concert and provides a blueprint for future research and development.⁵¹

In their chapter, Martin Tröndle and Esther Bishop describe concert studies as comparable to museum studies, which examines the history, activities, and the socio-cultural relevance of a museum, as well as curatorship and management. Tröndle and Bishop argue that the fact that museum studies developed as a field of research almost one hundred years ago and concert studies is only now emerging is ‘yet another reason why the museum, as an institution, has changed rapidly and is enjoying increased popularity worldwide while the classical concert is struggling with the loss of public interest.’ For Tröndle and Bishop, the aim of concert studies is to create insight into the concert to generate new possibilities for its future, and that concert curators and designers should aim to develop ‘multitude of approaches’ to reimagine the classical concert experience.⁵²

⁵⁰ Gotham, ‘First Impressions,’ 42–50.

⁵¹ *Classical Concert Studies: A Companion to Contemporary Research and Performance*, ed. Martin Tröndle (New York: Routledge, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>.

⁵² Martin Tröndle and Esther Bishop, ‘Concert Studies,’ in Tröndle, *Classical Concert Studies*, 1–2 (see chap. 1, n.8).

When I began my research in 2018 there was very little published research on concert curation, a point also acknowledged by Tröndle and Bishop.⁵³ Since then, however, there has been growing interest in the topic, with the addition of several publications.

The 2018 book *Curating Live Arts: Critical Perspectives, Essays, and Conversations on Theory and Practice*, presents of a range of different voices from across the live arts, providing an overview of the many interdisciplinary roles of a live arts curator. With chapters from a variety of artists and disciplines, the book creates an overarching view of a live arts curator as an administrator, interpreter, and author, whose artistic practice often destabilises and decentres classical methods.⁵⁴

In the chapter ‘The Work of the Musician-Curator in Relation to the ‘Concert Scenario’’, Marie-Hélène Breault offers one of the first overviews of a musician-curator, describing them as ‘composers of the concert scenario.’ The concert scenario is defined as the interrelationship between the works, the performers, the presentation spaces, the approach to performing the works, and the reception and support of the spectator. The musician-curator works to create the most effective relationships between these elements. Breault notes that with the curatorial approach, ‘the performer becomes more involved, moving beyond the level of simple execution.’ When envisioning new concert formulas, Breault emphasises the musician-curator’s consideration of audience experience, audience education, and their communication with musicians. Breault describes the aim of the musician-curator is ‘theatricalizing the concert’, with stage-settings, performer movement, and other visual elements integrated within the concert.⁵⁵

⁵³ Tröndle and Bishop, ‘Concert Studies,’ 2.

⁵⁴ Dena Davida et al., eds., *Curating Live Arts: Critical Perspectives, Essays, and Conversations on Theory and Practice* (Berghahn Books, 2018).

⁵⁵ Breault, ‘The Work of the Musician-Curator,’ 194–99.

Other publications on concert curation include the 2019 book *Defragmentation: Curating Contemporary Music*, which collates the talks and lectures on topics relating to contemporary music curation from several new music festival directors from the ‘Convention on Curating Contemporary Music’ held in Darmstadt from 17-20 July 2018.⁵⁶

In 2020, an entire issue of the journal *On Curating* was devoted to the topic of contemporary music curation, exploring how the practices of concert curators are being spurred by their questioning of the discourses and structures of music performance and their associated institutions.⁵⁷

In *Classical Concert Studies: A Companion to Contemporary Research and Performance*, chapters written by music curators highlight their desire to develop multi-sensory and immersive concert experiences that connect the audience with the music in new ways.⁵⁸ In the chapter ‘Musical Curator and Concert Director’, music curator Markus Fein views concert curation as an invitation to experiment with the aesthetic experience of music to create more intensive musical interactions, expanding the potentialities and evolution of the concert.⁵⁹

Many authors have argued for the importance of the concert in shaping perceptions of music and the creation of meaning. In his book *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning*, Eric F Clarke describes how the social and environmental context of music listening, as well as the sonic stimuli of the music itself, influence how it is

⁵⁶ Sylvia Freydank and Michael Rebhahn, eds., *Defragmentation: Curating Contemporary Music* (Mainz: Schott Music, 2019).

⁵⁷ ‘Curating Contemporary Music,’ *On Curating*, no. 44 (2020): 1–51.

⁵⁸ Tröndle, *Classical Concert Studies*.

⁵⁹ Fein, ‘Musical Curator and Concert Director,’ 126–29.

perceived and the meaning that is generated by the listener.⁶⁰ This sentiment is echoed by Nicholas Cook in ‘Music as Text, Music as Performance’, whose approach to performance studies is built on the premise that musical meaning is created during the act of performance.⁶¹ In ‘Creating Temporal Realities: Performativity as a Curatorial Tool’, Florian Malzacher describes how by ‘changing the institutional, aesthetical and architectural frame, the grids of perception and reflection change as well.’⁶² Concert designer Folkert Uhde contends that the concert event is impacted by numerous factors and parameters whose interplay can lead to endless possibilities for concert creation.⁶³ Scholars have only recently begun to develop the conception of the concert frame to better understand the multitude of factors that influence the concert experience.

In their 2020 book chapter ‘The Classical Concert as an Object of Empirical Aesthetics’ by Christoph Seibert, Jutta Toelle, and Melanie Wald- Fuhrmann, the concert frame is described as

the social and institutional embedding of the concert, which suggests, for example, specific ways of listening, strategies of musical re-enactment and understanding, and forms of experience through the space, the specific setting, and the codes of conduct. A musical experience takes place in this frame and is co-constituted by the frame, the individual characteristics of the recipients, and the music itself.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Eric F. Clarke, *Ways of Listening: An Ecological Approach to the Perception of Musical Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), <http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195151947.001.0001/acprof-9780195151947>.

⁶¹ Cook, ‘Music as Text, Music as Performance,’ 32.

⁶² Florian Malzacher, ‘Creating Temporal Realities: Performativity as a Curatorial Tool,’ in *Defragmentation: Curating Contemporary Music*, eds. S. Freydank & M. Reghahn (Mainz: Schott, 2019), 53–60.

⁶³ Uhde, ‘Concert Design: Form Follows Function,’ 113.

⁶⁴ Seibert et al., ‘The Classical Concert as an Object of Empirical Aesthetics,’ 351–60.

In 2021, Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann et al. published the first research which developed a comprehensive model for the concert frame. In their journal article ‘Music Listening in Classical Concerts: Theory, Literature Review, and Research Program’, the classical concert frame is described as ‘one particular frame for music listening, which shapes the aesthetic experience of the music featured within it in specific ways’. The two fundamental characteristics of the classical concert frame are said to be its ‘work-centered aesthetics and its liveness.’⁶⁵ The article also includes a figure depicting their frame-music-listener model.

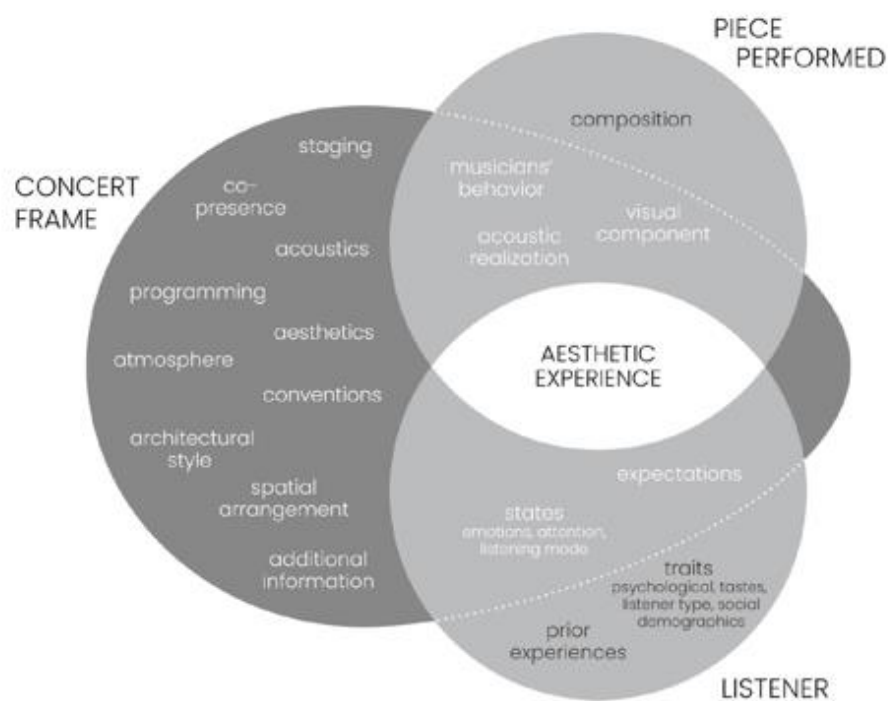


Figure 1.1. Wald-Fuhrmann et al., ‘Expanded frame-music-listener model’.⁶⁶

Since beginning my PhD in 2018 I have worked extensively on developing my conception of the concert frame from the viewpoint of the performer/curator. My conception of the concert frame was developed by analysing my five concerts submitted as part of this PhD, as well the literature on the history and development of the classical concert, the role of the performer,

⁶⁵ Wald-Fuhrmann et al., ‘Music Listening in Classical Concerts,’ 4.

⁶⁶ Wald-Fuhrmann et al., ‘Music Listening in Classical Concerts,’ 9.

audience experience of a classical concert, and recent examples of new concert formats. A detailed explanation of how I arrived at this definition can be found in Chapter Two in the section, ‘The Concert Frame’. Whilst I have certainly taken the description of the concert frame by Melanie Wald-Fuhrmann et al. into account, as the article was released close to my submission date, I have not yet attempted to unify our two conceptions of the concert frame.

1.3 Contribution to Research

This research provides an in-depth account of the concepts, processes, and creations of a performer/curator, something that is still relatively rare at the time of writing. It contributes to the burgeoning field of concert studies, for the first time specifically addressing concert frame curation from the viewpoint of the performer/curator.⁶⁷ It offers a sustainable and innovative method of new concert design, and describes ways in which performers can expand their creative scope within the classical music frame. Furthermore, this research encompassed premiere performances of several works, the details of which can be found in the Preface of this thesis.

1.4 Methodology

The performance research methodology for this thesis draws on the process of reflective practice as described in Donald A. Schön’s pivotal book *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*.⁶⁸ Schön argues that important knowledge and insight about a

⁶⁷ Martin Tröndle argues that ‘The formation of “concert studies” should not only be about the analysis, production, and scholarly dissemination of music. It should foremost be about researching the future of the concert, both on a theoretical level as well as in practical and artistic terms. In other words, it is about “artistic research” that involves working on the performance concept *with, in, and by means of the material*— namely the performance itself. This approach creates a new, self-confident performer who not only reproduces music but also produces art.’ Martin Tröndle, ‘Concerto21, A Didactic Introduction for Concert Development,’ in Tröndle, *Classical Concert Studies*, 336 (see chap. 1, n.8).

⁶⁸ Donald A Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1991). First published by Basic Books in 1983.

particular profession can be generated when a practitioner reflects on their thoughts and actions within a relevant situation.⁶⁹ In her 2014 book chapter ‘Reflective Practice in Music: A Collaborative Professional Approach’, Georgina Barton emphasises the importance of reflective practice for musicians to challenge their assumptions about music and its function, and this approach is particularly important for this research.⁷⁰ Linda Candy summarised four types of reflective practice in ‘Reflective Practice Variants and the Creative Practitioner’.⁷¹ The first is reflection-for-action, the process of contemplating ‘previous actions, thoughts and achievements in order to understand the implications of what has taken place and learn how and where to go forward.’ The second type is reflection-in-the making moment, where the practitioner reflects in the immediate moment of creation through rapid cycles of ‘making–seeing → reflecting → making again → reflecting again’. The third is reflection-on-surprise, where new knowledge is generated by the practitioner as they reflect on the unpredicted ideas that emerge during artistic creation. The fourth type is reflection-at-a-distance, which can occur when the practitioner reflects on their work with ‘a degree of detachment from the process’.⁷²

I have used all four methods of reflective practice described above to create a practice-led account of the considerations, concepts, and methods of my own concerts as a performer/curator within the evolving paradigm of concert curation. I deemed reflective practice the best way of describing the personal and emotional aspects of concert performance and curation, as well as the concepts and processes of my creative practice. By systematically analysing and describing my personal experience and the artistic results I achieve in the

⁶⁹ Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner*, 69.

⁷⁰ Georgina Barton, ‘Reflective Practice in Music: A Collaborative Professional Approach,’ in *Teaching Reflective Learning in Higher Education: A Systematic Approach Using Pedagogic Patterns*, ed. Mary Elizabeth Ryan (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2014), 65–76, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-09271-3_5.

⁷¹ Linda Candy, ‘Reflective Practice Variants and the Creative Practitioner,’ in *The Routledge International Handbook of Practice-Based Research*, eds. Craig Vear, Linda Candy and Ernest Edmonds (London: Routledge, 2021), 415–25, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429324154-30>.

⁷² Candy, ‘Reflective Practice Variants,’ 418–19.

concerts listed below, reflective practice can also offer insight into the broader culture of classical music performance and the role of the performer/curator.

The concerts that formed the basis of this research include: a Melba Hall Lunch Hour Concert in 2018 with Collide (a saxophone trio with cellist Yelian He and pianist Yasmin Rowe), a recital at the 2019 Singapore Saxophone Symposium with Duo Obax (an oboe and saxophone duo) and Yasmin Rowe, two performances in 2019 of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* with Collide and guest violinist Wilma Smith,⁷³ and *Her Lover's Shadow*, a 2018 concert that combined Australian instrumental solo and chamber music, dance, and lighting tell a story of love, loss, and memory.

These concerts will be used to examine the classical concert frame from the viewpoint of the performer and identify how this frame shapes our creative and expressive parameters in a concert. Each of the concerts use the classical concert frame to varying degrees, ranging from more classical concerts to the more conceptual. They can be situated along a spectrum from 'curating a performance', where individual components of the concert are curated to enhance the experience of the performance, to 'performing a curation', where the concert design begins without any predetermined components and uses a meta-narrative to guide the curation of the concert frame – an approach developed in this research.

The role of the performer/curator is, by its very nature, a broad one. This thesis aims to develop an understanding of the administrative, audience, and artistic considerations of the performer/curator. However, whilst researching some of the administrative and audience

⁷³ Please note that only one performance of *Quartet for the End of Time* was recorded and submitted as part of the creative folio of this PhD.

considerations, it will focus more specifically on the artistic considerations, delving more thoroughly into the creative process of the performer/curator and the constructing of their artistic conceptual framework. As concert curation is the sum of many considerations and processes, all aspects of concert design and presentation outside of actually performing will be referred to as curation in this thesis.

Whilst interviews with concert curators may have produced interesting insights, they are beyond the scope of the current study. As this research is more specifically about the performer/curator, I decided that interviews would be less conducive to the research than using a process of reflective practice to document my curatorial methods and processes. Post-concert audience questionnaires were considered but decided against, as this research primarily aims to build an example of the conceptual framework and artistic processes of the performer/curator. Although the study of musical taste and reception would be potentially interesting, this thesis will not delve into such issues.

I acknowledge and celebrate the myriad meanings and functions of music in different cultures, and this research does not seek to impose or compare systems of value or quality upon them. Unless otherwise stated, however, the concerts discussed in this thesis refer to classical music concerts that were developed in Western Europe throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and formalised during the nineteenth century. Only concerts of notated solo and chamber instrumental music will be addressed, that is, no concerts that include music improvisation. When I refer to a classical music performer, I am referring to a performer of notated compositions of any period that could be presented in the concerts described above. Given the stylistic openness of programs and venues, the terms ‘Classical Concert’ and ‘Classical Performer’ could now be considered redundant; however, I would assert that it is

still the commonly understood term to refer to non-popular music genre events and for performers of notated music.

It should also be noted that during the completion of this PhD, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected the type of concert experiences that I could create. I had planned to curate and record a range of concerts using the methods outlined in Chapter Three, but in Victoria, Australia, all public concerts from late March 2020 were cancelled. During 2021, concerts were only briefly possible during the first half of the year, and at the time of submission in early 2022, concerts are slowly resuming. However, the concerts that I am submitting provide a thorough sample for this research.

1.5 Chapter Outline

In Chapter Two I begin by discussing the process by which I identified and classified the various parameters that make up the concert frame. I then look at the way the classical concert frame restricts the artistic parameters for performers, and how these parameters can impact aspects of concert design such as programming, program notes, and lighting. I describe my conception of the concert frame, and how I have used this to become more aware of my creative freedoms in a classical concert. Examples of classical concert frame curation are drawn from four concerts that were performed as part of this research: a Melba Hall Lunch Hour Concert, a recital at the Singapore Saxophone Symposium, and two performances of Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*.

In Chapter Three I then discuss the process of creating a meta-narrative for Her Lover's Shadow and demonstrate how using a meta-narrative to guide the curation of the concert frame can greatly expand the performer's potential to create innovative and personal musical

experiences and provide a coherent and unifying method for curating the factors that frame the concert experience. I detail how the design of the concert frame emerged as part of my creative process.

I present the findings of this research in my concluding chapter, detailing how taking on the dual role of the performer/curator has changed my approach to concert design and presentation. I then discuss how I have continued to use the curatorial processes developed in this thesis to design new concert experiences. Finally, I present my ideas for future research in both concert curation and classical music pedagogy.

Chapter 2. Curating a Performance

The recent research and literature on concert curation have predominately focused on the creation of new concert formats and experiences.¹ However, as a classical music performer, developing entirely new concert experiences is not typical, and is not always feasible. I perform many concerts that are presented by a concert venue or as part of a pre-existing series or festival. In these concerts, many aspects of the design and presentation of the performance are outside of my control.² Generally, the components over which I have artistic and creative scope include the title of the concert, the choice of works, and my interpretation of them, but sometimes the conventions of a classic concert and my perceived role within it are so strong that even these free components can feel somewhat predetermined.

Nicholas Cook argues that in classical concerts, the performer is viewed as the medium of the composer's intentions.³ Within the work-centred aesthetic of a classical music concert, the performer is expected to devote their creative energy to the realisation of the work.⁴ Jerrold Levinson argues that 'the performer translates the notes on paper into experienceable sequences of sound. A musical interpreter... is primarily a kind of go-between: more a translator than an explicator.'⁵

¹ See Chapter 1 review of literature and research on concert curation.

² Examples of the components outside of my creative control will be given below during the discussion of the Melba Hall Lunch Hour concert, my recital at the Singapore Saxophone Symposium, and the performances of Quartet for the End of Time.

³ Cook, 'Music as Text, Music as Performance,' 29.

⁴ Wald-Fuhrmann et al., 'Music Listening in Classical Concerts,' 4.

⁵ Jerrold Levinson, 'Performative versus Critical Interpretation in Music,' in *The Pleasures of Aesthetics: Philosophical Essays* (Ithica and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), 64.

In the past, I have often considered my sole role as a performer in a concert was to be a translator of the score and medium for the composer. My aim was to create a ‘pure’ listening experience for the audience so they could most fully experience the aesthetic and emotional responses that the work aroused in them. I had assumed that the classical music frame created the optimal conditions for the audience experience of the music, and so I limited the extent to which I shared my personal creative and artistic ideas about the work with the audience because I did not want to interfere with their ability to create their own meaning.

During a performance, I tried not to ‘get in the way’ of the music by striving for the perfect execution of the objective musical elements like tuning and correct notes and rhythms, and by performing in what I believed to be the most appropriate style. Of course, the audience could gain insight into my creative ideas through my interpretation, gestures, facial expressions, and communication with other musicians on stage, but I aimed to align my interpretation with what I perceived to be the composer’s intent, and to realise this with conviction in a performance unobscured by deficiencies of technique.⁶

My programming was generally typical of the classical music programs described by Mark Gotham in ‘Coherence in Concert Programming’, mostly falling into one of the following categories: geographical, temporal, musical, extra-musical, or personal.⁷ I would build my program around one or two key works I wanted to perform, extrapolate a theme, and then add

⁶ For sources discussing the concept of musical interpretation and the role of the performer, see: Alan H. Goldman, ‘Interpreting Art and Literature,’ *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48, no. 3 (1990): 205–14; Levinson, ‘Performative versus Critical Interpretation,’ 60–90; Paul Thom, ‘Toward a Broad Understanding of Musical Interpretation,’ *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 60, no. 238 (2006): 437–52; Fred Everett Maus, ‘Musical Performance as Analytical Communication,’ in *Performance and Authenticity in the Arts*, eds. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell, Online edi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 129–53, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511520051.007>; Leo Treitler, *Reflections on Musical Meaning and Its Representations* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011).

⁷ Gotham, ‘Coherence in Concert Programming,’ 296. A description of each of these categories is provided in the literature review of this thesis on page 13.

other works that reinforce and amplify the theme. By selecting pieces with objective links, such as a common country or period, I avoided overlaying any personal and subjective meanings onto the works that could change how the audience might respond or perceive them. I rarely programmed works from multiple styles and eras in the same concert for fear of creating thematic or sonic disorder. I was also less likely to perform arrangements or transcriptions unless they were made by the composer themselves, because I did not want to interfere with the work the composer's intentions.

I was not alone in these practices. As a tertiary performance student, I learnt about programming by observing other students and professionals. In my teaching and professional career, I have seen that this is common amongst most classical music students, creating an unquestioning assumption that this is 'just how it's done'. Miguel Ángel Marín's 2018 analysis of 4,700 international classical music concerts performed between 2010-2015, confirms that 'patterns of association between programmed composers within individual concerts are highly predictable.'⁸

Although I might not have thought of it as curation, I also shaped any other aspects of a concert that were in my control so that the audience's sensory focus was on listening to the performance. For example, I would ask for the stage lighting to be focused on the performers, and for the audience lighting to be as dark as possible.⁹ This discouraged the audience from reading their programs during the performance and aimed to minimise any visual distractions. I avoided giving the audience any verbal or written descriptions about my philosophical or creative ideas about a piece, or what the work subjectively meant to me. My program notes

⁸ Marín, 'Challenging the Listener,' 115.

⁹ An historical description of the first auditorium with darkened house seating can be read in Ned A. Bowman, 'Investing a Theatrical Ideal: Wagner's Bayreuth "Festspielhaus,"' *Educational Theatre Journal* 18, no. 4 (1966): 429–38.

included biographical and historical information to inform the audience about the composer and period of the composition.

At times when I have performed the type of classical concerts described, however, I have felt they were not representative of the range and depth of the emotional and philosophical connections I was striving to create with an audience. However, the almost ubiquitous classical concert format made it difficult for me to ascertain which aspects of the concert experience I can creatively alter as a performer.

I have developed my conception of the concert frame to create a structured way to recognise what creative and artistic freedoms may be available in a classical concert, and bring into focus the artistic decisions I might have previously made unconsciously. I have formulated a set of factors affecting the concert frame, and will highlight ways in which the performer can use the concert frame to conceptualise and implement change.

2.1 The Concert Frame

Every concert has a frame, which is the sum of the various parameters within which a concert is organised and experienced. The concert frame is an extraordinarily complex structure comprising many different components, all of which play an important role in shaping the audience's musical experience.¹⁰

I began formulating my concept of the concert frame by listing every factor I considered in relation to the design and presentation of the concerts recorded as part of this research, from the moment I conceived of a concert idea or was invited to perform a concert, up until I had

¹⁰ Wald-Fuhrmann et al., 'Music Listening in Classical Concerts,' 4.

finished my post-concert reflections. I only listed components that were an integral part of the make-up of a concert. To inform my conception of the concert frame and help me become more aware of my own practices as a performer, I researched the literature on the history and development of the classical concert, the role of the performer, audience experience and perceptions, and publications on concert design and curation. I also reviewed recent examples of new concert formats to understand the design changes already being implemented, including examples described in books such as *Classical Concert Studies: A Companion to Contemporary Research and Performance*,¹¹ and *Defragmentation: Curating Contemporary Music*,¹² as well as classical concerts in unconventional venues, such as Anne-Sophie Mutter's 2015 performance in a Berlin nightclub or the carpark concerts from the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment in the United Kingdom.¹³

After generating this list, I organised the factors that I identified as constituting the concert frame into three overarching categories: Administrative, Audience, and Artistic (see Table 2.1). There is a great deal of overlap between these categories (which is illustrated in Figure 2.1), but I placed each factor within the category that I felt was most relevant to me as a performer/curator.

¹¹ Tröndle, *Classical Concert Studies*.

¹² Freydank and Rebhahn, *Defragmentation: Curating Contemporary Music*.

¹³ Frances Wilson, 'Yes, You Can Have a Classical Music Concert in a Carpark!' *Interlude*, 13 September 2020, <https://interlude.hk/yes-you-can-have-a-concert-in-a-carpark/>; 'Here's What Happened When Violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter Took Bach to a Nightclub,' *Classic FM*, 24 August 2015, <https://www.classicfm.com/artists/anne-sophie-mutter/news/yellow-lounge-video/>.

Administrative	Audience	Artistic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Number of Performers and Rehearsals, Stage Management and FOH, Audio Tech, AV/Lighting Tech/Designer, Reliance on Ticket Sales • Organisation or Institution Presenting the Concert • Part of a Festival, Series, Conference, or Symposium • Ticketing System • Logistics and Scheduling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Travel, Rehearsals, Soundcheck, Equipment, Production and Technical Meetings • Venue and Production Personnel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Backstage, Stage, FOH, Sound, Lighting, etc. • Contracts • Concert Duration, Start Time, and Date • Food and Drink • Filming and Recording • Partners and Sponsors • Insurance • Health and Safety Procedures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Venue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Acoustics, Design, Capacity, Location, Access • Attendance • Demographic • Community • Social Interaction • Marketing • Ticket Price • Profile and Popularity of Performers and Composers • Program Notes • Seating and Movement • Audience Behaviours • Performer Behaviour and Demeanour • Performer Dress Code • Pre-Concert Communication and Talks • In-Concert Talking • Post-Concert Talking/Interaction • Sensory Focus • Applause 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Works, Program Order, Arrangements/Transcriptions, Premieres, Theme/Categories, Composer Diversity and Representation, Musical Contrast, e.g.: Styles, Tempi, Dynamic, etc. • Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Interpretation, Expression, Intention, Meaning, Perceived Role as Performer • Artistic Aims • Concert Title • Choice of Performers • Personal Aesthetics • Atmosphere • Meta-Narrative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Philosophy, Emotion, Nature, Politics, Societal Issues, Story, Spiritual Beliefs • Extra-Musical/Interdisciplinary Elements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ E.g., Lighting, Staging, Electronics, Poetry, Dance, Film, Images, Painting, Sculpture, Projections, Spatialisation, Acting and Theatre, Sets, Stage Props, Stimuli for Scent/Taste/Touch

Table 2.1. The Concert Frame.

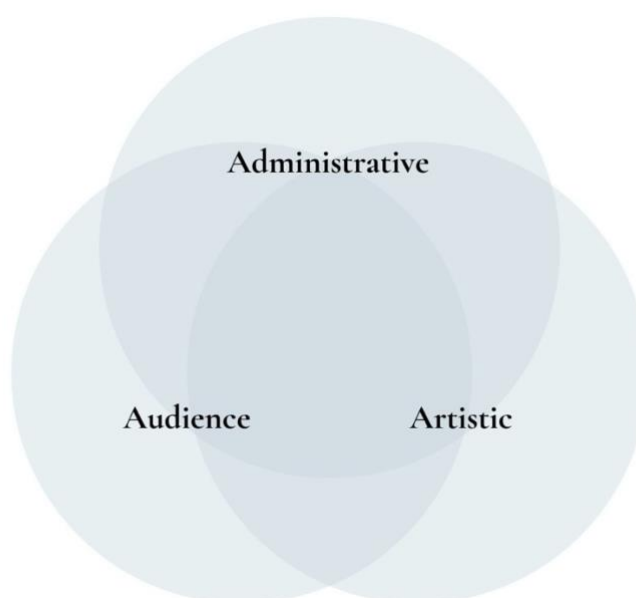


Figure 2.1. Many components overlap between the three factors of the concert frame.

The factors that I categorised as administrative encompass the financial, logistical, and practical aspects of a concert's organisation. The audience factors include not just the size and demographic of the audience, which the performer might be able to estimate before the performance, but also factors that can serve to heighten the audience's engagement with a performance, such as the program notes, or that directly affect the audience's experience of a concert, such as the size and acoustics of a venue.

The artistic components of a concert are mostly shaped by the artistic expression and creativity of the performer, artistic director, curator, or artistic committee. In a classical music concert, the performer is likely to have considerable control over the artistic components such as the concert title, program, and how any extra-musical or interdisciplinary elements are incorporated, although the extent to which the performer has control over the various factors will vary from concert to concert. Generally, we view our musical performance and interpretation in a concert to be the component over which we have the most control, and we focus on this more than any other aspect of the concert. However, taking on the dual role of the performer/curator can expand a performer's creative and expressive parameters in a concert. Using the conception of the frame to view a concert allows the performer/curator to see the individual components that contribute to the overall experience, empowering the performer to become more aware of the components they can creatively shape in their pursuit to express their artistic vision in a concert.

Below, I will discuss the concerts I performed as part of my PhD that took place in more conventional classical music concert settings. These concerts include a Melba Hall Lunch Hour concert, my recital at the Singapore Saxophone Symposium, and two performances of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*. In a conventional classical concert such as the Melba

Hall Lunch Hour concert described below, many factors are outside of the performer's control. By consciously examining the concert frame, the performer/curator can view the concert experience in its entirety and recognise the components over which they can exercise control and those which are set or predetermined. For each of the concerts discussed in Chapter Two, I set out to clearly identify my artistic and creative vision for the concert and then use my conception of the concert frame to identify and shape the open components available to me. Even though my concert *Her Lover's Shadow* was instrumental in developing my conception of the concert frame, I will wait until Chapter Three before discussing it in depth, as this is an example of curating a concert frame without any predetermined components at the outset.

2.2 Momentum, Melba Hall Lunch Hour Concert

The Melba Hall Lunch Hour Concert Series is a longstanding concert series given by the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music in Melba Hall, on the Parkville campus of the University of Melbourne. Opened in 1913 with fundraising help by Dame Nellie Melba, the 340-seat hall is renowned for its chamber music acoustics.¹⁴ There are twenty-four lunch hour concerts per year, most of which have a capacity audience who are dedicated attendees. The series is free for the public and live streamed on the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music website. The concerts provide an opportunity for Conservatorium students to hear professional performances of many of the works they are studying, and for select students to gain performance experience.

In late 2017, I formed a saxophone trio with cellist Yelian He and pianist Yasmin Rowe called *Collide*.¹⁵ As a newly established ensemble, we were looking for concert opportunities and

¹⁴ Peter Tregear, *The Conservatorium of Music, University of Melbourne: An Historical Essay to Mark Its Centenary 1895–1995* (Melbourne: The University of Melbourne, 1997).

¹⁵ For the *Collide* website, see: <https://collidemusic.rocks/>.

applied to be a part of the Melba Hall series. We created a brochure that included our artistic mission as a group, a sample program, and our individual biographies, which I sent as part of an Expression of Interest email to the series coordinator. After consideration from the artistic committee of the series, the concert was accepted and scheduled for 26 February 2018. To begin preparing for our performance, we set out to identify the predetermined parameters within which we could design our concert.

The administrative components were entirely controlled by the series' organisers. There was a set start time and duration, a pre-existing template for program notes and publicity photos, scheduled times for a soundcheck, a ticketing system, and designated front of house and technical staff. We could perform no more than forty-eight minutes of music and needed to finish by 2pm. The concert was free for the audience and each performer was paid a set fee irrespective of attendance numbers.

Having attended the series regularly during my undergraduate studies and since returning to Australia in 2016, I was aware that the audience at these concerts is largely comprised of a dedicated base of university staff and students and older, mostly retired adults. Melba Hall has fixed seating facing a raised stage, limiting audience movement throughout the performance. I have, however, observed lively audience interaction with each other before and after concerts. Audiences usually observe the etiquette commonly associated with classical concerts: they applaud when the performer enters and leaves the stage, after pieces but not between movements, and they listen silently during the performance. Despite this, the 1:00 pm start time creates a more informal and relaxed atmosphere than a tradition evening concert. The opportunities for pre- and post-concert talks are limited due to time restraints, but performers often briefly introduce their works to the audience during the concert.

Over time the organisers had developed a strong idea of the types of works that were well received, and we were advised to program ‘user friendly’ music in consideration of the audience demographic. We took this to mean tonal works and pieces by more well-known composers. We had little control over the lighting, as Melba Hall has many windows that cannot be covered. The age and style of the hall means the production equipment is limited compared to a modern concert venue, and production staff are only provided in rare circumstances. This limits the scope for extra-musical or interdisciplinary elements to be used, such as video or electronics.

This series typifies the classical concert format and is a good example of the kind of predetermined factors that performers navigate as we design and present our concerts. All the administrative components and many of the audience and artistic components were predetermined. Our process was to use the conception of the concert frame to identify open components and imagine how they could be shaped according to our artistic and creative vision.

We chose the name Collide for our ensemble because, rather than being a dedicated new music or classical music ensemble, we wanted to explore what happens when these musical worlds collide together.¹⁶ We are open to either embracing or challenging any of the classical music concert conventions. We consider classical music to be a living and evolving art form, and by

¹⁶ Samuel Gilmore describes the rupture between classical and avant-garde programming aesthetics in the early twentieth century in ‘Tradition and Novelty in Concert Programming: Bringing the Artist Back into Cultural Analysis’. Classical concerts programs continued to include tonal and/or historical works whilst avant-garde performances focused on recently composed and experimental works that celebrated compositional innovation. As the twentieth century saw an acceleration in the idiosyncratic sonic development of some modern music, programming new works next to classical repertory became more complex if they were not aesthetically similar. See Samuel Gilmore, ‘Tradition and Novelty in Concert Programming: Bringing the Artist Back into Cultural Analysis,’ *Sociological Forum* 8, no. 2 (1993): 221–42.

adapting and transcribing music for our instrumentation we can find new colours and generate new meanings for old works. It is important for us not to be pigeonholed as performers of a particular style as we feel this would restrict our creative expression, and limit the types of concerts we can perform.

Collide have a strong focus on commissioning and performing Australian and new works, but also love to transcribe and reimagine older works by classical composers, for example, a Beethoven Piano Trio or the ‘Blues’ movement from Ravel’s Violin Sonata No. 2. By programming new composers next to the canonic composers of the past we hope to question the assumptions about a work’s quality and value from an audience or institutional perspective.

The artistic factors we could control were decisions around the concert title, the works we would program, and how we would interpret them. We also had control over audience factors such as our attire and our interaction with the audience during the concert. I will pay particular attention to programming, as this is one aspect of concert design where performers have a strong opportunity to develop new and personal approaches.

In order to achieve our commitment to performing music from multiple styles and eras, we have had to develop new approaches to programming.¹⁷ For this concert, we chose to curate a program about music that we felt drew us into a moment, creating the sensation of time standing still, together with pieces we felt quickened our sensation of time through their musical momentum. We represented this by formatting the word ‘moment’ in bold in our title ‘**momentum**’. The abstract theme ‘momentum’ created a coherent framework to achieve our artistic aims.

¹⁷ See above, Chapter One Literature Review on page 12–14 and Chapter Two on page 29–30.

We began the concert with *Titan Tango* by Australian composer Keyna Wilkins. We commissioned Wilkins to arrange the work especially for Collide from her 2015 version for solo piano. It opens with short cadenzas being exchanged between the cello and alto saxophone (see Example 2.1). For me, the spontaneity and temporal liberty of a cadenza creates the sensation that the laws of time are briefly suspended.¹⁸ By beginning the concert with a cadenza, something that is rarely done in a classical music concert, we wanted to draw the audience’s attention into ‘the moment’ before the driving ostinato tango rhythm beginning in bar 13 drives the music forward (see Example 2.1).

Example 2.1. Wilkins, *Titan Tango*, Bars 1–6.¹⁹

TITAN TANGO
for Alto Saxophone, Violoncello and Piano

KEYNA WILKINS

Grave con liberamente ♩ = c.44

The musical score consists of two systems. The first system includes staves for Alto Saxophone, Violoncello, and Piano. The Alto Saxophone part has a whole rest in bar 1 and a half note in bar 2. The Violoncello part has a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with slurs and accents, marked *mp*, *mf*, and *p*. The Piano part has whole notes in bars 1 and 2. The second system includes staves for Alto Saxophone (A.Sax.) and Violoncello (Vc.). The Alto Saxophone part continues with a melodic line marked *mf*, *f*, and *p*. The Violoncello part has whole notes in bars 1 and 2.

¹⁸ For sources discussing the relationship between time and cadenzas, see: Bill Dobbins, ‘Improvisation: An Essential Element of Musical Proficiency,’ *Music Educators Journal* 66, no. 5 (1980): 36–41; Joseph P Swain, ‘Form and Function of the Classical Cadenza,’ *The Journal of Musicology* 6, no. 1 (1988): 27–59.

¹⁹ Keyna Wilkins, *Titan Tango*, for Alto Saxophone, Violoncello and Piano (Wollongong: Wirripang, 2018), 1.

Example 2.2. Wilkins, *Titan Tango*, Bars 13–20.²⁰

13 **A** **Vivo** $\text{♩} = \text{c.}104$
pizz.
Vc. *mp*
Pno. *mp*

17
Vc.
Pno.

Next, we performed my arrangement of Franz Joseph Haydn's *Piano Trio in D Major*, *Hob. XV:16*. We love the vibrant energy of the work and the sparkling melodic lines that weave between the three instruments. We chose the work because of Haydn's playful use of time, suddenly interrupting lively phrases with a brief moment of silence that seems to suspend the music in mid-air (See Example 2.3).

²⁰ Wilkins, *Titan Tango*, 2.

Example 2.3. Haydn, 'I. Allegro', from *Piano Trio in D Major*, Hob. XV:16, Bars 63–71.²¹

Edition Peters 82824

The slower lyrical melodies of the second movement gently ebb and flow, creating a stark contrast to the fast, bright final movement. We played the final two movements without a pause in between to accentuate the different sensations of time. The work has an explosive and energetic ending reminiscent of a wave gathering momentum until it breaks. The final ten bars are like waves of momentum, building in volume. Ten bars before the end an eight-note semiquaver motif begins in the right hand of the piano. The saxophone and left hand of the piano enter two bars later, building in dynamics, until the cello finally enters for a driving tutti fortissimo ending (see Example 2.4).

²¹ Franz Joseph Haydn, *Piano Trio in D Major*, Hob. XV:16, 1790 (Leipzig: C.F. Peters).

Example 2.4. Haydn, 'III. Vivace Assai', from *Piano Trio in D Major*, Hob. XV:16, Bars 192–202.

The piece by Haydn provided a kind of anchor to the program as we expected the audience to have a strong affinity for Haydn's music, and that by seeing his name on the program they might be more willing to attend even if they did not know the other composers. Having grounded the program with this work, each of the subsequent pieces slowly moved away from the classical style.

For our third piece, I arranged a single movement of Max Bruch's *8 Pieces for Clarinet, Viola and Piano*, Op.83: 'vi. Nachtgesang, andante con moto', meaning 'night song, slowly but with motion'. I find the achingly beautiful opening melody evokes the feeling of being lost in reflection in the still of the night. A faster middle section creates an anxious and uncertain atmosphere where we could push and pull of the timing of the melody with our use of rubato.²²

²² For sources discussing the relationship between rubato and time, see: Carl Czerny, *Complete Theoretical and Practical Piano Forte School*, Op. 500, 3 vols., 1839, trans. J.A. Hamilton (London: Cocks, 1839), vol. 3, 31–38; Ignace Jan Paderewski, 'Paderewski on Tempo Rubato,' in *Success in Music and How It Is Won* by Henry T. Finck (New York: Scribner, 1909) 454–62; Sandra P. Rosenblum, 'The Uses of Rubato in Music, Eighteenth to Twentieth Centuries,' *Performance Practice Review* 7, no. 1 (1994): 33–53, <https://doi.org/10.5642/perfpr.199407.01.03>.

The piece settles back to the slower tempo of the opening before the final delicate phrases hesitantly approach the final silence, lingering suspended in the air until broken by the release of our gesture (see Example 2.5). This was slowest piece in our program, and each of the subsequent pieces increased in tempo, giving the program an overall driving momentum to the end.

Example 2.5., Bruch, ‘VI. Nachtgesang, Andante con moto’, from *8 Pieces for Clarinet, Viola and Piano*, Bars 83–93.²³

After the Bruch, we programmed Nikolai Kapustin’s *Duet for Alto Saxophone and Cello, Op. 99*. This short work felt like a good transition piece between the Classical and Romantic styles of Haydn and Bruch and the more modern works that would end the program. The middle section is almost reminiscent of an early jazz standard, with a walking bass line in the cello and a flowing alto saxophone solo over the top. The movement creates a different sense of

²³ Max Bruch, ‘VI. Nachtgesang, Andante con moto’ in *8 Pieces for Clarinet, Viola and Piano*, (Berlin: N. Simrock, 1910).

momentum than the earlier works, using complex harmonic tension and release to drive it forward.

We then programmed Svante Henryson's spirited and energetic piece *Off Pist*, for soprano Saxophone and Cello. The fast tempo, syncopated rhythms, and rapid semiquaver lines weaving between the soprano saxophone and cello create a lively atmosphere. At times the call and response phrases become shorter and shorter until the music is suspended in silence, almost reminiscent to the Haydn and Bruch examples above (see Example 2.6. Bars 86–93).

Example 2.6. Henryson, 'Off Pist', from *Off Pist Suite*, Bars 85–92.²⁴

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Off Pist' by Svante Henryson, specifically bars 85 through 92. The score is written for a violin and a double bass. It is in the key of D major (two sharps) and 3/4 time. The score is divided into two sections, I and J, indicated by boxed letters above the staves.

Section I begins at bar 85. The violin part starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The double bass part starts with a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. Both parts are marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The violin part continues with a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, and a quarter note E5. The double bass part continues with a quarter note C3, a quarter note D3, and a quarter note E3. The section ends at bar 86.

Section J begins at bar 93. The violin part starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, a quarter note A4, and a quarter note B4. The double bass part starts with a quarter note G2, a quarter note A2, and a quarter note B2. Both parts are marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The violin part continues with a quarter note C5, a quarter note D5, and a quarter note E5. The double bass part continues with a quarter note C3, a quarter note D3, and a quarter note E3. The section ends at bar 94.

²⁴ Svante Henryson, 'Off Pist', from *Off Pist Suite* (Stockholm: www.henryson.net/scorestore 1996/2018), 8.

The final work of the program was *Rung*, by British composer Adam Caird. *Rung* was the fastest piece in the program, and is built on the same ostinato tango rhythm as Titan Tango which we thought was an interesting way to bookend the program (see Example 2.7.). It was also the most sonically different piece in the program, with dampened piano strings, slap strings with the right hand for the cellist, and alternative fingerings on the soprano saxophone. The accented and syncopated final section reach the loudest dynamics and fastest tempo of the entire program, until the last phrase ends suspended without resolution (see Example 2.8.).

Example 2.7. Caird, *Rung*, Bars 1–9.²⁵

Rung Adam Caird

Funky ♩ = c. 160

Sop. Sax

Cello

Pno.

damp strings behind damper to obtain harmonic

6

col legno or slap strings with right hand

Pno.

²⁵ Adam Caird, *Rung* (Manchester: Astute Music, 2008), 2.

Example 2.8. Caird, Rung, Bars 92–96.²⁶

During the concert we spoke quite casually to the audience in between each piece, introducing ourselves and the works we were performing. We also wore more semi-formal clothes to contribute to a more relaxed atmosphere. Throughout the concert we had an exceptionally positive response from the capacity audience, and afterwards many of the audience members signed up to our mailing list. We felt we were able to satisfy the audience's expectations but also surprise them with our programming.

²⁶ Adam Caird, *Rung* (Manchester: Astute Music, 2008), 12.

Using the conception of the concert frame helped us identify the open components of the concert, and reconsider how we approach the conventions of a classical music concert. By applying a curatorial approach to programming, we were able to realise our artistic aims within the creative scope that was available to us. My recital at the 2019 Singapore Saxophone Symposium was another occasion where the administrative factors were quite limited, but with unusual audience factors and an entirely different artistic goal.

2.3 Duo Obax and Yasmin Rowe Recital, Singapore Saxophone Symposium

The Singapore Saxophone Symposium has been held annually at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) since 2011.²⁷ Zechariah Goh Toh Chai, the Artistic Director of the symposium, is the Head of Composition Studies and Senior Lecturer at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. Alongside a range of performances and masterclasses by local and international saxophonists, a composition workshop is held as part of the symposium to promote new and idiomatic works for saxophone.²⁸ The majority of performances are held in NAFA's 380-seat Lee Foundation Theatre.

I was invited to give a recital, perform one work in the Gala concert on the final evening and give a masterclass at the symposium by Zechariah Goh in January 2019. I had already been a guest artist at the 2017 and 2018 symposiums, and was excited to be invited to return. The event is well run and has always been very enjoyable.

Like the Melba Hall concerts, the administrative components were entirely predetermined. My recital was to be thirty minutes in length. The symposium would cover travel and

²⁷ 'About – Singapore Saxophone Symposium 2019,' accessed 18 January 2021, <http://singaporesaxophonesymposium.com/2019/about/>.

²⁸ 'Composition Workshop – Singapore Saxophone Symposium 2019,' accessed 18 January 2021, <http://singaporesaxophonesymposium.com/2019/composition-workshop/>.

accommodation costs and pay a performance fee. Whilst there were no stipulations that it had to be a solo concert, the symposium's budget constraints limited the number of professional musicians I could travel with from Melbourne. All marketing and concert programs would be organised by the symposium, for which I was asked to provide a biography, headshot, and list of works.

The main artistic restraints were on lighting, concert duration, and the number of musicians that I could perform with (because of travel costs). Because there are back-to-back events throughout the symposium, rehearsal times and spaces in Singapore are very limited. This makes staging and the use of extra-musical or interdisciplinary elements more difficult because there are very few opportunities to prepare in the theatre beforehand.

As I had participated in previous symposia and similar saxophone events, I was aware of the likely audience demographic. The symposium is mostly attended by secondary and tertiary level saxophone students from the Asia-Pacific, some members of the general public, and professional saxophonists from around the world. This means that the audience has many listeners with the expertise to judge the quality of saxophone technique. In my experience, many of the saxophone students in the audience listen intently to the aspects of their playing they are working on at the time, such as tone colour, altissimo control, technical fluency, or intonation. At these kinds of saxophone events, it can feel like the students are more interested in saxophone technique rather than the music itself. Dazzling displays of virtuosity often receive the most rapturous applause and create the most 'buzz' amongst them afterwards. The saxophone professionals in the audience often have strong opinions about a performer's interpretive choices of our more famous pieces, which means performers often avoid them and

focus on new music. Works that are written especially to be premiered at a saxophone event often cater to the audience's expectation of virtuosity and technical display.

Overall, the symposium allows the performer a lot of artistic freedom, as long as they can make their ideas work within the constraints of the festival. In the past I have been able to present more theatrical concerts with electronics and some small lighting changes and the symposium has always been as accommodating as possible. As with the Melba Hall concert described above, the artistic factors of programming and interpretation were in our control, as well as audience factors such as our attire and our interaction with the audience.

Most recitals at the symposium are for solo saxophone and piano, saxophone quartet, or saxophone ensemble. I decided I would perform as a trio with oboist Briana Leaman and Yasmin Rowe on piano, allowing me to present a slightly different concert. Briana and I perform as a duo called Duo Obax, and often work with Yasmin for trio projects.

As Duo Obax, our artistic and creative vision is inspired by nature and the types of feelings it evokes in us: calm, awe, wonder, and connection. We often remark that despite the many unique and simultaneous sounds that make up a soundscape in nature, there is sense of harmony between them. Even when we feel the overall atmosphere to be peaceful, there are often flurries of random energy as a bird takes off or a gust of wind whistles through the trees. Our aim is to design our recitals like an experience of nature and create an atmosphere in our concerts that is representative of the most impactful experiences we have shared together. Almost all of the music we perform has been written by Australian composers, including many works composed or arranged for our group. We approach composers whose music evokes the same aesthetic or

emotional responses in us that we experience in nature, and often talk in depth about our artistic vision and inspirations.

Our recital at the Singapore Saxophone Symposium was particularly inspired by birds. The program included:

Nicholas Russoniello, *Werri Dance*, 2018, Soprano Saxophone and Oboe

Luke Severn, *Little Birds of the Night*, 2018, Saxophone, Oboe and Piano

Tim Dargaville, *Three Invisible Dances*, 2015, Soprano Saxophone and Piano

Ross Edwards, *Love Duet*, Arr. in 2019 for Alto Saxophone, Oboe and Piano

While these works have moments of technical virtuosity, they are more atmospheric with slow harmonic developments and many haunting lyrical passages. I knew that this ran the risk of frustrating the audience's expectation of virtuosity, I wanted to create a concert experience that would be memorable and impactful because of its atmosphere.

We decided to begin *Werri Dance* in the wings off stage, with Briana on one side and me on the other. We each played melodic excerpts of the piece across the stage as though they were the calls of two singing birds (see Example 2.9). At the time these motifs were not included at the beginning of the work, but Nicholas Russionello was very happy for us to do this, and they have been incorporated in recent editions. We started as the audience in the auditorium were still talking and settling, hoping to represent the kind of spontaneous sounds in nature that suddenly can capture your attention.

As we both slowly walked to the centre of the stage I repeated bars 8–11 whilst circular breathing. The bars have lower pedal tones and use changes in voicing to sound multiple notes

of the harmonic series simultaneously, a shimmering effect that is derived from the nature of sound itself that we felt was a beautiful way to start.

Example 2.9. Russoniello, *Werri Dance*, Bars 1–12.²⁹

Full Score

Werri Dance

For Joseph Lallo and Briana Leaman

N Russoniello
2018

Our next piece was Luke Severn’s ‘Little Birds of the Night’, inspired by the poem of Stephen Crane of the same name. We had commissioned Severn to write the piece earlier that year as we were drawn to his beautifully lyrical and atmospheric writing. The piece begins and ends in a ‘dreamy’ atmosphere, with rich, colourful harmonies that brings to mind the orchestral writing of Debussy.

²⁹ Nick Russoniello, *Werri Dance*, (Sydney: nickrussoniello.com.au, 2018), 1.

Example 2.10. Severn, 'Little Birds of the Night' in *and other lines*, Bars 1–6.³⁰

I. Little birds of the night

"Little birds of the night
Aye, they have much to tell
Perching there in rows
Blinking at me with their serious eyes
Recounting of flowers they have seen and loved
Of meadows and groves of the distance
And pale sands at the foot of the sea
And breezes that fly in the leaves.
They are vast in experience
These little birds that come in the night."
-Stephen Crane

Luke Severn

Dreamy ♩ = c. 58

Oboe

Soprano Saxophone

Piano

pp dolce

pp

pp

2

p

p

p

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³⁰ Luke Severn, 'Little Birds of the Night', from *and other lines* (Melbourne: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2020), 1.

I then performed Tim Dargaville’s *Three Invisible Dances for Soprano Saxophone and Piano*. Dances I and III are lively and energetic. Their fast tempo, changing metre, and irregular melodic lines create an unusual dance feel, which I thought reminiscent of a bird’s light and spontaneous jumping or hopping movements (see Example 2.11).

Example 2.11. Dargaville, ‘Invisible Dance I’, from *Thee Invisible Dances for Soprano Saxophone and Piano*, Bars 1–4.³¹

I

Rhythmic, with bounce ♩ = 120 Tim Dargaville

S. Sax. *f sempre*

Pno. *f sempre*

Ped.

The second dance is atmospheric, lush, and slow. During the last sixteen bars of the movement the saxophone plays a solitary haunting pianissimo note over delicate and colourful piano chords (see Example 2.12).

³¹ Tim Dargaville, ‘Invisible Dance I’ in *Three Invisible Dances for Soprano Saxophone and Piano* (Melbourne: Australian Music Centre, 2006/11), 1.

Example 2.12. Dargaville, 'Invisible Dance II', from *Three Invisible Dances for Soprano Saxophone and Piano*, Bars 37–55.³²

We ended the recital with our performance of Ross Edwards's 'Love Duet' from *Bird Spirit Dreaming*, which Edwards arranged for us from the second movement of his Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra. The alto saxophone plays very little compared to the oboe (which is not what you would expect to hear from a piece performed at a saxophone symposium), but the

³² Tim Dargaville, 'Invisible Dance II' in *Three Invisible Dances for Soprano Saxophone and Piano* (Melbourne: Australian Music Centre, 2006/11), 9.

piece formed an integral part of the overall concert atmosphere. The delicately slow ‘love duet’ gently unfolds in complexity, with soaring and mysterious melodies in the oboe (see Example 2.13). The final bars return to the pianissimo dynamic of the opening, with the final piano note slowly decaying to silence.

Example 2.13. Edwards, ‘Love Duet’ from *Bird Spirit Dreaming*, Bars 1–7.³³

for Diana & Alexandre

LOVE DUET
from *Bird Spirit Dreaming*

Ross Edwards

This arrangement was made for Briana Leaman and Joseph Lallo

Lento misterioso ♩ = c. 48

Oboe

Alto Saxophone

pp

A tempo ma con poco moto (♩ = c.48)

pp dolciss.

pp dolciss.

³³ Ross Edwards, ‘Love Duet’ from *Bird Spirit Dreaming* – *Concerto for Oboe and Orchestra* (Sydney: G. Schirmer Australia Pty Ltd, 2002/19), 1.

During the concert, I introduced the works and their composers, and provided short musical descriptions. As the concert went on, Briana, Yasmin, and I felt the atmosphere of the concert become more intense, and at the end we were quite taken aback by the intensity of the applause. Afterwards, we were surprised by how many people expressed their appreciation of the programming. Most of the time with these events, saxophonists comment only on your playing, and we were excited to hear the appreciation of our programming.

The Melba Hall Lunch Hour Concert and my recital at the Singapore Saxophone Symposium were both examples of concerts designed within pre-existing concert frames, but also show that even within these constraints, there are components available for us to curate in personal and interesting ways. Next, I will describe my performances of Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, where I was able to exercise control over a much wider array of parameters.

2.4 Quartet for the End of Time, fortyfivedownstairs and Montsalvat

Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* is one of the most powerful and intense compositions of the twentieth century. It was premiered in a World War II German prison camp on 15 January 1941, by Messiaen and three other captive musicians, Jean Le Boulaire (violin), Henri Akoka (clarinet), and Étienne Pasquier (cello).³⁴ Despite the circumstances of its conception and premiere, Messiaen stated that the work was not a commentary on the war.³⁵ Rather, Messiaen is exploring the conflict between our earthly experience of time and the

³⁴ Leslie A Sprout, 'Ignoring Jolivet's Testimony, Embracing Messiaen's Memories' in *Musical Legacy of Wartime France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 80–82.

³⁵ Sarra Elizabeth Hey-Folick, 'Escaping Time: Messiaen's Musical Language, Religious Symbolism, and Undermining Time in Quatour Pour La Fin Du Temps,' DMA Diss., iii (University of Nevada, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.34917/19412083>.

eternity of God, who is ‘who is without beginning, without end, without succession,’³⁶ and the dissolution of time described in the Book of Revelations.³⁷

Yelian He, the cellist in *Collide*, who had performed the work a few years earlier in the United Kingdom, suggested that we perform the work with *Collide* and ask Wilma Smith, former concertmaster of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, to join us. Yelian and Yasmin (piano) regularly perform with Wilma as part of their piano trio, *Rock, Paper, Scissors*. Before agreeing as a group to the project, we asked ourselves whether we would feel comfortable performing the work using the saxophone instead of the clarinet. Because of the work’s emotional and historical magnitude, we thought deeply about whether we could perform it with the intensity, colour, and flexibility we felt it requires and deserves. We discussed whether or not the composition relies on having the clarinet part played by a clarinetist to have an impact on an audience. I will touch on these questions briefly below, but I will focus predominately on the curation of the concert frame for these performances and how I used my emotional and aesthetic responses to the music to shape other aspect of the concert experience. My description of how and why I adapted the clarinet part for saxophone serves to highlight the pressures and influences performers face when balancing the design of a concert with considerations about the artistic integrity of a performance.

My first step was to see how many changes I would need to make to the original clarinet part to be able to perform it on saxophone. Even though the saxophone would create a different

³⁶ Andrew Shenton, ‘Observations on Time in Olivier Messiaen’s *Traité*,’ in *Olivier Messiaen: Music, Art and Literature*, ed. Christopher Dingle (New York: Ashgate, 2007), 178.

³⁷ Iain Matheson, ‘The End of Time: A Biblical Theme in Messiaen’s *Quatour*,’ in *The Messiaen Companion*, ed. Peter Hill (London: Faber & Faber, 2011).

A detailed description of the background of the work and the research relating to it is beyond the scope of the current study. However, sources can be found in footnotes 34–37. See also Rebecca Rischin, *For the End of Time: The Story of the Messiaen Quartet* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

tonal colour to the clarinet, I wanted to respect the integrity of the work by making as few changes as possible. I asked Australian saxophonist and arranger Mary Osborne to transcribe the original clarinet part for alto saxophone. The obvious choice was to use the soprano saxophone in place of the clarinet (as both are in the key of Bb), but this would require transposing the lower passages up an octave to fit in the range of the soprano saxophone, whereas transcribing the part for alto saxophone would allow every note to be performed in its original register. I preferred this even though it meant using the extreme altissimo register of the alto saxophone and created many technical difficulties. The clarinet part also has many extreme dynamics, from *ppp* to *ffff*, which I thought I could achieve better on the alto saxophone than the soprano.

As I was analysing the part, I noticed that in ‘Movement VI, Danse de la fureur, pour les sept trompettes’ (Dance of fury, for the seven trumpets), Messiaen wrote the words *bronzé, cuivré*, above the clarinet *sfff* accents, asking the clarinet to create a bronze and brassy sound. Whilst this is probably a reference to the trumpets in the title, I thought it was an interesting indication of the types of tonal colours Messiaen was interested in exploring in the piece. As the saxophone is a reed instrument with a brass body, I felt that I could create an interesting interpretation of the sound Messiaen described. I also considered incorporating qualities of the clarinet sound and technique into my interpretation. By not using any vibrato throughout the entire piece, which is stylistically typical of classical clarinet playing, I felt I could achieve the important stillness in the long slow-moving passages. Using alternate fingerings meant I could create the woodier and denser colour of the clarinet.

After due consideration, I felt comfortable I could perform the intricate details of the part and create a tonal colour that was similar to the clarinet but also took advantage of the brassier

qualities of the saxophone. I decided I would discuss my interpretive decisions with the group then rely on them to decide whether they felt integrity of the work was preserved. During our first rehearsal together, there seemed to be a collective sigh of relief as we felt the energy and intensity of the work come together. We agreed that we would perform the piece and were excited by the challenge ahead.

Starting the concert design with only the work in mind changed our curatorial processes as performers considerably. We had much greater control over all factors of the concert frame because we were not designing it to fit within the pre-existing format of a series or festival. Without having to navigate any predetermined components, we were able to make curatorial decisions that best aligned with our ideas. Perhaps the biggest curatorial decision was our choice of venue, which impacts many aspects of the concert frame. These include audience and artistic factors such as capacity, lighting capabilities, acoustics, and location, consequently impacting how the performance is experienced by an audience.

We wanted the focus of the concert to be the composition, both for the audience and for us as performers. Even though the primary function of a concert hall is to direct the sensory focus of the audience to the performance of the work, performing in a concert hall did not feel right for us. We were performing an unconventional arrangement of the work and wanted an unconventional space. We thought this would help set an audience expectation for something outside the norm, and perhaps connect the audience with the exceptionally unconventional setting of the work's premiere in a prisoner of war camp. We approached two venues we felt achieved these aims and that are renowned for more adventurous programming: fortyfivedownstairs and Montsalvat. Both accepted our proposal, giving us the chance to perform the concert twice over a two-and-a-half-week period.

The first venue was fortyfivedownstairs located in Melbourne's inner-city Flinders Lane, a warehouse-style basement theatre with exposed brick, dark wooden floorboards, and paned windows with iron bars.³⁸ The second venue was the Barn Gallery at Montsalvat, a large white gallery with exposed wooden beams, gambrel roof and polished concrete floor, and situated on twelve acres of land in the leafy Melbourne suburb of Eltham.³⁹

Instead of a set performance fee, we agreed to split the ticket revenue between us and the venues. This meant we invested much more time than we normally would in marketing the concert. We were in more frequent communication with the venues about ticket sales, and felt more financial pressure for the concert to be well attended. The payoff was that we felt we had more creative control over the design and presentation of the concert.

By using my conception of the concert frame, I was able to focus on parameters that are not often explicitly considered as a way of shaping the audience's experience, for example, printed programs. I was interested in using the program design as an expressive and creative opportunity for the performer, and to contribute visually to the audience's aesthetic and emotional experience of the concert. Printed programs can allow the audience to navigate their way through the concert by listing the order of the works and scheduled intervals. They can connect the audience to the performers on stage by providing biographical information, and provide historical information about the work and the composer. Whilst programs have the potential to improve the audience's comprehension of the work and guide their sensory experience of the concert, they are often quite plain and functional.⁴⁰

³⁸ 'About Us » Fortyfivedownstairs,' accessed 18 January 2021, <https://fortyfivedownstairs.com/about-us/>.

³⁹ 'Montsalvat,' accessed 18 January 2021, <https://www.montsalvat.com.au/>.

⁴⁰ Jonna K. Vuoskoski and Tuomas Eerola's 2015 study 'Extramusical Information Contributes to Emotions Induced by Music', examined how extramusical and contextual information can influence the emotional effect of a musical work for a listener. Their findings suggest that providing contextual information and narrative descriptions intensified the emotions induced by the music for the listener. See Jonna K Vuoskoski and Tuomas

I wanted my program design to be inspired by my musical interpretation and ideas of the work. I searched for images that elicited similar aesthetic and emotional responses in me as the music did when I was practising, and that represented the musical contrast between the sections. I wanted my musical interpretation and my program design to be underpinned by the same ideas for two reasons. Firstly, I thought this would allow me to express one idea in two different forms (the musical performance and the program design), and secondly, that this would create an artistic coherence between the two.

When I was practising and researching the piece, I wrote down any words, phrases, colours, or descriptions of images I associated with the music, as well as the physical sensations I experienced. In the same way that these ideas influenced my interpretation of the score, they also influenced my design of the program. Many of my design ideas came from practising the solo third movement ‘Abîme des oiseaux’ (Abyss of Birds).

The beginning of the movement is marked *Lent, expressif et triste* (slow, expressive, and sad) and under the first note Messiaen writes *désolé*, meaning desolate, bleak, or afraid. At quaver = 44, the tempo is extraordinarily slow (see Example 2.14). The opening section between bars 1 to 13 is often referred to as The Abyss.⁴¹ The phrases are long and few opportunities to breathe, pushing the wind player to the absolute limits of their air capacity. It is hard to concentrate as we lose air and I found it difficult to keep a sense of pulse. The temptation was to speed up to the end of the phrase so I could grab a breath, but I took Messiaen’s marking, *sans presser* (without going faster or accelerating), as a request to resist this impulse.

Example 2.14. Messiaen, ‘Abîme des oiseaux’, from *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*, Bars 1–5.⁴²

Eerola, ‘Extramusical Information Contributes to Emotions Induced by Music,’ *Psychology of Music* 43, no. 2 (2015): 262–74, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0305735613502373>.

⁴¹ Hey-Folick, ‘Escaping Time,’ 139.

⁴² Olivier Messiaen, ‘Abîme des oiseaux’, in *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* (Paris: Durand, 1942), 4.

III. Abîme des oiseaux



After practising this section for a month, I had written down the following words in the corner of my score: exhaustion, drudgery, monotony, helpless, marching, held down, grounded, hard to breathe, endless stretches of barbed wire, oppressive, broken wings, blanket of snow. I wondered if the idea of snow had come from reading Messiaen's description of why he wrote the work:

I would say that I composed the quartet in order to escape from the snow, the war, captivity, and myself. The greatest benefit I gained from it was that, in the midst of three hundred thousand prisoners, I was probably the only one who was free.⁴³

I then searched for photographs of the prisoner of war camps. I decided I would devote a single page of the program to each movement of the work. As the movements are separated by silence during the performance, in the program I would separate them onto single pages. Each page in the program contained one image, and on each image were Messiaen's own words about each movement.

I chose images of barbed wire, snow, and train tracks (see Figure 2.3 and 2.4). The long stretches of barbed wire around the camps represented the atrocities that were inflicted within

⁴³ Sprout, *The Musical Legacy of Wartime France*, 82.

them, and I find their expansiveness elicits a sense of hopelessness. The image on the front cover evoked a sense of being pulled forward to an inevitable ending.

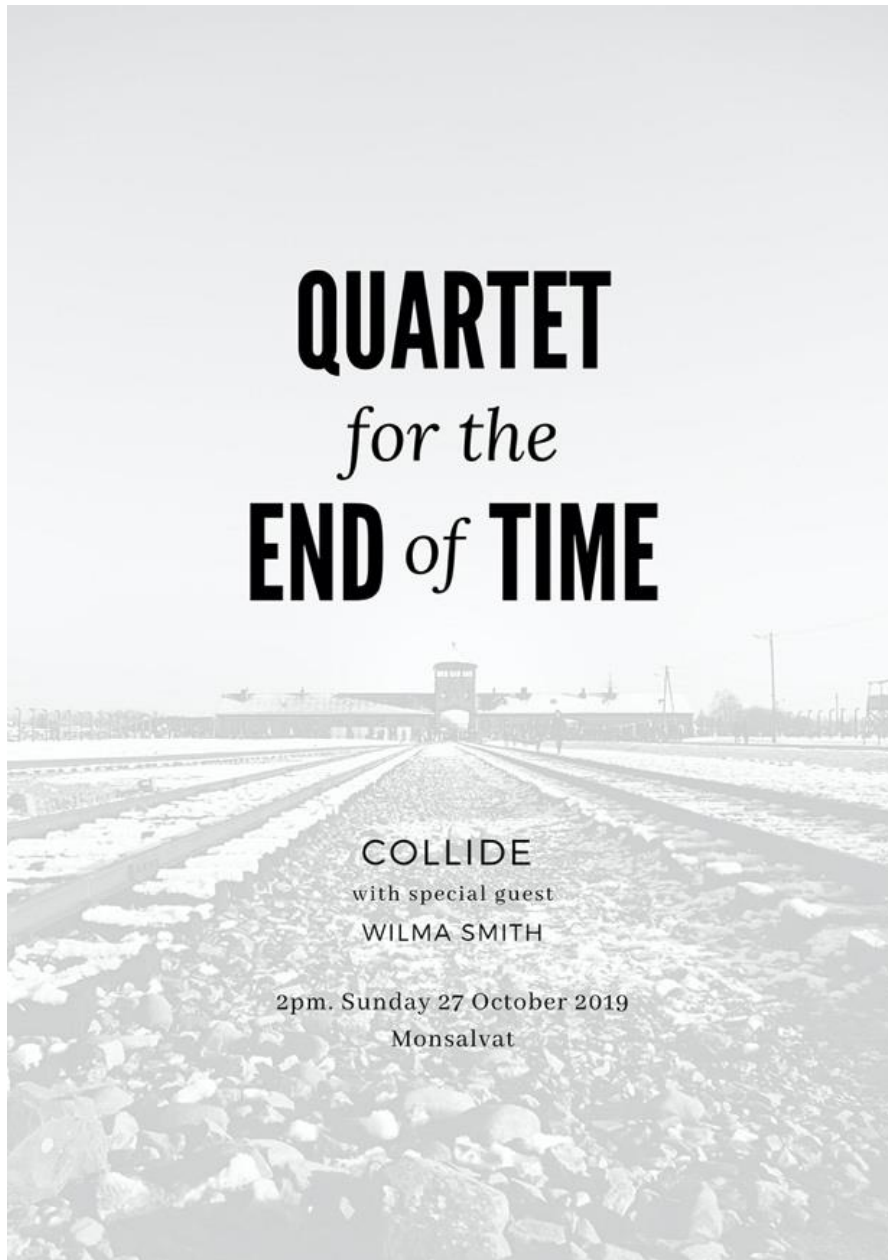


Figure 2.2. Quartet for the End of Time program front cover.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Photo by Erica Magugliani, *Extermination Camp*, 2018. <https://unsplash.com/photos/K2ZGh2XabNo>

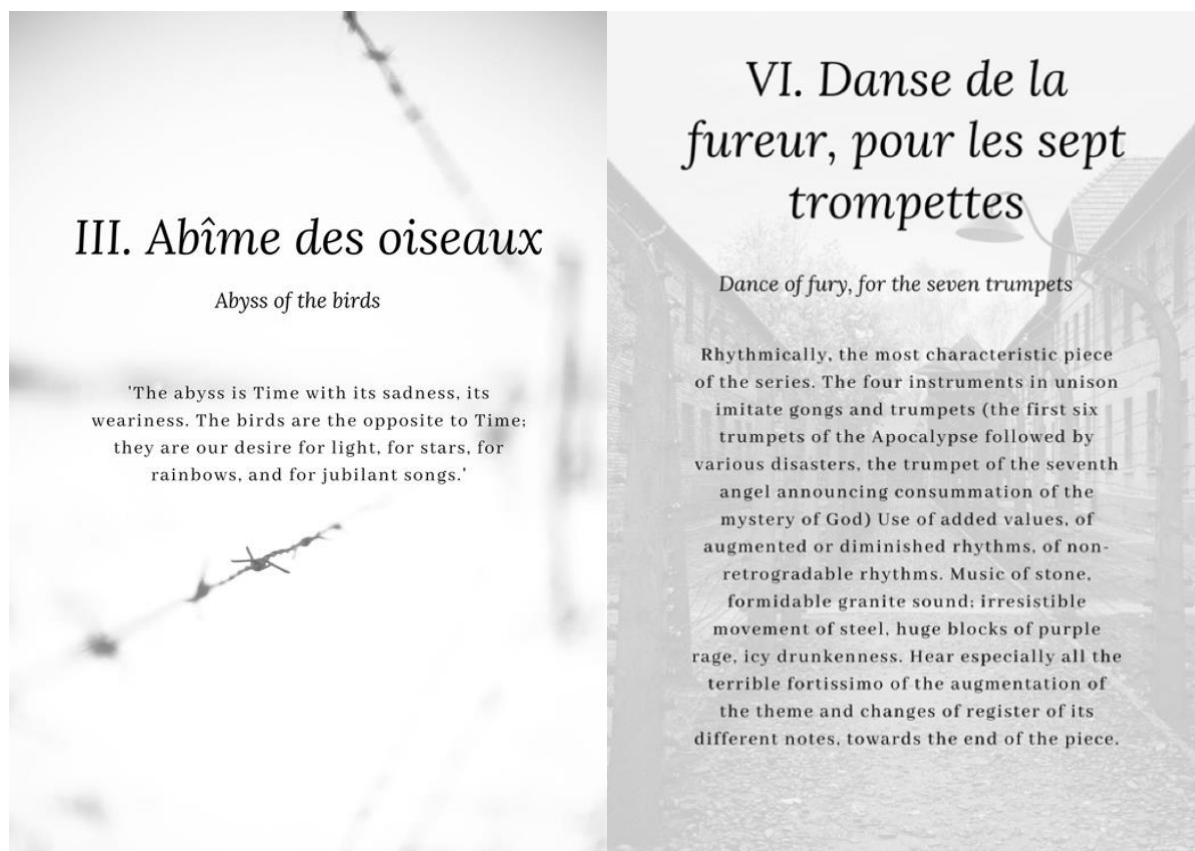


Figure 2.3. Quartet for the End of Time program pages for movements II and VI.⁴⁵

The slow passages of ‘The Abyss’ are in stark contrast to the rapid virtuosic flurries of notes between measures 14 to 19 and 21 to 24, often referred to as the ‘The Birds’.⁴⁶ Measure 14 is marked crotchet = 126, *Presque vif, gai, capricieux* (almost fast, happy, capricious) and under the phrase Messiaen writes *ensoleillé, comme un oiseau, très libre de mouvement*, meaning sunny, like a bird, very free in time (see Example 2.15).

⁴⁵ Movement III photo image by Marco Amatulli, *Barbed Wire*, 2019. <https://unsplash.com/photos/r9PMK-rwbl8>; Movement VI photo image by Severinus Dewantara, *Double barbed wire fences of Auschwitz Concentration Camp*, 2019. https://unsplash.com/photos/81qPtovZ_IA

⁴⁶ Hey-Folick, ‘Escaping Time,’ 139.

Example 2.15. Messiaen, ‘Abîme des oiseaux’, from *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps*, Bars 12–13.⁴⁷


The image displays four staves of musical notation for the piece 'Abîme des oiseaux'. The first staff begins with the instruction 'Sans presser, progressif et puissant' and a dynamic marking of *ppp*, followed by a crescendo marked 'cresc. molto' leading to *ffff*. The tempo is marked 'Presque vif, gai, capricieux' with a metronome marking of $\text{♩} = 126 \text{ env.}$. The second staff continues with a dynamic of *f* and the instruction '(ensoleillé, comme un oiseau, très libre de mouvement)'. The third staff features a dynamic of *f* and the instruction 'Pressez brillant'. The fourth staff starts with a dynamic of *ppp* and a tempo marking of 'Lent ($\text{♩} = 44 \text{ env.}$) (sans presser, progressif et puissant)', followed by a crescendo to *ffff* and then a dynamic of *f* with the tempo marking 'Presque vif ($\text{♩} = 126 \text{ env.}$)'.

I wrote down the following associations and sensations that arose whilst I was practising this section: spontaneous, free, fleeting, fickle, vibrant, at peace, gentle, playful, instinctual, suspended, rapid head movements of a bird, and looking down from above. I imagined myself listening attentively for a response to the bird calls during the short rests in between motifs, which I felt helped keep the tension and intensity of the phrase during the silence.

For this section I search for black and white images of birds, an obvious reference to Messiaen’s lifelong fascination with birdsong and their stylistic influence on his writing,⁴⁸ but also to contrast the freedom of the birds with the hopelessness of captivity. I mostly chose images of birds in flight, except for one image of a bird perched on tree looking up to the sun.

⁴⁷ Olivier Messiaen, ‘Abîme des oiseaux’, in *Quatuor pour la fin du Temps* (Paris: Durand, 1942), 4.

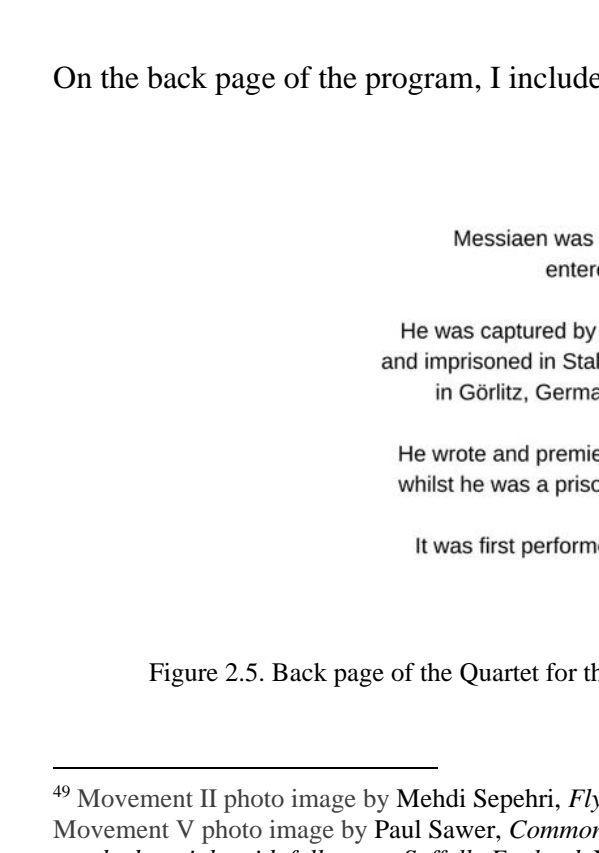
⁴⁸ Sander Van Maas, ‘Messiaen, Deleuze, and the Birds of Proclamation,’ in *Speaking of Music: Addressing the Sonorous*, eds. Keith Chapin and Andrew H. Clark (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 169–85, <https://doi.org/10.5422/fordham/9780823251384.003.0011>; John R. Nelson, ‘Birds and War,’ *The Massachusetts Review* 56, no. 3 (2015): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mar.2015.0062>.



II. Vocalise, pour l'Ange qui annonce la fin du Temps

Vocalise, for the Angel who announces
the end of time

'The first and third parts (very short) evoke the power of this mighty angel, a rainbow upon his head and clothed with a cloud, who sets one foot on the sea and one foot on the earth. In the middle section are the impalpable harmonies of heaven. In the piano, sweet cascades of blue-orange chords, enclosing in their distant chimes the almost plainchant song of the violin and cello.'



V. Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus

Praise to the eternity of Jesus

'Jesus is considered here as the Word. A broad phrase, "infinitely slow", on the cello, magnifies with love and reverence the eternity of the Word, powerful and gentle, "whose time never runs out". The melody stretches majestically into a kind of gentle, regal distance. "In the beginning was the Word, and Word was with God, and the Word was God."'
(John 1:1 (King James Version))

Figure 2.4. Quartet for the End of Time program pages for movements II an V.⁴⁹

On the back page of the program, I included a brief contextual description of the work:

Messiaen was 31 years old when France
entered World War II.

He was captured by the German army in June 1940
and imprisoned in Stalag VIII-A, a prisoner-of-war camp
in Görlitz, Germany (now Zgorzelec, Poland)

He wrote and premiered Quartet for the End of Time
whilst he was a prisoner of war in German captivity.

It was first performed by Messiaen and his fellow
prisoners.

Figure 2.5. Back page of the Quartet for the End of Time program.

⁴⁹ Movement II photo image by Mehdi Sepehri, *Flying Birds*, 2018. <https://unsplash.com/photos/cX0Yxw38cx8>
Movement V photo image by Paul Sawer, *Common Nightingale Luscinia megarhynchos adult male, singing, perched at night with full moon, Suffolk, England*, Year unknown.
<https://www.agefotostock.com/age/en/details-photo/common-nightingale-luscinia-megarhynchos-adult-male-singing-perched-at-night-with-moon-suffolk-england-april-composite-image/FHR-03034-00116-842>.

My hope was that during the silence between movements the audience would look at the page associated with the upcoming movement, and that this would emotionally and aesthetically connect them to the next movement and heighten their experience of it.

Different curatorial decisions were made for each of the performances, which were two and half weeks apart. Our first performance was on Tuesday evening, 8 October 2019, at fortyfivedownstairs. To create an intimate and intense atmosphere for the performance, we asked for small candlelit tables to be arranged in a close semicircle around us with the seating bank behind the tables looking down onto the stage. We requested a soft white wash to light the performance space, and red up-lighting to accentuate the exposed brick pillars and iron bars on the windows.

We did not talk before, during, or after the concert. Performing this piece was a solemn and powerful experience, and required intense concentration and physical exertion. To maintain an intense atmosphere throughout the entirety of the concert, we did not release our gestures after we finished each movement. Even though it is typical for an audience not to applaud in between movements at a classical music concert, there is often noise from the moving or clearing their throat. However, during this performance there was absolute silence between movements.

Our second performance at Montsalvat was on the Sunday afternoon of 27 October 2019. Montsalvat rarely program evening concerts, but we did not mind as the premiere of the work also took place during the day, and it meant that whilst we were performing the same work twice, the settings of the concerts were vastly different. There was natural light streaming in from the windows, and spotlights on the gallery artwork that surround us.

Whilst we could not control the time of day, or the natural lighting, we could use these factors to shape a different, less intense concert experience from our previous performance. Knowing this, we could create a concert that felt more communal with a calmer and more reflective atmosphere. We decided to wear brighter and more casual clothes instead of the traditional concert blacks. In this way, we were not ‘performing’ the role of a performer, but rather we were a group coming together to play the work. It also created less sense of separation between the audience and performers.

While each of these four concerts discussed in this chapter were arguably fairly traditional, each had different open components and offered different curatorial possibilities. For the Melba Hall Lunch Hour concert and the Singapore Saxophone Symposium recital I was able to create more personal pairings of works and develop a unique atmosphere for each concert by developing a curatorial approach to programming. For the *Quartet for the end of Time*, the process of concert frame curation allowed me to create two notably different concert designs and atmospheres between fortyfivedownstairs and Montsalvat, despite performing the same work in both. A curatorial approach encourages performers to shape their programming as part of their creative vision, and expands the type of artistic expression they can share with an audience.

In each of these concerts described, I have felt the performance was at the heart of the concert experience and that I curated components of the frame to expand my creative and expressive parameters and enhance the emotional and aesthetic experience of the works for the audience. I have called this process ‘curating a performance’. In the next Chapter, I will explore the idea of ‘performing a curation’, where the expression of an idea is at the heart of the concert experience and guides the curation of the concert frame. The musical performance is but one

of the artistic components that make up the totality of the concert experience. The performer/curator views themselves as the author of the concert experience, and the design of the concert experiences emerges through their creative process.

Chapter 3. Performing a Curation

The four concerts discussed above have shown ways in which the performer/curator can exercise greater artistic freedom within the constraints of the classical concert frame. As outlined above, the concert frame is a complex structure with a multitude of artistic, audience, and administrative components. The classical concert frame is one recognised way of coherently tying these components together. In this chapter, I will examine one of many possible approaches to curating concerts in where the performer has greater freedom to harness a wider range of parameters – audience and administrative as well as artistic – to help achieve their aesthetic and emotional goals.

3.1 Using a Meta-Narrative to Guide the Curation of the Concert Frame

In his 2013 lecture titled ‘Art as Therapy’, Alain de Botton argued that ‘it’s not the art that’s the problem, it’s the frame around the art. We are simply not encouraged to bring ourselves to works of art.’¹ De Botton argues that by reframing the way we approach art, we can ‘release its latent purpose and its power to help us live and die’. In de Botton’s hypothetical reorganisation of the Tate Modern, the art would be arranged and presented according to their potential therapeutic function for the viewer rather than by dates or provenance. Galleries would focus on ‘the important rebalancing emotions encouraged by particular artworks’, categorised into themes of love, self-knowledge, fear, suffering, and compassion.² These categories would guide curatorial decisions and provide a conceptual framework within which the public could engage with the artworks.

¹ Alain de Botton, ‘Alain de Botton on Art as Therapy’ Lecture at the School of Life, 4 December 2013, 45:16, <https://youtu.be/qFnNgTSkHPM?t=409>.

² De Botton and Armstrong, *Art as Therapy*, 85.

A walk through a museum of art should amount to a structured encounter with a few of the things that are easiest for us to forget and most essential and life-enhancing to remember.³

Given that each individual artwork has its own history and narratives, I thought of de Botton's categories as a meta-narrative: a narrative that is above or beyond the narratives of the individual works, or most simply, a narrative about narratives.⁴ The meta-narrative created an overarching idea within which the individual artworks are situated. Whilst de Botton conceptually framed the artworks according to what he saw as their therapeutic ability to guide and console its viewers,⁵ I thought the same approach could be used by a performer/curator to curate the concert frame according to the core motivation underpinning their artistic expression. This too could be called a meta-narrative: an over-arching idea guiding the design of the concert experience.

³ Alain de Botton, 'Should Art Really Be for Its Own Sake Alone?,' *The Guardian*, 20 January 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/jan/20/art-museums-churches>.

⁴ John Stephens and Robyn McCallum, *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 3–25. The term metanarrative has been the focus of considerable debate and criticism in postmodern, poststructuralist, and critical theory, where metanarratives are defined as 'universal discourses of legitimation that mask their own particularity.' See: James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), 69. Jean-François Lyotard argued 'simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it.' See: Jean-François Lyotard, translation from French by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), xxiv–xxv. However, in this thesis, the term refers to its literary-critical use where a meta-narrative 'designates a larger arc of which smaller units form a part.' See: A. K. M. Adam, 'Metanarrative,' in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). See also, Monika Fludernik, 'Metanarrative and Metafictional Commentary: From Metadiscursivity to Metanarration and Metafiction,' *Poetica* 35, no. 1/2 (2003): 1–39; H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁵ De Botton and Armstrong, *Art as Therapy*, 81–91.

By using a meta-narrative to guide the curation of the concert frame, a conceptual framework is created within which the performer/curator can unite the musical and extra-musical elements of the concert design. This involves examining the factors of the concert frame and determining how the ideas of the meta-narrative could be expressed in the concert experience. Furthermore, if performer/curators use their own emotional and aesthetic responses to curate the concert frame, concert designs can model a form of artistic engagement for audiences that invites and emboldens them to approach the art differently. Below is one example of my use of a meta-narrative to guide the curation of a new concert experience, and others will be referred to in the conclusion.

3.2 Her Lover's Shadow, Grant Street Theatre

In 2018, I curated and performed *Her Lover's Shadow*, a sold-out concert that combined Australian instrumental solo and chamber music, dance, and lighting to tell a story of love, loss, and memory.⁶ The design of *Her Lover's Shadow* emerged through an intensely personal creative and artistic process. I wanted to curate an engaging, enriching, and emotionally satisfying concert for the audience, and to share with them a concert experience that represented how music and art were most serving me at that time in my life. I used my own experience of the art to frame the audience's experience, and model one potential means of artistic engagement.

I began by developing a meta-narrative, and then allowed the concert design to develop from it as part of my creative process. At that time, creating music and art was helping me understand and cope with loss, and clarify what was most important in my life. This became my meta-

⁶ Recordings from this concert can be found at <https://www.josephlallo.com/projects/her-lovers-shadow>.

narrative: ‘Art can be used to understand and cope with loss, and clarify for us what is most important in our lives’.

Meta-Narrative Art can be used to understand and cope with loss,
and clarify for us what is most important in our lives.

Figure 3.1. Her Lover's Shadow meta-narrative.⁷

I used the meta-narrative to create an emotional structure within which I programmed, designed, and presented the concert. The meta-narrative contained many other narratives within it, including those contained within the works performed. My own ideas, structures, and narratives also emerged under the meta-narrative, as described in more detail below.

When I was reading *Art as Therapy* (2013) by Alain de Botton and John Armstrong, which formed the basis of the lecture mentioned above, I came across a reference to Pliny the Elder's account of the origin of painting in his *Natural History*, dated 77-79 AD. I found one line of the story to be particularly moving: ‘a young couple who were much in love had to part, and, in response, the woman decided to trace the outline of her lover's shadow.’⁸ For me, Pliny's story of the origin of painting was a poignant expression of my meta-narrative. I felt a deep sense of sadness as I read it and thought about the futility of the human attempt to eternally preserve what we love most. After finishing this section of the book, I made my first decision about the concert design: to call it ‘Her Lover's Shadow’. Pliny's story became my first narrative within my meta-narrative.

⁷ As detailed below, I would write my ideas and choices under the meta-narrative throughout the design stage of Her Lover's Shadow.

⁸ De Botton and Armstrong, *Art as Therapy*, 8. The original quote is ‘his daughter... deeply in love with a young man about to depart on a long journey, traced the profile of his face, as thrown upon the wall by the light of the lamp.’ Pliny the elder, translated by John Bostock and H. T. Riley, ‘An Account of Paintings and Colours,’ in *The Natural History of Pliny* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855), 283.

Meta-Narrative Art can be used to understand and cope with loss,
and clarify for us what is most important in our lives.

Narrative Her Lover's Shadow

Figure 3.2. Her Lover's Shadow meta-narrative and narrative.

Next, I created a kind of 'mood board' that I could refer to throughout the process of conceptualising the concert. I began to research how Pliny's story had been represented through artistic and written depictions, and collated the excerpts and images on to A3 pages (see Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3. Example of a mood board for Her Lover's Shadow.⁹

⁹ The images shown are, clockwise from top left: Jean Baptiste Regnault, *Origin of Painting: Dibutades Tracing the Portrait of a Shepherd*, 1785; Francine van Hove, *Dibutades*, 2007; Eduard Daege, *The invention of painting*, 1832; Karen Knorr, *The Pencil of Nature*, 1994; Joseph Benoit Suvée, *Invention of the Art of Drawing*, 1793. Text from Hagi Kenaan, 'Tracing Shadows: Reflections on the Origin of Painting,' in *Pictorial Languages and Their Meanings*, eds. Christine Verzár Bornstein and Gil Fishhof (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, Faculty of the Arts, 2006), 17–28.

I researched the artistic and written depictions on the origin of painting to ‘feed’ my own intuitive creative and ideas during the concert design process, and only included text or images that aligned with my own ideas of the narrative. Experimenting with placement of the text and images allowed me to consider how different themes, colours, and gestures could interact, and develop my conception of the atmosphere for the concert. I observed my emotional, aesthetic, and physical responses to the mood boards, with a view to using them to underpin both my musical and extra-musical decisions.

When reflecting on the meta-narrative, Pliny’s story on the origin of painting and the mood boards, I began to conceive of a three-part structure for the concert. I labelled these parts as Love – Loss – Memory, with memory the longest and most complex section, as love and loss are relatively brief but remembering continues until death. In this case, the narrative structure was a linear sequence of atmospheres and ideas that would unfold during the concert, and I sketched out a more detailed description of the narrative underneath this structure.

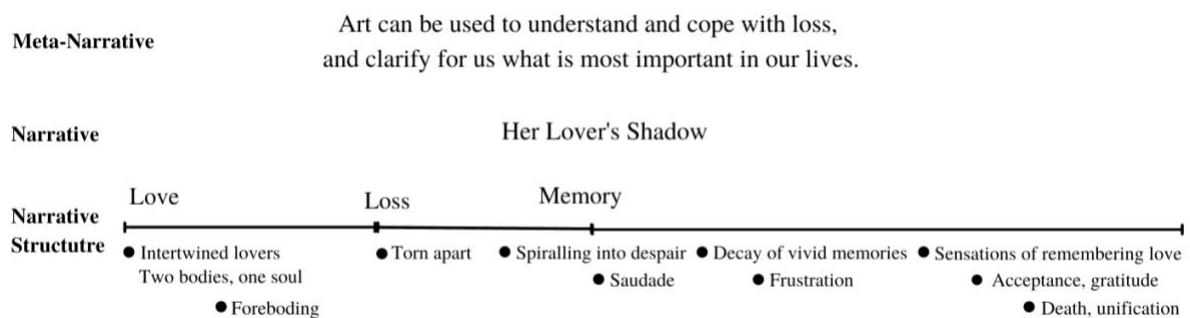


Figure 3.4. Her Lover's Shadow meta-narrative, narrative, narrative structure, and descriptions.¹⁰

¹⁰ The idea of one soul split between two bodies is described in: Plato, ‘Symposium,’ in *Ancient Greek Philosophers* (San Diego: Canterbury Classics, 2018), 125–68.

As I reflected on the meta-narrative, I thought back to my most powerful emotional experiences of art: hearing a live performance of Francis Poulenc's *Gloria* for the first time, or standing in front of a Mark Rothko painting, or conducting the second movement of Dobrinka Tabakova's Concerto for Violoncello and Strings. These were cathartic and healing experiences because I felt myself understood, as though an artist had been able to express clearly what I had only sensed. I felt more connected, and as I contemplated the artistic experience afterwards a greater sense of clarity emerged about loss, pain, and love. I realised these experiences had some common features. The spaces were shared but intimate, with a sense of ritual and occasion created by a group coming together, but private enough to allow me to feel vulnerable and open to a deep emotional experience. Given this concert was exploring themes of loss and love, I decided an intimate performance setting would be important to give the audience the opportunity to have a powerful concert experience. With this in mind, I used my conception of the concert frame to consider how other factors of the concert frame could be used to express the meta-narrative, and how I might artistically integrate them into the experience.

As a performer/curator, the only aspect of the concert experience I consider to be non-negotiable is the live performance of music before an audience. For example, I am open to performing the concert in complete darkness, without program notes or any other embedded information. For any additional elements to be incorporated into the concert experience, I must feel that they are integral to my expression of the meta-narrative. This process avoids using the meta-narrative approach to concert frame curation as a means to create theatrical concerts, rather than artistically unique and personal concert designs.

I began my programming by imagining an intimate black space, and the co-presence of myself, other performers, and the audience. After imagining different ensemble and audience sizes in

this space, I decided only to program pieces for a soloist, or chamber works for twelve or fewer players. This would mean the performance could be accommodated in a smaller venue and a more intimate concert experience could be created than is typically possible for a large ensemble performance.

As I considered the atmosphere that I wished to create with this concert, I was drawn to sound worlds I often associate with Australian compositions: slowly developing thematic material, rich and colourful harmonies, lyrical melodies over a driving rhythmic pulse or changing metre, often inspired by the vast Australian landscape. I estimate I listened to and read the scores of over 300 works as I programmed the concert, trawling through the websites of many Australian composers and publishing houses. I was open to transcribing works written for other instruments for saxophone and was willing to have a different instrumentation for each work. Each time I would listen to a work, either out loud or by hearing the score in my mind, I would imagine it being performed in the intimate black space described above. I felt the atmosphere it would create in the space, which I describe as the combination of my emotional, physical, and aesthetic sensations. I then selected works that elicited the same emotional responses in me that inspired my conception of the meta-narrative and narrative.

The first piece I chose was *I touched your glistening tears...* by Brenton Broadstock. The work evoked in me a strong sense of turmoil and loss, and I imagined this piece representing the immense pain of the lovers as they were separated. Originally written for oboe and piano in 1998, Broadstock had arranged the work for soprano saxophone, cello, and piano in 2000. Fortuitously, the instrumentation meant that I would ask Collide to perform in the concert.

Example 3.1. Broadstock, *I touched your glistening tears...* Bars 1–4.¹¹

The 8:30' work is marked at crotchet = 80–90 'With sadness and introspection' (see Example 3.1). The piece has an arc structure, developing slowly and with a sense of inevitably towards a dynamic peak about halfway through. I programmed the work as a transition between love and loss in the narrative.

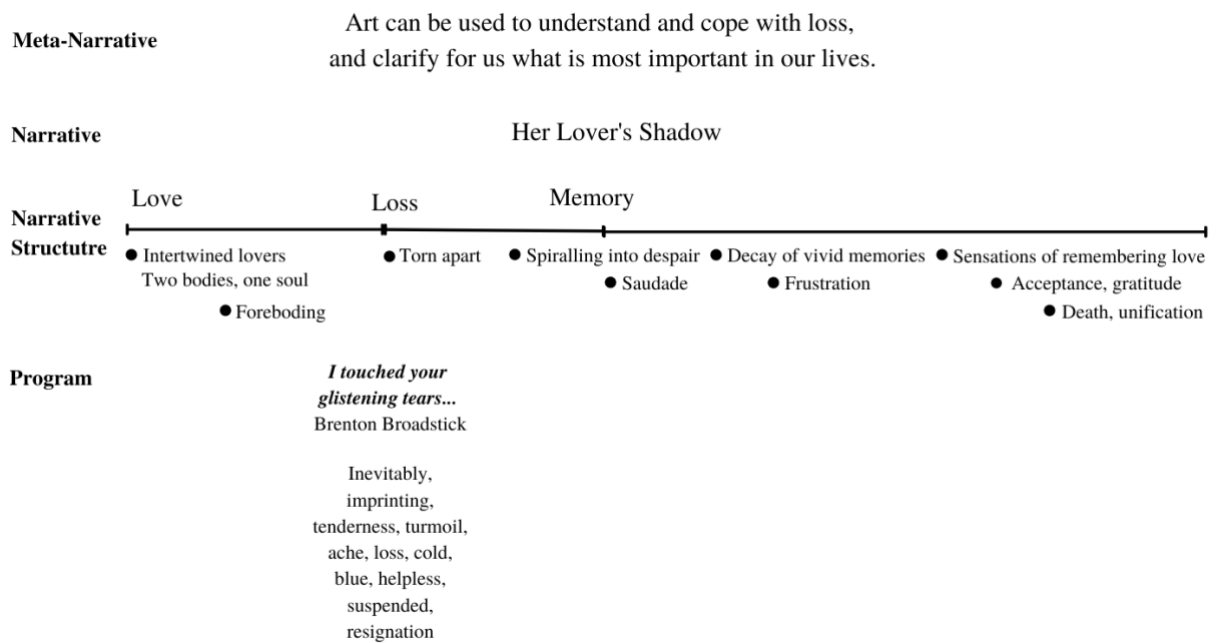


Figure 3.5. Programming *I touched your glistening tears...* by Brenton Broadstock.

¹¹ Brenton Broadstock, *I touched your glistening tears...* (Melbourne, Australia: reedmusic.com, 1998/2000), 1.

I began searching for a faster piece to begin the concert that would represent the lovers' close connection, and came across Paul Stanhope's 1993 work *Morning Star II*, the second of the three chamber music pieces of the same name.

Morning Star II was originally written for flute, clarinet, violin, violoncello, and piano. The work begins with a soft, delicate staccato motif shared between the clarinet and flute, followed by staggered entries by the violin, cello, and piano creating dense rhythmic layers. The lively rhythmic pulse generates a sense of urgency and foreboding, but this momentum often subsides into more lyrical and expressive sections. As I was listening to this piece it evoked an image of two lovers intertwined in a sphere, their bodies undistinguishable. I imagined they were lit by a rich ember colour that I associated with a fiery sunrise, and I pictured them gently opening their eyes and awakening to the day with their bodies slowly unfurling from an embrace. For me, the faster moments represent their youthful naivety and intense love, but also a sense of foreboding. The slower sections evoked moments of tenderness between the lovers, forging memories of their closeness. Listening to the work, many vivid images of gestures and movements for the two lovers come to mind, and I started to consider incorporating contemporary dance as the embodiment of this image of the entwined lovers.

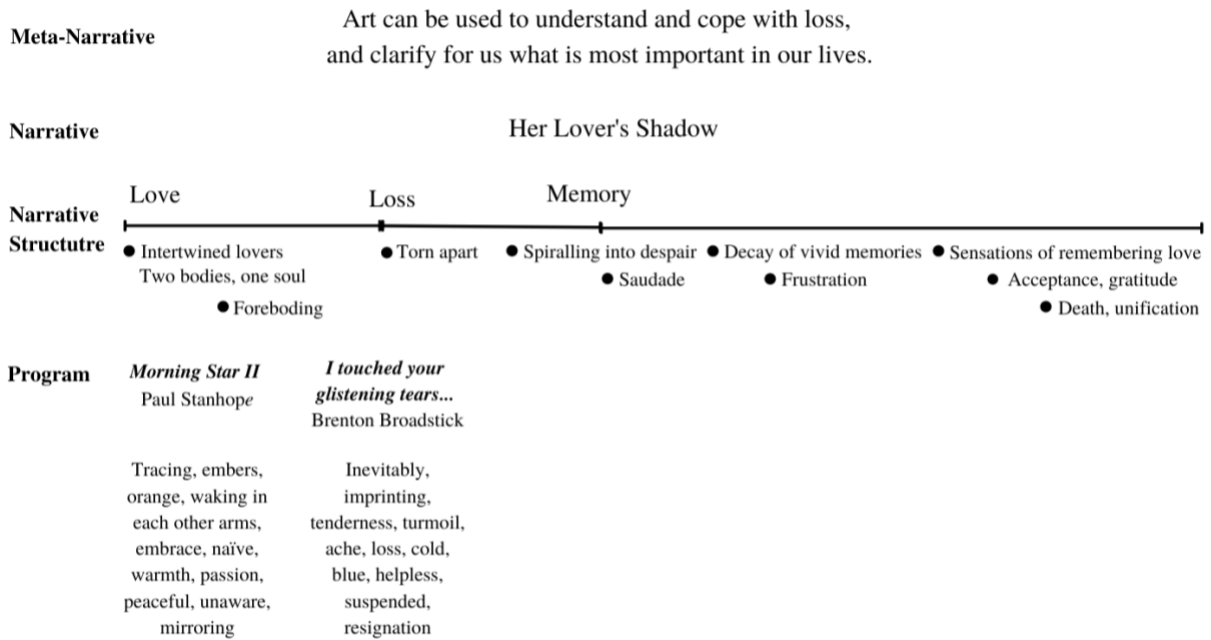


Figure 3.6. Programming *Morning Star II* by Paul Stanhope.

This work was originally composed for clarinet, but I knew that I could adapt the clarinet part for the soprano saxophone. The work begins with a duo between the flute and clarinet that I felt could represent the two lovers awakening, and I thought it would be personally meaningful to perform the work with my wife, oboist Briana Leaman, playing the flute part. I therefore programmed the eight-minute work in the love section of the narrative at the start of the concert.

The program was taking shape, beginning with the driving momentum of *Morning Star II* programmed as Love, and the slower *I touched your glistening tears...* as a transition between Love and Loss. Under the next transition section between Loss and Memory, I had written 'spiralling into despair', and 'saudade' (a Portuguese word describing a profound state of melancholic longing for a lost love). As I listened to Tim Dargaville's 2007/8 work *Crossing the Borderland*, with its rhythmically tumultuous start, lyrical and reflective inner sections and driving ending, I thought the piece perfectly represented this section of the narrative.

Crossing the Borderland is scored for soprano saxophone, violin, cello, and piano. I imagined the dissonant, fortissimo tutti motifs at the beginning to represent the emotional turmoil of the separated lovers, with each accented chord signifying a rupture of their worldview and sense of self. The slower sections evoked in me a sense of desperation and solitude, similar to the painful realisation that comes with permanent loss, and the desperate attempt to fortify precious memories of someone who, once they are gone, can only exist in our memories. Programming *Crossing the Borderland* took me to the *Saudade* section of my narrative outline. I began to search for works for the final section of the narrative, exploring themes of frustration, remembering, gratitude, and death.

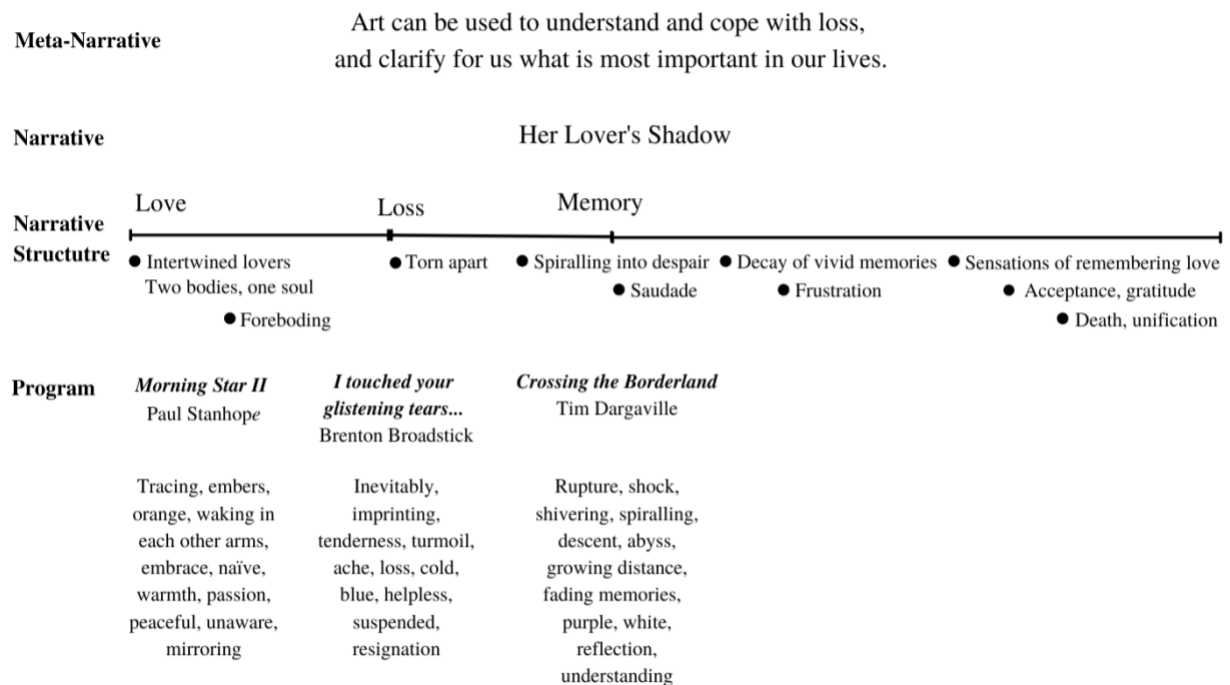


Figure 3.7. Programming *Crossing the Borderland* by Tim Dargaville.

When visiting the website of Melbourne composer May Lyon, I listened to *Dash*, a three-minute solo bass flute composition. The piece shifts between nervous, rushed passages and moments reminiscent of daydreaming. I felt the work had two distinct characters within it, one

anxious and almost breathless, the other melancholy and suspended. After conversations with the composer, I adapted the piece for saxophone, and programmed it to represent the frustration that comes as vivid memories decay over time. However, the narrative structure was still unresolved as I had not yet reached the final section about acceptance and gratitude. It was at this point Melbourne-based composer Kate Tempany discussed with me the ideas behind her new composition for saxophone quartet, piano, and percussion.

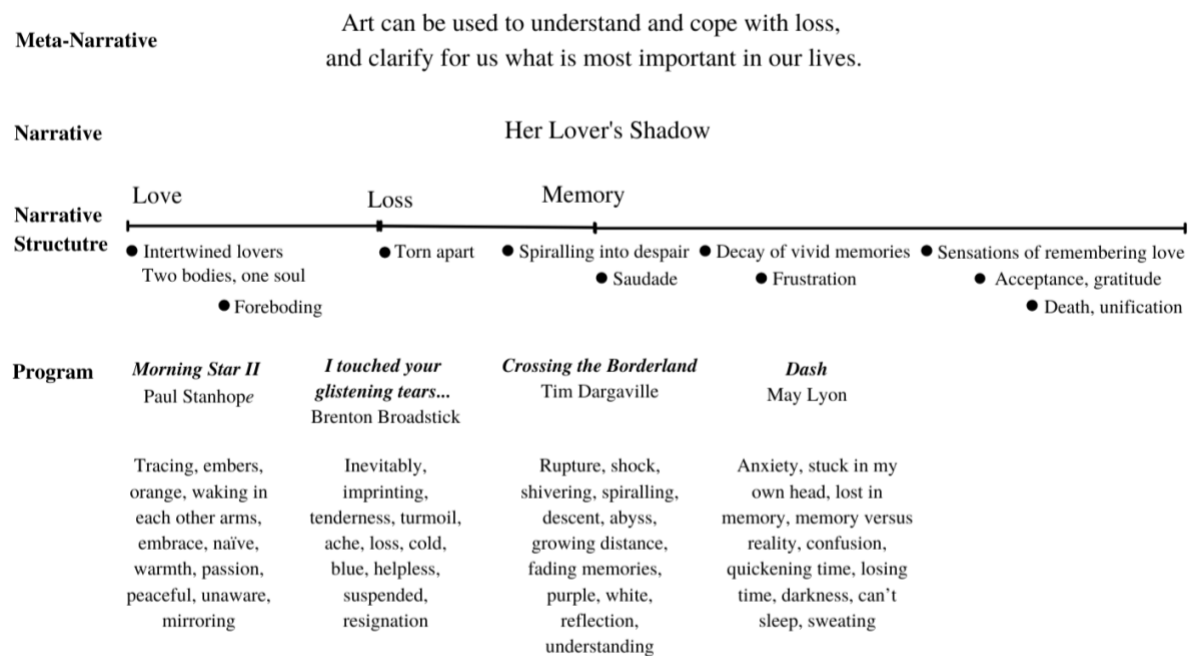


Figure 3.8. Programming *Dash* by May Lyon.

Tempany's new work was to be called *Samudra Manthan, The Churning of the Oceans*, where two different sound worlds span the piece until they eventually focus to a central point of stillness. As Tempany sent through samples of the score and midi recordings, I was blown away by the stirring beauty of the work and her unrestrained rhythmic writing. The work was ethereal, challenging, and evoked sensations of profound insight and bliss. I could think of no more perfect ending to the concert. I thought the final point of stillness to be the death of the lovers, and I felt a sense of resolution to the program structure.

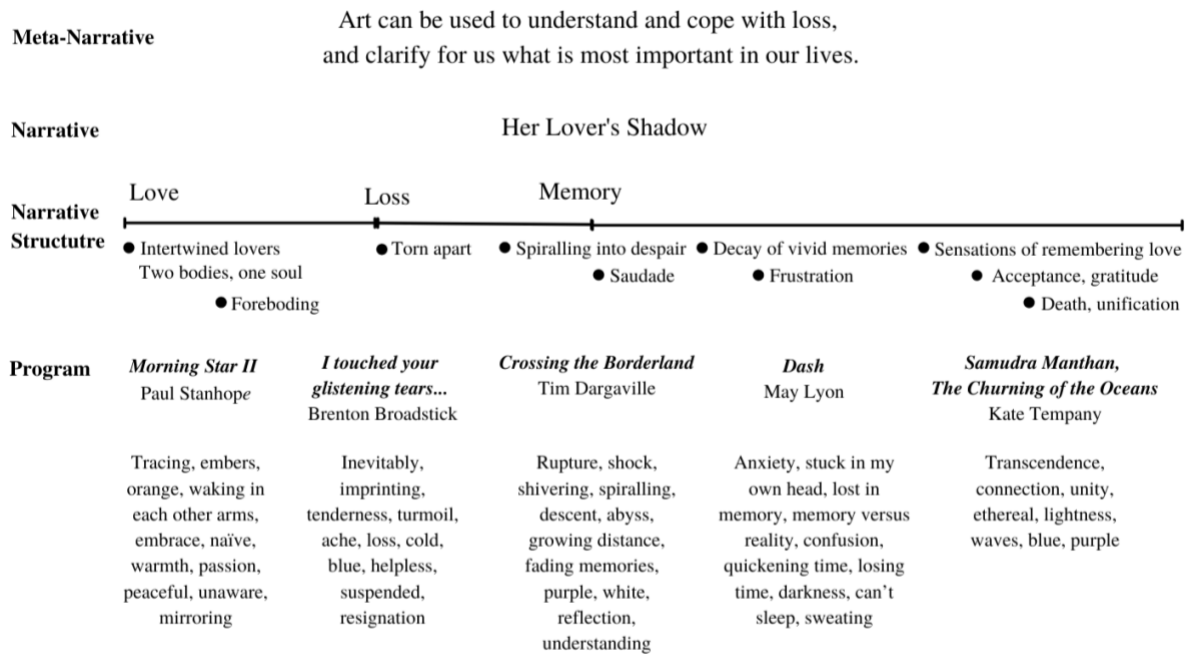


Figure 3.9. Programming *Samudra Manthan, The Churning of the Oceans* by Kate Tempany.

As I considered the overall program, I decided to split the concert into two halves, the first with instrumental music and dance, and the second instrumental music alone. I imagined the first half of the concert telling the story of the two lovers, and thought I could artistically integrate the visual elements of dance and lighting design to heighten the narrative impact. I envisaged the second half as representing one lover remembering their lost love in the later stages of their life. I imaged their frustration as their memories of their beloved decayed, their swirling and distracted thoughts, and their process towards acceptance and gratitude. To reinforce the move from depicting a story to remembering a story, I decided to limit the visual stimuli in the second half and embrace the more abstract nature of instrumental music. I imagined the audience themselves would at times drift into thought and then be brought back to the moment.

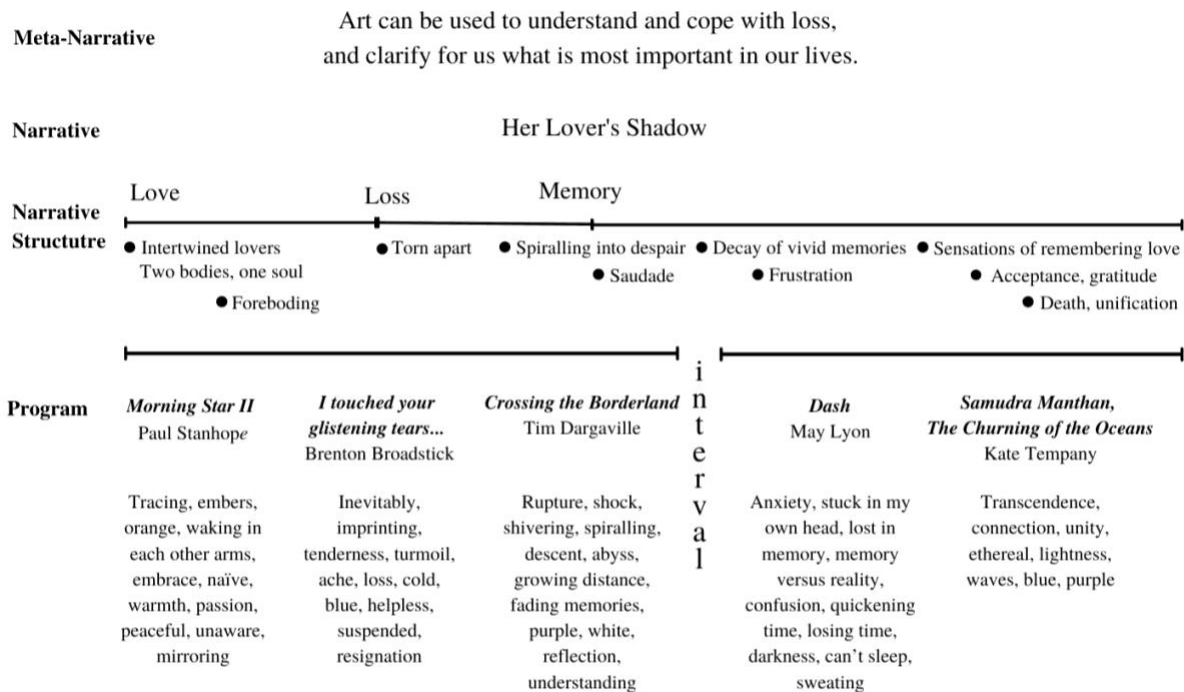


Figure 3.10. Concert structure for Her Lover's Shadow.

Once I had resolved the key artistic components of the concert, and particularly the works to be performed, I moved on to considering the administrative factors of my concert frame. My next major consideration was the budget. The music alone would require twelve musicians, dancers, lighting designers, and production staff, and I would need administrative/financial support. As this was an experimental approach to ‘concert experiment’ curation, I decided to approach the Conservatorium’s New Music for support.

The Melbourne Conservatorium of Music’s New Music Studio provides a platform for musicians to create, collaborate, and perform twentieth and twenty-first century music. The Studio sets very few artistic parameters for performers, other than that the music was written within the last fifty years, and that the concert was free to the public. Even though it was not part of my original plan to limit the concert to ‘new’ music, all the works I had chosen were written within the last thirty years. After discussions with Peter Neville, director of the New

Music Studio, they offered to fund the cost of a venue, a lighting designer, front of house staff, and half the artist fees. I was happy to present the concert for free as this removed any financial barriers to attending. I funded the other half of the artist fees and any other costs, including audio and video recording of the performances, and took no fee. I invested my own money into the project because it was a critical part of my research, and I was incredibly motivated and enthusiastic about the process ahead.

After considering several possible venues on the University of Melbourne's Parkville and Southbank campuses, I chose the Grant Street Theatre, which has an intimate setting and unconventional design. The exposed brick exterior and wrought iron window grills create an unassuming and unimposing concert venue, and its inner-city location is easy to access via public transport. Inside this black box theatre, the 120-capacity tiered seating bank positions the audience above the performers, with the bottom row placed directly on the 12m by 14m stage, only metres away from the performers. Because the audience could see the stage floor, it could be used as a kind of canvas on which light and shadow could be thrown. The theatre has good lighting capabilities and can achieve a state close to absolute darkness, both of which were important to my concert design.

Over the next three months I assembled the artists and production team for Her Lover's Shadow: two dancers/choreographers, twelve musicians, a lighting designer, two university production and timetabling staff, two stage assistants, an audio recorder, a film recorder, a production assistant, a page turner, and a props coordinator. With many aspects of the concert frame taking shape, I turned my attention to the audience factors of marketing and program design.

I wanted the marketing of Her Lover's Shadow to create a sense that this would be a different type of concert experience for the audience. I did not have the budget to do a photoshoot for the concert, so I sourced an image on Shutterstock for the poster and program.¹² Typically, images found on classical music concert posters feature composers, musicians, instruments, artwork, cities, or landscapes. The image I selected was quite different, a striking black and white portrait of a reclining woman (see Figure 3.11). I designed the poster to look more like a poster for a feature film than a classical concert, as I thought this would resonate with a larger audience. Within a week of placing the posters around the University campuses and advertising online, the concert sold out.

¹² Shutterstock is a website where photographers can upload their images and they can be purchased with a royalty-free license. The license covers web distribution, printing, and advertising. More information can be found at <https://www.shutterstock.com/license-comparison>.



Figure 3.11. Poster for Her Lover's Shadow.¹³

Her unusual pose and soft eyes created a sense of intimacy, and the gravity defying placement of her earrings suspended over a void felt like it was a moment suspended in time. The image felt like a modern interpretation of Pliny's origin of painting story, particularly in comparison to the older paintings included in my mood boards. I pictured her head cradled by the hand of her lover as Butades does in Eduard Daege's *The invention of painting* (see Figure 3.12).

¹³ Alekcej Tugolukoff (Tugol), *Woman on black background*, photography, Year unknown, retrieved from shutterstock.com.



Figure 3.12. Eduard Daege, *The invention of painting*, 1832.¹⁴

As I was designing the printed program for the concert, I thought about how it would affect the audience's experience of the concert. Even though the entire program was constructed under the narrative structure, I felt that the atmosphere of the two halves was quite different. The first half of the concert incorporated a lot of sensory stimuli, including dance, music, lighting, and staging, and I did not want to overload the audience with additional information or over-explain the ideas being presented. Therefore, I provided very little additional information about the works in the first half of the concert. The second half of the concert, however, had fewer sensory stimuli and I decided that program notes for the instrumental pieces would help give the audience a framework to enhance their engagement of the works (see Figure 3.13).

¹⁴ Eduard Daege, *The invention of painting*, 1832, oil on canvas, Height: 176.5 cm; Width: 135.5 cm, Alte Nationalgalerie, Berlin, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eduard_Daege_%22Die_Erfindung_der_Malerei%22_\(1832\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eduard_Daege_%22Die_Erfindung_der_Malerei%22_(1832).jpg).



HER LOVER'S SHADOW

SATURDAY | 22 SEPTEMBER | 7PM
GRANT ST. THEATRE

MCM New Music Studio

Dash, May Lyon, 2009
Solo Alto Saxophone
World Premiere Arrangement (2018)

*Dashing about on a chaotic day, there are still moments of calm,
yet ultimately they are frustrated and disrupted.*

SAMUDRA MANTHAN
The Churning of the Oceans, Kate Tempary, 2018
Saxophone Quartet, Piano, Percussion
World Premiere

The Churning of the Ocean is a Hindu myth depicting the origin of *amrita*, the nectar of immortality. In the legend, gods and demons range themselves on opposite ends of a giant serpent, wrapped around a mountain which is used as a churning rod. Each team takes it in turn to pull upon the giant snake. Through the play of alternating forces, the ocean is brought to a state of rapid rotation, and from the whirling waters various divine objects emerge, foremost of which is the heavenly *amrita*.

This composition explores patterns created as two disparate sound worlds approach each other, and gradually merge. One side is founded purely in rhythm and timbre, in the absence of pitch. The other side is melodic, derived from the notes of the north Indian *thaat Purvi*. By degrees, each sound world takes on characteristics of the other, till they combine in a riotous swirl of sound. At last rapidly spinning motion focuses to a central point of stillness.

Use of rhythm in Samudra Manthan is inspired by Hindustani tabla and West African cultural drumming, both of which the composer has been exploring for many years.

*This composition was written with the generous support
of the 2018 Catherine Mary Sullivan Scholarship.*

HER LOVER'S SHADOW

*'his daughter... deeply in love with a young man about to
depart on a long journey, traced the profile of his face,
as thrown upon the wall by the light of the lamp'*

Pliny on the origin of painting.

Morning Star II, Paul Stanhope, 1993
Dance, Oboe, Saxophone, Violin, Cello, Piano

I touched your glistening tears, Brenton Broadstock, 2000
Dance, Saxophone, Cello, Piano

Crossing the Borderland, Tim Dargaville, 2007/8
Dance, Saxophone, Violin, Cello, Piano

— Interval —

HER LOVER'S SHADOW

Curator & Saxophonist **Joseph Lallo**
Choreography & Dance **Tahlia Klugman & Momoko Nanri**
Piano **Yasmin Rowe**
Cello **Yelian He**
Violin **Katriona Tsyrlin**
Oboe **Briana Leaman**
Conductor **Nicole Marshall**
Alto Saxophone **Tarko Sibbel**
Tenor Saxophone **Stuart Brownley**
Baritone Saxophone **Emily Clarke**
Percussion **Alison Fane, Harry Potocnik & Laura Smith**

Special thanks to Peter Neville, James Hutchinson, Liam Krebs
(Production Assistant), Mira Stephans (Page Turner), Terence
Liu and Kristie Thai (Stage Assistants), and the Melbourne
Conservatorium of Music New Music Studio.

Figure 3.13. The print program for Her Lover's Shadow.

Rehearsals began two months before the concert. Before meeting with them for the first time, I sent dancer/choreographers Tahlia Klugman and Momoko Nanri recordings of each work and the meta-narrative outline for the first half of the concert (see Figure 3.14). I included information about the instrumentation, the timings of the pieces and the sections I had divided them into, and my broad narrative and gestural ideas for each section. I divided *Morning Star II* and *Crossing the Borderland* into sections according to their tempo, but created a dynamic outline for *I touched your glistening tears* as the tempo remains mostly stable throughout. Both Tahlia and Momoko said they had never danced to classical music like this, nor such a varied program, and they were eager for the challenge.



Figure 3.14. First half outline of Her Lover's Shadow given to the dancers/choreographers.

During our first meeting, we had a deep and dynamic discussion about the meta-narrative and narratives of *Her Lover's Shadow*. As we talked through each work and the sections within them, we noted down ideas and sketched possible gestures. We talked about the atmosphere we envisaged for the concert, who the audience might be, and the style of the music and dance, and decided to meet regularly before their dance rehearsals to discuss narrative details and choreography ideas. When collaborating with other artists, I see my role as a concert curator is to build a framework within which they feel empowered and inspired to create, but I did not want my meta-narrative structure to be overly prescriptive or to stifle the creativity of the other artists. I was relieved, therefore, when I received an email from Tahlia thanking me for, 'an idea sparking meeting today'.¹⁵

During the combined music and dance rehearsals in the theatre, I saw many disparate artistic elements of the concert frame come together for the first time. I did not want *Her Lover's Shadow* to be a dance show with music, or a music show with dance. My aim was to have the two art forms coexisting equally on stage. I decided to place the musicians in the centre of the stage close to the dancers rather than off stage or to one side where we were 'out of the way'. I asked that neither the musicians nor dancers react to each other during the performance. This meant that when we were not playing, we stayed connected to each other and in a focused and more intense state. I wanted to feel as if the dance and music were two simultaneous expressions of the meta-narrative, like two sides of the same coin. By not being distracted by each other, I felt this would help accentuate the overall intensity of the experience. I asked the musicians to wear all black so our clothes would be unaffected by the lighting designs, meaning the lighting could be focused on the dancers and sections of the stage. I imagined the dancers

¹⁵ Tahlia Klugman, email correspondence, 3 September 2018.

wearing simple, flowing, matching, and light-coloured costumes. Tahlia and Momoko chose flowing, cream-coloured pants and plain white tops from a Japanese casual wear designer.

The colours I had associated with the narrative and music formed the basis for the lighting states, which were brought to life and developed by lighting designer Siobhan Geaney: red and orange for *Morning Star II*, shades of blue and whites for *I touched your glistening tears...*, from whites to blues and purples for *Crossing the Borderland*, only enough light to see the music for *Dash*, with colours returning to blues and purple for *Churning of the Oceans*.

Her Lover's Shadow premiered on the 22nd of September at the Grant St Theatre. The concert began in almost complete darkness, with only enough light for the performers to read the music. As we played the opening of *Morning Star II*, the two dancers entered from side stage lit by a dark ember light. Their intertwined bodies moved like a ball rolling slowly across stage, accentuating their closeness and dependency. For the first half of the piece the dancers were always connected, tracing the side of each other's faces, and then opening their hands with threading gesture over their heads as though imprinting the memories in their minds. A change in the music created a sense of urgency, and the lovers became aware that one of them would soon depart. Their movements became more jagged and slightly off unison. A growing distance opened between them, but they pulled each other back and in different direction. No shadows appeared on the floor until the very end of the first piece, when the inevitability of separation becomes apparent to the lovers. As *Morning Star II* finished with driving rhythmic momentum, their movements became uncomfortable and disjointed, depicting their growing sense of foreboding. Earlier gestures that were gentle and in-sync were now jagged and out of time. The lighting transformed into a bright hot orange, until everything fell silent, and the stage was suddenly black.

As the opening unison notes of *I touched your glistening tears...* were played, the dancers swayed gently from side to side with the weight of their impending parting upon them. Bathed in a deep blue light, their shadows cast on floor were almost touching but never quite reached each other, depicting their fated separation. Their soft, slow, simple movements throughout the piece were juxtaposed with the dramatic crescendo and emotional intensity of the work, signifying the chasm between their brave outward emotions and their inner pain. To depict the moment of separation between the lovers, Momoko slowly walked the length of the stage with Tahlia moving on the floor as her shadow. Half way across the stage, the shadow slowly detached from the lover, leaving her alone for the first time.

As the lights came on for the start of *Crossing the Borderland*, two upright mirrors were placed on both back corners of the stage. Each dancer stood in solitude in front of one the mirrors, their thrashing movements representing their tumultuous emotions from the shock of loss. Their reflections in the mirrors signified their realisation that they would no longer make new memories together, and could only exist for each other through the prism of their own recollections. As the piece shifted into the softer and more lyrical inner sections, Momoko moved unseen via backstage to behind Tahlia's mirror. As the lovers' feeling of melancholic longing grew and they became lost in their recollections, small pieces of paper representing memories were thrown by Momoko from behind the mirror over Tahlia. Upon each falling piece of paper, Tahlia and Momoko had written a handwritten memory about the process and inspirations behind the concert, to then be given to the audience as they left the theatre (see Figure 3.15). As the piece neared its end, the stage was covered by a deep purple wash, and the two dancers emerged, moving in unison as though united in their memory. The lights slowly narrowed to a single spot over the dancers as we played the loud and irregular final motifs of

down when I am lost in a memory. I felt this work refocused the audience after the interval in preparation for *Samudra Manthan*. As the narrative of second half explored themes of memory and perceptions of time, the durational contrast between Lyon's three-minute work and Tempany's twenty-minute work seemed appropriate.

Beginning and ending with the sound of cymbals, *Samudra Manthan* develops through waves of rhythmic and melodic momentum. The work has a rare compositional freedom that seemed to be underpinned by the physics of shifting water rather than conventional Classical compositional rules. To me, the two interacting sound worlds in the piece, one melodic and one rhythmic and pitchless, represented one lover's recollection of another. Like flashes of memory, every musical motif was fleeting, rapidly shifting between dissonant and grating harmonies to sudden moments of blissful melodic colour. In the context of the narrative, the piece represented sensations of remembering love; although over time memories of those I have lost have become less vivid, they have transformed into emotional and physical sensations of warmth and gratitude. As the piece came to an end, I envisaged the moment before a lover's death when they reach a final place of acceptance. For ten seconds after the final strike of the cymbal, the musicians and audience stayed in silence and without movement.

After the concert, I sat on stage with several other artists involved in the concert, and the audience were given the opportunity to ask questions and to discuss their impressions of the performance. Almost the entire audience remained for this discussion, and there was a buzzing, energetic atmosphere in the space. I was asked about the process of conceiving the performance, and audience members discussed their responses to their concert. Tahlia and Momoko answered questions about the ideas underpinning their choreography, and Kate Tempany spoke about her compositional creative process for her new work. The discussion

gave the artists the opportunity to connect with the audience in a personal and communal setting, and for me brought a sense of finality to the concert. In the week after the concert, I received several emails from the artists involved thankful for the collaboration and commenting on the enthusiastic response of the audience.

Developing Her Lover's Shadow was a deeply personal and cathartic experience, which I had the privilege to share with the audience. Even though I primarily used this meta-narrative approach to develop a personal concert experience, it ended up creating a larger collaborative framework that many people around me could invest in.

Every time I asked someone to be involved in Her Lover's Shadow, I spoke about the meta-narrative and the ideas underpinning the creation of the concert. It was important to me that they were open to performing a concert that might be out of their comfort zone, and that they felt that they could contribute their ideas as the concert design developed. I feel this invested the people involved in a different and more personal way than with a more typical classical concert.

I engaged with the composers around me, and many of them came to our rehearsals and the performance. Kate Tempany publicised the concert through her close personal connections with leaders of two Indian community organisations, who kindly sent out group emails promoting the concert to their vast list of contacts. Anecdotally, Tempany said that a lot more people from these community organisations would have come if seats had been available, and that for those who did attend it was not only their first concert at the Melbourne Conservatorium, but also their first new music concert.

Creating Her Lover's Shadow was one of my most rewarding artistic experiences, and it was a privilege to share it with the audience. As I was curating the concert frame for Her Lover's Shadow, I was particularly inspired by hearing Alain de Botton discuss his early bewildering experiences of the paintings of Mark Rothko, and how his relationship with artworks changed after he read an interview Rothko had given to Time Magazine:

The interviewer kept saying to Rothko, 'Mr. Rothko, what are you doing with your art? What is it?' Rothko was evading and sliding and going into art speak, and eventually Rothko lost his temper in a productive way, and he said, 'Look, what I'm trying to do with my works of art is: you've got sadness in you, I've got sadness in me – and my works of art are places where the two sadnesses can meet, and therefore both of us need to feel less sad.' Beautiful. I wish they'd put that on a huge caption in the Rothko Room, because that would have been a productive frame within which to enter a relationship with that artwork.¹⁶

I wanted to design this concert to be a place where I shared my emotional experience of loss with the audience, and wanted my curation of the concert frame to encourage them to emotionally engage with the performance. If the concert resonated with them I hoped that they might feel more understood, and that afterwards they could reflect upon the ideas contained within the meta-narrative and gain a deeper understanding of their own experiences. As a performer/curator my aim is to artistically express my ideas through totality of the concert experience, and that this method of concert design will create engaging, enriching, and emotionally satisfying experiences which will lead audience's coming back.

¹⁶ Alain de Botton, 'Alain de Botton on Art as Therapy' Lecture at the School of Life, 4 December 2013, 45:16, <https://youtu.be/qFnNgTSkHPM?t=409>.

Chapter 4. Conclusion: The Performer/Curator

As performers, the way we design and present our performances is heavily influenced by how we perceive of our roles in a concert. I began this research because I was feeling creatively and artistically limited by the norms of classical music performance and the expectation that I be a translator of the work and a medium of the composer. As I have taken on the role of the concert curator and become open to creative expression through the totality of the concert experience, I have expanded my expressive and creative parameters and achieved greater variety in the design of my concerts. For some concerts I still consider my role to be a translator/medium and perform within the classical music frame, but I now do this consciously and for artistic reasons.

Taking on the dual role of a performer/curator has helped me to develop a new approach to concert design and presentation. By developing a conception of the concert frame, I have created a more structured way to identify the aspects of the concert experience I can shape as part of my artistic expression and creativity. This has helped me to achieve the two primary aims for this research: the development of more creative freedom within predetermined concert frames; and the design of completely new concert experiences in circumstances where the frame is essentially open.

As discussed in Chapter Two above, the Melba Hall Lunch Hour Concert and my recital at the Singapore Saxophone Symposium both had strict, predetermined administrative, audience, and artistic parameters. However, by using my conception of the concert frame, I was able to consciously consider how I could shape the free components of the concert according to my artistic vision. I developed a curatorial approach to programming to create more personal pairings of works and develop a unique atmosphere for each concert. With both concerts,

curating the free components of a highly predetermined concert frame allowed me to create a distinctly different type of concert experience, and share more of my own artistic creativity and expression with the audience than I felt I had previously been able to within the work-centred classical concert format.

In the two performances of the *Quartet for the End of Time*, I used my interpretative ideas and emotional responses to the work to curate components of the concert frame – such as program notes, lighting, and the choice of venue – in a way I felt contributed to the audience’s aesthetic and emotional experience of the concert. Despite performing the same program in both fortyfivedownstairs and Montsalvat, this process of consciously curating the concert frame led to two notably different concert designs and atmospheres.

For *Her Lover’s Shadow*, I chose a meta-narrative to guide my curation of the concert frame. My aim was to express the meta-narrative through the interplay of the musical and extra-musical elements of the concert, and ultimately, through the totality of the concert experience. For this concert, I shifted my perspective from being a performer who curated aspects of a concert, to a curator who performed as part of my curation. I considered my role to be the author of the concert experience, as well as the interpreter of musical works. By thinking of my role this way, I removed my sense of obligation – which was possibly just the weight of tradition – to present the music in a particular way, freeing myself from preconceptions of what a concert should be and creating more opportunity for originality in concert presentation and programming.

Her Lover’s Shadow was the most artistically satisfying of the concerts discussed here. I found the collaborative aspects terrifically engaging and rewarding, and immensely enjoyed the

creativity and ideas the other artists contributed. Furthermore, it has renewed my interest in performing classical music and given me hope for the relevance and evolution of the concert experience in the future.

I have continued to use the meta-narrative approach developed in this thesis to concert frame curation to develop new concert experiences. Alongside Melbourne-based musician Jade Norfolk, I have co-curated Sound of Water, a spatialised and multi-sensory concert designed specifically for the spaces of the Ian Potter Southbank Centre. It is scheduled to be premiered in 2022, after being postponed twice due to COVID.¹

Our meta-narrative was ‘our experience of music can serve as a model for our connection with the natural world,’ and from this we developed a narrative structure around the water cycle: downpour, downstream, seeping into the earth, and evaporation (see Figure 4.1). Six out of the seven pieces programmed are world-premieres, and all the works were written by Australian composers.

¹ The Ian Potter Southbank Centre is an award-winning building designed by John Wardle Architects. Opened in 2019, it is the new home of the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music in Southbank, Victoria. For further information, see: <https://www.johnwardlearchitects.com/projects/ian-potter-southbank-centre/>

Meta-Narrative	Our experience of music can serve as a model for our connection with the natural world						
Narrative	Sound of Water						
Narrative Structure	Downpour	Downstream	Seeping into the Earth		Evaporation		
Program	<i>Downpour</i> Kate Tempany <i>Saxophone</i> <i>Ensemble and Percussion</i>	<i>Downstream</i> Mira Stephens <i>Saxophone</i> <i>Ensemble and Electronics</i>	<i>Leviathan</i> Nate Cross <i>Solo Baritone</i> <i>Saxophone and Loop Pedal</i>	<i>Twelve</i> Brenton Broadstock <i>Saxophone</i> <i>Ensemble</i>	<i>Clouds and Cogs</i> Declan Postlethwaite <i>Saxophone</i> <i>Ensemble</i>	<i>Proliferate</i> Robert McIntyre <i>Saxophone</i> <i>Ensemble</i>	<i>Together We Unite Through Music</i> Katia Beaugeais <i>Saxophone</i> <i>Ensemble</i>
Staging	Level 2 and 3 of Foyer	Foyer into Auditorium	Auditorium, soloist centre stage	12-piece ensemble along the back stage wall	60-piece ensemble spaced around the audience	60-piece ensemble placed centre stage	
Lighting	Dark Green and Blue		Dark Blue and Purple		Cobalt and Sapphire		Sky Blue and White

Figure 4.1. Sound of Water meta-narrative design.

The concert will begin in the building’s vast, open foyer, which will be transformed with lighting and projections (see Figure 4.2). The first piece will be played from the level two and three balconies with the audience on the ground floor, to create a sense that sheets of sonic rain are falling from the ‘downpour’ above.



Figure 4.2. Trevor Main, *Foyer of the Ian Potter Southbank Centre*, 2019.²

Guided by the movement of the musicians, the audience will travel ‘downstream’ into the main auditorium, passing through several soundscapes and improvisations. As the audience are seated in a crescent shape facing the oculus window of the Kenneth Myer Auditorium (see Figure 4.2), the atmosphere will become dark and intense during ‘seeping into the earth’, before ‘evaporation’ creates an uplifting and energising end to the concert.

² Trevor Main, *Foyer of the Ian Potter Southbank Centre*, Gallery of The Ian Potter Southbank Centre, 2019. <https://www.archdaily.com/935526/the-ian-potter-southbank-centre-john-wardle-architects>.



Figure 4.3. Trevor Main, *Oculus window in the Kenneth Myer Auditorium*, 2019.³

In my experience, developing the broad instrumental and performance skills is an extremely demanding task for a classical performer, and very little time in a music degree is devoted to teaching the art of concert design and presentation. However, over the last four years, I have also been introducing these concepts to the saxophone students of the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music. Whilst many student recitals continue to use a classical concert format, we also have concerts that are being programmed using the methods outlined in this thesis. Using the conception of the concert frame to present their concerts has led to more variation amongst student performances and focused their attention on their creative pursuits rather than a competitive and unhealthy ‘perfectionist’ approach to performance. Students are designing and programming concerts inspired by what is most important to them, such as social issues like climate change, philosophical ideas, their cultural heritage, or personal stories and worldviews. They are learning to shape their concerts by integrating their other artistic pursuits,

³ Trevor Main, *Foyer of the Ian Potter Southbank Centre*, Gallery of The Ian Potter Southbank Centre, 2019. <https://www.marshallday.com/our-work/education/ian-potter-southbank-centre/>.

including visual arts, writing, or multimedia creations. This is allowing them to tell interesting and personal stories using notated music, and create interesting pairings of old and new works. Their programming is becoming more diverse as they work with composers, write their own music, and look for repertoire outside the traditional canon. By valuing more types of creative voices, my aim is to increase the creative paradigms available to students to express themselves. One aspect of my future research will be to further develop and document the practices of teaching concert curation for student performers.

I plan to continue to develop new concert experiences using a meta-narrative to guide the curation of the concert frame, and I would like to undertake structured research into the audience's responses to these concerts. I would particularly like to conduct a more 'controlled trial', performing one program within two different concert frames. The first would be a traditional classical concert setting where I consider my role to be a translator of the score and a medium for the composer. The design of the second concert would emerge as part of my creative process as a performer/curator, where I consider my role to be the author of the musical experience. The response of the audience to the two concerts could then be assessed using surveys, interviews, or a combination of the two.

Classical music performers can express themselves in unique and personal ways through the concert. My hope is that new concert designs explored in this thesis are representative of the intense and powerful musical experiences we have as performers. By using our own emotional and aesthetic responses to curate the concert frame in a concerted way, we offer our audiences a way into the music and the power and purpose it can have in our lives. Instead of viewing concert curation as the search for new concert formats, I view it as the search by the performer/curator to find new ways to express themselves through the concert experience.

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