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Composition Portfolio with Accompanying Comments and Analysis

Dermot McDermott
Technological University Dublin

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Composition Portfolio

with accompanying comments and analysis

Submitted by

Dermot McDermott  B.A., B.Mus

for award of

M.Phil

by

Dublin Institute of Technology

Supervisors: Dr. Grainne Mulvey, Dr. David Mooney

Conservatory of Music & Drama

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Abstract:

My M.Phil project consists of eight original musical compositions of varying genre and style, together with accompanying analysis and commentary on these works. The compositions include pieces for full symphony orchestra, string quartet, clarinet quartet, and a number of other chamber works with varying instrumental combinations. Together, the works represent approximately fifty minutes of music, together with over nine thousand words of commentary and analysis.

Some of my compositions have already been performed by the contemporary music ensemble, Concorde, and I have also completed a commission, with funds supplied by the Arts Council, for a work which was publicly performed and recorded by the same ensemble at the Hugh Lane Gallery of Modern Art.

Dermot McDermott

March 2013
Declaration

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of M.Phil is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for postgraduate study by research of the Dublin Institute of Technology and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any other third level institution.

The work reported on in this thesis conforms to the principles and requirements of the DIT's guidelines for ethics in research. DIT has permission to keep, lend or copy this thesis in whole or in part, on condition that any such use of the material of the thesis be duly acknowledged.

Signature____________________ Date________________
Candidate
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Enclosure: A compact disc with simulations and recordings of above pieces.
**Introductory Remarks:**

One of the advantages of studying composition at a mature age is the enormous number of influences acquired over many years of listening to music of many genres. This produces, no doubt, a myriad of unconscious influences which are hard to disentangle, and even more difficult to eradicate. The disadvantage, of course, is that it becomes more difficult to approach the process of composition with fresh ideas, and without prejudices.

Another factor that might be considered a disadvantage was the fact that I was not a pianist. However, I feel that this has, in fact, allowed me more liberty to explore ideas on the keyboard, without the fingers falling into any pre-defined patterns, and thus avoiding work unduly influenced by a pianistic style.

When considering the question of a personal style of composition, I would have to say that I have not been able to discern a distinct 'style' in any of my own compositions. Indeed, I would have to say that I was somewhat surprised at the variety of styles of music that I managed to produce.

The only prejudice I will admit to is the avoidance, in general, of music with a purely intellectual or mathematical/mechanical basis, or music adhering to a philosophy of processes, in favour of a style which, at the very least, permits me to express or depict emotional states and moods.

I felt that writing in a deliberate, and over conscientious, contemporary manner would actually place severe restrictions on the nature of my work, and I preferred to restrict my experimentation, by and large, to the use of extended techniques and altered timbres. I would have to say that my approach to composition has been an intuitive one overall. Generally speaking, at the outset, I had no plans for any particular pieces other than an intention to produce work in a variety of genres and instrumental combinations.
With the exception of *A Peace Worth Willing*, whose structure, mood and pitch content were somewhat worked out beforehand, most of my works grew organically from simple ideas and concepts, with ideas often arriving spontaneously rather than being worked out well in advance. My orchestral piece *A Mearing Dream* is an example of this approach.

I had also developed an interest in possible extended techniques for the various instruments for which I was writing. Having worked closely with Irish composer and performer, Jane O'Leary on a number of compositions in a workshop setting, I became particularly interested in extended techniques used on the piano. I had also become familiar with the works of George Crumb and was particularly impressed by his use of extended techniques for both piano and flute in his piece *Vox Belanae*. Study of some of these techniques resulted in their use, in modified form, in my piece *A Peace Worth Willing*. Collaboration with clarinettist, Paul Roe, led to some exploration of extended techniques on this instrument also, resulting in their use in my piece *Mirror Talk*.

Many influences from other composers appear to me only in retrospect. The chordal passage following the central climax to the orchestral piece seems to me to be a truncated version of the famous 'Interview Chords' from Benjamin Britten’s opera *Billy Budd*. Britten's influence is also apparent to me in the *Duo for Violin and Cello*, which contains echoes of the third movement of his third String Quartet Op 94, with its soaring first violin part and *pizzicato/glissandi* combinations. The ending of this latter piece also contains resonances of Britten's *Violin Concerto* Opus 15.

Some of the writing for cello in *A Peace Worth Willing*, particularly the double-stop *pizzicato glissandi*, are, in seems to me, and echo of the *Dialogo* section of György Ligeti's *Sonata for Solo Cello*.

Like most composers, and indeed creative artists generally, the most difficult stage of
composition for me is the initiation of a piece. My solution, generally, is to never stare at a blank page, but to start putting notes on paper, simply to get the process started. Usually, I find that seemingly random jottings soon start to become more ordered, ideas begin to emerge, and a shape of some sort starts to present itself. Very often the ideas presented at this stage later manifest themselves in the middle, or even at the end of a piece, and often, themselves, suggest other ideas for other sections within the piece concerned.

Curiously, the process of assigning titles to many of my works proved to be an even more torturous one than writing the pieces themselves. I found a real mental aversion to providing descriptive titles. Many of the titles, such as *Mirror Talk* and *A Peace Worth Willing*, were simply phrases that popped into my head rather than any attempt to capture the character of a piece.

My interest in, and knowledge of early music also had an influence on some of my works. Some of the characteristics of medieval music, such as the use of drones and the sparse interval of a fifth, are apparent in both the *Duo for Violin and Cello* and *A Peace Worth Willing*, as are the organum-like passages in this latter piece. I also have an interest in the timbres of instruments from an earlier era, such as the cornetto, and while it was not practical to produce works for these instruments at this stage, it is something I intend to explore further in my future career as a composer.
Jo-Ha-Kyu

for

Flute, Violin & Piano
Overall Concept:

This piece was begun with no overall concept or design in place. It was also the first piece I was preparing for my portfolio. As the piece was composed in preparation for a workshop with the Concorde Ensemble, I decided to score it for flute, piano and violin.

Compositional Process:

I began the process of composing this work with a rather vague notion of creating a piece with an oriental-like delicate simplicity, and with that in mind I began experimenting with simple single and double voiced linear melodic material on the keyboard. This concept also encompassed the use of the flute as a substitute for the traditional Japanese sound of the *Shakuhachi* bamboo flute. My initial familiarity with Japanese music was through an LP I purchased many years ago (sadly, now lost) of solo *Shakuhachi* music called *A Bell Ringing in the Empty Sky*. This made a very strong impression on me at the time. I also had somewhere in the back of my mind a piece called *Young Apollo* (Op. 16) for piano and strings by Benjamin Britten.

Form and Structure:

The structure of the piece is loosely based on the *jo-ha-kyu* model found in Japanese art and music, although this structure was not a conscious choice by me at the time of composition. The concept of *jo-ha-kyu* as a structural principle originated in the *Gagaku* court music of Japan, but was applied to other art forms as well. The 15th-century Japanese playwright Zeami Motokiyo applied *jo-ha-kyu* not just to the narrative structure of his works, but also to his actors' vocal technique.

For Zeami, *jo* represented the process of internally hearing the pitch and gathering in the breath, *ha* was the pushing out of the breath, and *kyu* was the actual production of vocal sound. More generally, and with specific application to music, *jo* represents a slow introduction, *ha* a breaking or splintering apart, and *kyu* the rushing forwards towards a
climax.

While this formal structure was not consciously present during the composition process, the piece, upon examination, has an affinity with this traditional structure.

**Analysis:**

The piece opens with a major 2nd on the piano, in the higher treble clef. Throughout the following one and two bar phrases, separated by *fermata*, this narrow interval is expanded, initially to include a tritone on F# and then up an octave to C. By bar 7 the opening material encompasses slightly more than an octave from a B flat to a C#.

Much of the material in the slow piano introduction up to bar 15 lies within this fairly narrow range in the higher treble clef register. In this slow piano exposition (the *jo* part of the structure referred to above) I was attempting to reproduce the effect of a whispered human voice speaking gently, reflectively but persuasively.

The beginning of the *ha* section of the work commences in bar 15 with the trilled flute initially entering on a high C, doubling the note heard on the piano. The flute then moves up a semi-tone to C#, playing an extended *arabesque*, breaking into septuplets in bar 31, in a polyrhythmic passage with piano underneath.
The tonality of the flute and piano throughout these passages is essentially a hemitonic pentonic scale (a pentatonic scale containing semi-tones) consisting of B flat, C, C#, D and F# (which contains the cluster C, C#, D).

This is not a recognized Japanese pentatonic scale such as the in (used primarily in music for the Koto and Shamisen) which also contains semi-tones, but which contains the interval of a 4th.

At bar 32, the violin enters playing, pizzicato, the same pentatonic material as the flute. This pizzicato timbre also mimics, briefly, the sound of the biwa, or short-necked Japanese lute.

The piano rejoins the texture in bar 35 and almost immediately joins with the violin in a brief triplet quaver pattern in rhythmic unison, with the flute playing staccato quintuplets on top. This triplet pattern is repeated by the flute in minimis, before all three instruments repeat it once more in crotchet triplets, and in rhythmic unison. These triplet patterns serve to briefly break up the onward momentum of the piece.

After this, the piece resumes its onward momentum, moving into the kyu section, which includes polyrhythmic, quintuplet, sextuplet and feathered accelerando figurations in the piano.

This momentum is accentuated by a polyrhythmic violin part from bar 47. Here the violin plays a semi-quaver triplet figuration, nested within crotchet quintuplets.
The flute does not contribute to this momentum, however, and is limited to held minims and trills. It does, however, return to its linear melodic role in bars 51-52 with a restatement of some of the pentatonic material, as the piece moves to its climax in bar 53. The piece settles into an harmonic stasis at the end, though it lacks the calm coda traditionally expected in the jo-ha-kyu structure.

Overall, I have to say I enjoyed working with these non-Western structures, and their concomitant pentatonic sound-world.
Duo

for Violin & Cello
Overall Concept.

The origins of this piece grew out of a concept to compose a work for two instruments which would fully explore the full range and extreme registers of those instruments. While I had no specific programme or narrative in mind as the basis of the piece, I did want to explore both the disparities and homogeneous elements of the two instruments, creating and resolving tensions between them, and thereby, also, attempting to create a third 'super' string instrument.

Compositional Process:

From the outset, I was determined to explore the full registral range of both the violin and cello and also to investigate the possibilities of creating tension between these two instruments by switching their normal registral roles, thereby also altering timbres in the process. My only initial impulse when writing the piece was to use drones as a characteristic feature of the work.

Analysis:

Both instruments begin the piece at their extreme registral ranges. After an introductory glissando, the piece begins with a drone, occasionally rhythmic, based on a perfect fifth in the two lowest open strings of the cello. This drone occasionally incorporates a rhythmic element. The violin enters in the extreme high register with the repeated note of C7. This repeated note develops into a melodic line, gradually descending and expanding its pitch material to incorporate the full chromatic aggregate by bar 17. From bar 24, the extreme registers encountered heretofore begin to converge and the piece becomes more contrapuntal in character, with the instruments interacting mainly within their middle registers. After bar 34, however, the registers overlap, and the instruments begin to reverse their registral roles.
The violin descends to playing on the G and D strings, and the cello rises into the treble register where it remains for the following seven bars.

This process reaches its conclusion in bar 39 where the violin settles onto its lowest possible note G (with a left hand pizzicato of a perfect fifth) and the cello comes to rest on a B natural, a full octave and major third above.

The previous contrapuntal character is intensified by the cello passage of descending accelerandi, in micro-rhythms, back to its normal range, accompanied in the violin by the perfect fifth drone previously heard in the cello at the beginning of the piece. The violin then incorporates this texture at bar 45 leading to a hesitant, fragmented bridge passage which heralds the return of the drone motif in the cello.

At bar 58 the violin once again moves to its extreme high register with a more explicit melodic idea utilising the linearised cluster of G, G#, A, B flat, B and C, while the cello once more returns to the drone motif from the beginning of the piece, this time at a higher register, including pizzicato and parallel fifth glissandi, the latter also appearing in my piece A Peace Worth Willing.
Although not at their true extremes, the gap in registers between the two instruments becomes once more apparent. The cello once more descends, by a sequence of glissandi, to its lowest register, while the violin settles into a repeated, descending, F#, F natural, E motif, which is also played in major third double stops. This repeated motif in the violin rounds off the piece and is intended to evoke a pleading prayer, or mantra-like ending to the work. The work ends with unison left hand pizzicati in both instruments, which, as a brief echo of the previous material, overlap. In retrospect, this ending reminds me very much of the end of Britten's Violin Concerto Opus 15 with its lack of a satisfactory resolution.
Mirror Talk

for

B flat Clarinet & Piano with E-Bow
**Overall Concept:**

This piece grew out of desire to explore the use of an E-bow to indefinitely extend tones on the piano. As I had also previously attended a seminar with clarinettist, Paul Roe, I decided to score the piece for piano and clarinet. The work contains some techniques which I would go on to use more extensively in another piece, *A Peace Worth Willing*. As explained in the commentary to that piece, the E-bow is an electromagnetic device, generally used by rock guitarists, which is used to generate an oscillating pulse causing a metal string to vibrate, even in the absence of manual stimulation.

**Compositional process:**

I had been experimenting with various extended techniques on the piano and clarinet, and having consulted with Paul Roe on the use of multi-phonics on the clarinet, I decided to incorporate these into the piece as well. The title of the piece, *Mirror Talk*, is incidental and there is no program or narrative to the piece. I decided, also, to use an unmetered system as the basic framework for the piece and instead utilise motifs as 'events' that occur at various points within the work.

**Analysis:**

The pitch material is mainly confined to the clarinet part with the addition of singing through the mouthpiece and multi-phonics. The piano is slightly prepared with the use of two strips of adhesive tape over a number of strings in the lower register, enabling the production of sound as these strips of tape are slowly pulled away.

The entire texture of the piece is underpinned by the continuous E-bow drone. The pitch material on the keyboard sometimes rotates in clusters, occasionally moving symmetrically around a central interval. For example, at measure 18 in the piano, the pitches are: A, F, B flat, A, F#.
And a similar formation occurs in the clarinet at measure 26, rotating around the pitch E.

The piece contains a number of passages for clarinet where the player is asked to 'sing' certain pitches in conjunction with the notes played. (here notated with an x) For the most part, the player is asked to sing a perfect fifth above the played note, as in measures seven through ten.

In addition, slap tongue technique, breathy playing and multi-phonics are also used. These techniques were incorporated in consultation with clarinettist Paul Roe, who subsequently work-shopped the piece with Concorde.

The work concludes with a long held multi-phonic on F# in the clarinet, followed by the pianist moving the E-bow from F#, where it has been placed from the beginning of the piece, to C (a leap of a diminished fifth) followed by a descent, via G, to F# once more. Although this is one of my shorter pieces, I considered it to be a successful experiment in the use of the E-bow to produce continuous tones on the piano.
Yanco

for

String Quartet
Overall Concept:

The idea for my string quartet sprang from a childhood memory of having seen a Mexican film called *Yanco* on television while visiting my grandmother's house in Cork in the 1960s. In this film, a young Mexican boy, who has super-sensitive hearing, is driven mad by the clatter and sounds of his local village and befriends an elderly man who teaches him to appreciate music and also secretly teaches him to play the violin. After the man's death (he is murdered by the villagers in a land dispute), the boy escapes to the forest each night to play the old man's violin, terrifying the villagers who believe that it is the old man come back from the dead, or perhaps even the devil, tormenting them for their evil deed.

For some reason or other this film stuck in my memory, and came back to me as I prepared to attend the annual Irish Composition Summer School.

Compositional Process:

The string quartet was composed, in a shorter form, during my week long attendance at the Irish Composition Summer School at Maynooth in July 2007. It was completed in its current form over the following year.

The whole concept behind this 'quartet' became a somewhat subversive one. From the outset, I decided that the first violin would, in itself, become a lone protagonist in this piece, mirroring the young boy playing alone in the forest at night-time. In performance, therefore, it should be separated from the other musicians, excluded from the normal layout of the quartet, and preferably in another acoustic space: such as another room or stairwell close to the main performance area.

The first violin is, therefore, in a sense, in exile, excluded from its normal positioning in the quartet. Its voice and musical language are also separated from the more prevailing homophonic and contrapuntal textures of the other three instruments.
This trio now functions as a commentator on the first violin's line, which, for the most part, contains the principle linear melodic material.

This sense of exclusion and separation is, therefore, brought to the fore, not just in the instrumental layout, but also in the music itself. This quartet was work-shopped by the Vanbrugh Quartet in 2010.

**Analysis:**

The opening four bars consist of the second violin, viola and cello playing in a homophonic texture.

This gradually becomes more contrapuntal as the music progresses, the music remaining in close register for the most part. The cello, however, occasionally moves to its lowest C, but quickly returns to the former register. Throughout the musical discourse, the linear becomes progressively more vertical, pausing on semi-breves and at the entrance of the first violin part, which occurs in bar 17.

The trio are interrupted in their flow by the entrance of the first violin, in high register, playing a single pitch, D.
The pitch material used by the first violin from its first entry in bar 17 to bar 43 is: D, C, F#, G, B, B flat, F, E, D#, C#, G#, A. Thus encompassing the full chromatic aggregate. After being momentarily silenced, the lower strings play a more accompanying role, while the first violin proceeds to establish its linear pitch material. The lower strings, however, remain in harmonic stasis, sharing the previously established pitch material. For the purpose of balance between the lower strings, I have concentrated on some timbral elements in order to alleviate the harmonic stasis, which rests mainly on the pitches C, F#, and G, distributed throughout the lower three parts.

This texture gradually thins out and disappears altogether in bar 46. The melody line in the 1st violin, emerging from its initial pitch D, starts its full organic development from bar 24, ending with an extended major second trill at bar 56. The angularity of this melody derives from the pitch material in the lower strings from bars 24 to 32, with the
exception of the pitch D. The melody expands its pitch material to include the full aggregate outlined above, completing the process by bar 43.

The contour of this melodic line consists mainly of major and minor dyads linked by wider intervals of the chromatic scale, with an overall sound-world suggestive of an octotonic scale, but also evoking a modal style. One can come to this conclusion through consideration of the harmonic stasis, which initially focuses on the pitches C, D, F#, G, and then, D, E, F, G, B flat; pitch groups representing the octotonic scale and Dorian modes, respectively.

We thus have a quasi-polymodal style encompassing chromatic elements as transitions. The melody is momentarily touched upon in the second violin at bars 56 and 60, and is also hinted at in the cello part at bars 62 and 64, but otherwise the texture remains the same.

A one-bar transition leads to a short, quiet coda with echoes of the opening staccato passage in the trio, now played sul tasto, interrupted by a repeated high F in the first violin.
Kalliope

for

Clarinet Quartet
Overall Concept:

My clarinet quartet actually began its life as a string quartet. Having written the first page or so, however, it struck me very quickly that the *staccato*, homophonic character of the writing which was emerging was far more suited to woodwinds rather than to strings. I therefore scored it as a clarinet quartet with two B flat clarinets and two bass clarinets. Once this decision was made, I made more rapid progress in the writing of this piece. The title, *Kalliope*, besides being the name of the Greek muse of music & poetry, is also a type of fairground steam organ whose playful character this piece, in part, invokes.

Compositional Process:

The piece was, from the beginning, through-composed, without any overall structure or plan in mind. The only notion I had in mind was that the piece should have a rather playful, and slightly mischievous character.

Form and Structure:

There is no formal structure to this piece. It is, rather, a continuous succession of short episodes, varying in length, character and timbre. Together, they serve to explore and demonstrate the various capabilities, registers and playing styles of the clarinet. This includes not only the production of staccato rhythmic *ostinati*, but also more sonorous, organ-sounding passages, as well as the rapid figurations which accomplished players are capable of executing.
Analysis:

The piece opens with all four players playing in a *staccato*, homophonic style.

![Musical notation]

Until bar 49, the piece consists of short phrases, of varying bar-lengths, interspersed by short rests, beginning with three bar phrases and gradually extending in length.

Each phrase ends with a single semi-quaver note. The tonality of the opening passages is based on the whole tone scale. This *staccato* character is broken briefly in bar 50 with linear staggered entries initiated by the second bass clarinet. These staggered entries are carried forward into the following staccato passages as well.

This *staccato* character finally breaks down in bar 88 where, after repetitions of a *staccato* figure, the piece changes character, while also changing to a slower 4/4 tempo. Here, the two top instruments descend to their *chalumeau* register which, together with the lower registers of the bass clarinets, give this passage a more organ-like timbre, contrasting with the *clarino* timbre of the opening passages. While this passage maintains the homophonic character of the piece, the pace of harmonic change is also slower. This passage ends at bar 107 as the second bass clarinet descends to a low D flat, producing a D flat Major 9th chord. The following passage begins as the bass clarinet descends once again to a low C, which is then doubled four octaves higher by the first clarinet.
A passage of linear material then follows with these two instruments at a registral distance in the four octave range.

This linear material is accompanied by the two middle instruments in close register playing pointillist, rhythmic patterns, which rise in pitch as the passage progresses.

At bar 119, the duo between the first clarinet and the second bass clarinet ends and the two middle voices are left to continue their rhythmic pointillist duo. Here, the bass clarinet is also playing in its high clarion register. At bar 121-122 they are joined by the two other instruments and the quartet once more begins to return to its previous staccato character.

The homophonic texture attempts to resume once more at bar 124, though with the addition of linear figurations in all instruments.
This is underpinned by the bass clarinet which maintains a semi-quaver *ostinato* throughout bars 127-132. Following this, the *staccato* character of the piece breaks down altogether and at bar 131, the first bass clarinet is finally released to play a fast linear passage. This is accompanied in the other instruments by remnants of the *staccato* motif off the beat and also now subservient to the flowing linear style of the first bass clarinet. The other voices follow suit, with staggered entries, and the piece takes on a more linear fluid character.

From bar 135, however, the bass clarinet resumes its semi-quaver *ostinato* on a low C and the other voices return with staccato homophonic material, though more sparse than the opening material. This now combines with linear material in bars 137, 138, 140 and 141 so that the piece now attains a synthesis of the two styles.

The progress is halted in bar 142 by homophonic parallel chords which lead to a short *coda*, which is the only recognizable traditional structural feature of the piece. Rapid rising figurations, initially in first and second clarinets, but later joined by the second bass clarinet in bar 147, and the first bass clarinet one bar later, lead to the conclusion.
The piece ends with isolated symmetric clusters (F, F#, A flat, A nat.) in all voices, played homophonically.

In writing this piece, I very much enjoyed exploring the sonorities and capabilities of the clarinet in an ensemble context.
A Peace Worth Willing

for

Cello & Modified Piano
Overall Concept

A Peace Worth Willing for cello and modified piano, was a work commissioned by Martin Johnson, principal cellist of the National Symphony Orchestra, with the support of the Arts Council. Martin had played with Concorde at a workshop at which one of my pieces was played. The short piece involved, Mirror Talk (also included in this portfolio), involves the use of an E-bow to indefinitely sustain tones on the piano. The E-bow is a device, mainly used by rock guitarists, which generates an oscillating electromagnetic pulse that causes a metal string to vibrate, even in the absence of manual stimulation. Martin thought that this idea could form the basis of an interesting work for cello and piano to be performed at a concert of new works, as part of the Gallery at Noon series, in the Hugh Lane Gallery in April 2010.

Other than giving me an approximate duration for the piece, he made no further suggestions or demands.

One slight problem I had from the outset, however, was that the combined timbres of piano and cello were not ones that appealed to me very much. To my ear, at least, they did not combine well and were too redolent of the chamber music of a previous era. I was determined, therefore, to alter the timbres of both instruments as much as possible, and to disguise their traditional roles.

The title of the piece, incidentally, has no particular meaning or connotations, and was merely an interesting phrase which came into my head.

Compositional Process.

As Martin Johnson had expressed an interest in utilising an E-bow in this piece, I proceeded to do some experiments with this device on a cello, which I borrowed from him for a few months. These experiments led to the conclusion that, while this technique would work well on a piano, it was not really feasible to use an E-bow on the
cello itself. This was mainly due to difficulties encountered in positioning the device accurately, the fact that the sound produced was of a low volume, and of a rather mechanical, electronic, nature. I also established that it would be difficult to alter, or switch off, these sounds at will.

Unlike many of my other pieces, the overall structure and mood of the work was clear to me from the outset, even before the process of composition began.

I decided, early on, to structure the piece in an ABC format with the altered timbres being mainly used in the A and C sections, and a more normal timbre for both instruments being utilised in the B section. Since the piece involves the use of E-bow created drones, and having experimented with various intervals and clusters, I eventually decided to use two E-bows to exploit the interval of a perfect fifth as a prominent feature of the piece, conveying at various sections a hint of organum.

I also experimented with producing percussive effects on the piano by simply damping a number of the strings with tape, but eventually decided to use felt, held down by heavy weights, as a more practical solution. As a result, discernible pitch was eliminated from these notes and a percussive timbre was produced when the piano keys were struck.

Through these various experiments, for this piece the piano keyboard is thus divided into three different 'zones' with differing timbres. The E-bows occupy the range from G3 to D4. The pitches F7, F#7, and G7 are damped for use as a percussive effect, and the remainder of the keyboard is available for normal playing.

Naturally, full instructions are given to the performers in a preface to the score.
Obviously, an E-bow used in this manner is only effective when the sustain pedal is held down. I did find, however, through experimentation, that an interesting buzzy, *Tambura* like sound could be produced by lifting the sustain pedal gradually, until the felt mutes are just touching the strings. As the E-bow continues to produce a tone, the result is a rather interesting buzzing sound which can be produced and eliminated at will. It is interesting to note that this buzzing sound can, in fact, be produced, although not readily sustained, on a piano without the use of an E-bow, and although this would normally be considered an anathema by pianists, it may perhaps hold interesting possibilities.

In utilising the sustain pedal in this unconventional manner, I had, effectively, stumbled upon a new extended technique for the piano.

As suggested above, the resulting sound is somewhat similar to the Indian *Tambura* or the buzzing bridge used on the *trompette* string of a Hurdy Gurdy. The use of this particular sound had been suggested to me by listening to *Vox Belanae* by George Crumb, though his method of execution is different, as he utilises paper clips applied directly to the strings to gain this effect.
As the performance of the piece was scheduled for the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin, I also had to visit this venue to examine the resident baby grand piano to ensure that the interior structure of the instrument would not inhibit the use of the E-bow, and also to ensure that the effect produced on this particular instrument was of an acceptable volume.

Having had a cello at my disposal for a period of time also enabled me to work out a pitch class of usable, and readily playable, natural harmonics across all four strings of the instrument, and to utilise these as a working scale from which to derive pitch material for the cello in the A and C sections of the piece. I had chosen to exclusively use natural, as opposed to artificial, harmonics due to their more resonant quality. At Martin's request, they were to be notated at actual pitch.

I also decided at an early stage that the use of an open, time-based, notation would be preferable for much of the piece, in order to give the musicians the widest possible latitude in performance.

**Analysis**

As mentioned above, the piece is divided into three sections. The first and third sections incorporate both extended techniques and altered timbres, in both piano and cello, while the central section consists of more traditional timbres and playing techniques in the cello. In keeping with my determination to disguise the instruments as much as possible, they are seldom heard together using their normal timbres.

The piece opens with the E-bows playing a constant drone firstly on G and then with D
added to give a perfect fifth. This drone is modified and interrupted when the sustain pedal is lifted gently to produce the buzzing sounds discussed above. An added refinement to this technique is produced when notes adjacent to those played by the E-bow are played normally, also resulting in this buzzing sound. As the sustain pedal is lifted and depressed once more, these played notes are damped and the drone notes continue. The cello enters playing the same pitches as the drone in *tremolo*, and *sul pont*. It then continues with diffuse, soft, bowing sounds on the same open strings, matching the E-bow Drones. Brief figurations, played normally, are introduced in the piano. The cello then embarks on a melodic line in natural harmonics, interrupted by repeated figurations in the piano, initially encompassing a tritone, with brief, repeated, percussive passages in the highest register. These pianistic figurations develop into more extended sextuplet *arpeggios*. This passage also includes the cellist executing harmonic sweeps based on the open string harmonic series on the G and D strings. These sweeps are achieved by moving the finger from the harmonic node at the neck end to the corresponding node at the bridge end of the fingerboard.

Just before L, a change in mood is heralded by repeated, insistent, percussive clusters on the damped upper strings of the piano, interspersed by jeté bowing and *glissandi* in the cello.

Larger clusters, and an extended *pizzicato* D on the cello, lead to the beginning of the B section of the piece.
At P, the cello commences a fluid melodic solo passage which incorporates a traditional *arco* playing technique. Here the performer is given an opportunity for more expressive playing, serving as a contrast to the altered timbres heard heretofore. This passage also includes left-hand *pizzicato*, double stop *pizzicato* with *glissandi*, and the occasional pitch bend. The double stop *pizzicato* in bars 113-114 and bars 123-129, which are anticipated by the left-hand *pizzicato* on open strings in bars 105 and 111-112, are in parallel fifths. This mirrors the perfect fifth heard previously in the piano drone.

This brief passage of *organum* is a development of the previous E-bow drones. It forms a contrast to the preceding *arco* solo passage, and provides yet another timbral transformation.

The cello completes this section by settling once more onto the opening drone notes of G and D, which are then transferred to the piano as the pianist depresses the sustain pedal once more. This passage should involve a gradual and smooth transformation of timbre, but not of pitch, from one instrument to the other. The start of the C section is confirmed by a repeat of the initial tritone figuration in the piano.

The cello, still playing *arco*, picks up the final F# of this figuration with a leap of a major 7th from G, repeats this leap once in *arco* and finally in harmonics.

The cello once more plays a melodic line in harmonics, interrupted this time by the tritone figuration played on hammered strings inside the piano. This is followed by two passages where cello harmonics and hammered piano strings are heard in unison, producing a combined alternative timbre. (a genuine piano hammer from an old family piano was provided for this purpose).
The piece ends with a repeated falling perfect fourth in high harmonics on the cello, alternating with a falling major third interval on piano which, combined, provide an ephemeral hint of a G major perfect cadence. The E-bow drones are, afterwards, allowed to continue and, finally, with E-bows gently removed, the piano strings are left to vibrate to a natural silence.
Dark Disney

for

Clarinet, Violin, Cello & Piano
Overall Concept

This piece was composed with the resources of the contemporary music ensemble, Concorde, in mind. Hence, I decided to score it for Flute, Clarinet, Violin, Cello and Piano. Although I am not myself a pianist, the genesis of the piece came originally from some experimentation on the keyboard; playing alternating black and white clusters using a rocking movement of the flattened palm of the right hand, instead of individual fingers, to produce a continuous *ostinato* pattern. This pervasive *ostinato* pattern was intended to provide an underlying motoric force facilitating the generation of organic gestures in the other parts. These gestures are characterised by the use of rhythmic unison, contrary motion, and of wide intervalic registers encompassing more than an octave. Occasionally, both wind and string families are pitted against each other in a contrapuntal tapestry, unified by the piano *ostinato*, to produce a textural density. Overall, apart from a short passage from bars 65 to 93, the more linear, melodic, elements are presented almost exclusively in the other four parts, leaving the piano to fulfil its role of providing the continuous motoric drive. The title came to me simply as an interesting phrase, but is not intended to represent the mood or character of the piece.

Compositional Process:

While, initially, having no overall plan for the structure of the piece, I was nevertheless minded to have it begin in quite an aggressive fashion, without preamble or introduction, using a significant opening gesture. I also decided, at a quite early stage, to make use of combined instrumental textures, often requiring instruments to play in rhythmic unison, rather than to write in an exclusively contrapuntal style, with instruments employing independent lines.

The intended overall mood of the work, as implied by the opening gesture, is one of strength, defiance, certainty of purpose, and a sense of controlled outrage.
There were no conscious influences present during the process of composition, though in its pervasive rhythmic drive, almost exclusively heard in the piano part, there are undoubtedly some minimalist influences present in the work.

Form and Structure:

There is no formal overall structure to this piece. It was through-composed and there are no repeats or breaks in the flow of music. Overall, the piece is presented as a series of 'episodes' or miniatures, varying in length, character, and sometimes timbre, unified only by the persistent piano *ostinato*. Although tonal elements are occasionally employed during the piece, overall, the piece is atonal in character.

Analysis:

As mentioned above, the piece opens with an overt gesture in the flute and clarinet, in rhythmic unison. This entrance takes the form of a descending triplet composed of two combined semi-quaver triplets. This triplet motif is further exploited, in different forms, throughout the piece.

This gesture in the winds takes place just half a bar after the piano commences, *sforzando*, its *ostinato* pattern of alternating black and white clusters.
The flute and clarinet's opening passages, each four bars long, end with a truncated phrase in semi-quavers, following a held note. (a feature which also occurs, but more prevalently, in my Clarinet Quartet). After repetitions of the triplet motif in the winds, the strings make their first real entrance. The violin, which echoes this triplet motif at its entry, and also later in bar 12, contributes the first explicit melodic material to the piece, supported by the cello. During this string passage, the flute and clarinet play in rhythmic unison, often at the interval of a tritone, producing a characteristic combined timbre and the first (introductory) episode finishes at bar 18 on an A Major seventh chord (minus the fifth).

The second episode opens in bar 20 in similar fashion to the first, with a triplet motif in the winds this time playing a tritone apart, and supported this time by the strings, also a tritone apart. This time the winds drop out of rhythmic unison with the clarinet playing successive quintuplets against a much extended triplet, flutter-tongued on the flute. This episode ends non-tonally at bar 24.

After a one bar interval during which the piano, continuing the right-hand ostinato, introduces some sforzando interventions in the left hand, the next episode commences with the now familiar triplet, this time with the flute and violin leading the way in rhythmic unison. The clarinet and cello also enter in a similar fashion, the switched instrumental combinations now providing a different timbre.

This episode provides quintuplet figurations in all instruments (except the piano) and finishes in bar 32 on a D Major chord (with added minor second). The following episode, which is really a continuation of the previous one, opens, this time, with all four instruments together playing the opening triplet motif, and there are numerous repetitions of this motif, in all instruments, over the following few bars, finally culminating in a sustained major/minor interval cluster.
Following further piano *sforzando* interventions in the left-hand, the four instruments for a time join the piano in producing a rhythmic *ostinato* through a combination of key-clicks and *col legno battuto* techniques. The piano's left-hand *sforzando* clusters now begin to come to the foreground, as do the right-hand clusters, previously only heard in their alternating black/white *ostinato* context. This culminates in a climax at bar 46, where all five instruments briefly share the *ostinato* rhythm, before the piano part once more settles into its previous *ostinato* role after bar 48.

The next episode, which begins immediately in bar 48 with flutter-tongued flute, is slower, more measured and contrapuntal in character. Here, the winds provide an accompaniment as the violin reaches into its higher register. The triplet motif makes its appearance once more in bars 59-61 towards the end of this passage, which ends on a chord of G# minor with added major 7\textsuperscript{th}. In the following episode, which starts in bar 65, the *ostinato* role is passed from the piano to the strings who play *col legno battuto* in alternating quavers. In this passage the piano comes to the fore once more, this time with an explicit single-line melody incorporating tritone intervals and accompanied by
occasional echoes of its previous *ostinato* role with clusters in the high register. The winds, meanwhile, augment the *ostinato* element by rhythmic *staccato* interventions, and also provide an echo of the triplet opening gesture in bar 82.

From bar 83 onwards, the high register *ostinato* clusters in the piano begin to take a central role, descending in register and becoming a linear, melodic, element in their own right. This is accompanied by low-register flutter-tongued notes in the winds, playing in rhythmic unison, providing yet another alternative timbre, and including the triplet motif in contrary motion.

In bar 93, the piano resumes its previous *ostinato* role as the strings re-enter in rhythmic unison, joined by the winds in bar 96 with a few final reminders of the triplet motif before the piece begins to settle into an harmonic stasis, with the strings playing a low B flat in octaves, and the winds playing the tritone interval of F and B. This harmonic stasis is designed to inculcate a sense of resignation and resolution to the concluding passage of the work.

As the piece comes to its conclusion, the rhythmic *ostinato* is once more briefly transferred from the piano to the cello and violin in turn, playing *col legno battuto*. The piece then ends, as a low register cluster in the piano continues to reverberate, with the winds holding their tritone interval over a much diminished *ostinato* heard in the strings.
A Mearing Dream

for

Symphony Orchestra
Overall Concept

In writing my orchestral piece, I set out on the process of composition with no real preconceptions or definite overall plans. The overall concept on which the piece is based only gradually became apparent to me as I began work on the slow double bass introduction.

In essence, the work is based on an emotional event which I, myself, have experienced on occasions in the past and which, I am sure, is familiar to many people who have had similar experiences during their lives. Namely, the experience of awaking in the morning, or during the middle of the night, having during the period of sleep forgotten some trauma or affliction which has, heretofore, dominated our waking lives. There is, often, that fleeting moment of subtle emotion, that sense of unease, before we completely come back to a conscious awareness of the painful emotion which we have been experiencing in our waking hours. There is also, then, the force with which these painful realisations once more impinge on our consciousness, along with the feelings of devastation which this can bring. These painful emotions may, perhaps, have their origin in the separation from a loved one through death, the breakup of a relationship, or perhaps even some painful physical affliction. In this piece, therefore, I have attempted to represent a fleeting emotional experience, extended linearly in time, to present a broad emotional landscape. I had great difficulty in finding a suitable title for this piece, as the concept behind the work was a subtle one. I eventually came across the archaic word mearing which, in ancient times, was used to describe a ditch or wall forming the boundary between two town-lands or tribal territories; a landscape feature, usually referred to as a mearing ditch. I felt that this word appropriately described the state of finding oneself at a boundary between the waking and dreaming states. I therefore decided to name the piece A Mearing Dream.
Compositional Process

As a practical way into the compositional process, I began to experiment with brass textures and clusters, with the idea of using brass gestures at the core of the piece, out of which other ideas would organically arise.

During this process, two separate concrete ideas emerged, the first comprising sets of minor second clusters in horns, trumpets and trombones fanning out into larger chord structures, and the second, a brief, ascending, *staccato* motif in the trumpets. I was, however, unsure as to how these disparate elements would be incorporated into the whole.

The piece largely, therefore, grew organically, and internally, out of these two ideas. The brass clusters first make their appearance in bars 93-96, and the ascending trumpet duet motif in bars 72 and 83. Overall, there were no conscious stylistic influences from other composers works, though in retrospect, some unconscious ones can be cited.

Trumpet motif:

Brass cluster:
Form and Structure:

In form, this piece could be described as a Tone Poem, though, again, this was not a conscious choice from the outset. It conforms to this definition by virtue of the fact that it is a single movement work for orchestra based on a non-musical idea.

Structurally, the piece is moulded into an arch form. From the sparse ppp opening passages, the work intensifies both texturally, dynamically, and in harmonic complexity, before these elements gradually diminish in intensity towards the end of the piece.

The piece finally settles into a sparse harmonic stasis at the end, which, while not sharing any actual material with the opening section, mirrors its mood.

Analysis:

The piece opens pianissimo in the double basses with a major second/minor third cluster using the pitches G, A and B flat. This cluster is repeated, with short intervals of silence intervening, with pitches re-voiced, and incorporating short glissandi. Each cluster, after the second entry, tails off into jete bowing in one or more of the instruments. Longer, more substantial, jete passages are introduced in all three double bass parts at bar 36 with cello, viola, and eventually both violin parts, contributing to this texture from bar 42 onwards. These jete passages prefigure the staccato element incorporated into the ascending trumpet motif (referred to in the above section on the process of composition).

The first hint of linear, melodic material is introduced by the solo oboe in bar 47, in the
form of an *arabesque* initially encompassing the minor second interval of A and B flat, but gradually expanding in range to include F#, resulting in a major second cluster. This finally develops into an explicit melodic statement in bars 62-64, with an answering phrase in bars 65-66. During this development, the overall texture is gradually filled out with *pp* minor seconds in the horns juxtaposed with *staccato* interventions in the lower winds and brass. These latter, again, prefiguring the more explicit rising *staccato* gesture to come in the trumpets.

A high pedal G, a pitch already present in the low, clustered, pedal played by the double basses, is also introduced, with free bowing, in the first violins in bar 67. This pitch is also present in the *staccato* tuba interventions, and in the horn parts.

Bar 72 heralds the first statement of the aforementioned trumpet motif shared between two trumpets, imitated a quaver apart. The short one-bar motif consists of a diminished 7th *arpeggio* beginning on C. The woodwinds enter with demisemiquaver figurations played in rhythmic unison, based on minor second intervals, overlaying a restatement of the oboe theme in the bass clarinet at bar 74. The answering phrase, this time, played on the cor anglais at bar 77. This passage is also underpinned by a *staccato* motif in the oboes at bars 75-78.
At bar 83 the trumpet motif is restated and extended in length by one bar. This is followed, as before, with demisemiquaver material in the upper woodwinds. This material is then transferred to the bassoons at bar 85, who elongate it and develop it more fully in the following four bars. The passage culminates with *staccato* semiquaver chords in the woodwinds, played in rhythmic unison.

The brass cluster (referred to in the introduction) initiates, at bar 93, the process of expanding the textural density, which culminates with the *tutti* string section at bar 104. At this point, the strings immediately come to the foreground with an explicit *fff* passage. Here the pitch material is a linearisation of the material in the opening passages. The passage itself opens with a descending minor second and an upward tritone leap played *fff, tutti*, and in unison. It consists of eleven bars of explicitly melodic, but atonal, material. The three initial pitches of this passage are played *martelé*, and the following bars *detaché*. This passage has, for me, some resonances of the string writing of Dmitri Shostakovich in his large symphonic works.
The strings are joined by the Xylophone for a few bars from 111-114, with each phrase of this passage being punctuated by &ff interventions from the timpani.

In bar 115, the initial three pitches of this string passage recur, in a pseudo-canonic fashion, firstly in the trumpets and subsequently in the lower strings, in unison with the lower brass. There follows a hocketed chordal passage between woodwind and brass sections, which in retrospect, is somewhat reminiscent of the so-called 'interview chords' at the end of Act 2, Scene 2 of Benjamin Britten’s opera *Billy Budd*. Meanwhile, from this point onwards, the other string parts begin to separate into a rhythmic, *ostinato* texture, utilising some of the pitches, in cluster form, from previous linear passages. This creates a discrete layer of string sound which underpins the increasing activity in brass and woodwinds. This layering structure, in retrospect, can be cited as an influence from Charles Ives, and especially his piece *The Housatonic at Stockbridge* from *Three Places in New England*. This texture is accompanied, and given further rhythmic complexity, with the introduction of a short percussion passage at bar 131, incorporating complex counter-rythms. This percussion gradually filters out after bar 145.
The *staccato* trumpet motif, first heard in bars 72 and 83, is reintroduced at bar 144, this time extended linearly, and at an *fff* dynamic. The trombones enter pseudo-canonically, with the same motif, at bar 151, and the horns in similar fashion at bar 154.

This brass combination results in a climax in bars 160-162 with the sustained cluster C, D, D#, and minor third clusters B,C,D, and D, D#, F, with answering chords in the winds. The dense string *ostinato* texture recedes during this passage in the brass. The strings re-enter with more melodic linear material, a reworking of the previous pitch material with the addition of the pitch E, beginning with a rising minor sixth, in bar 178. This time only the first and second violins play in octaves, over a G pedal in cellos and basses. This melodic line in the violins eventually settles onto a G pedal in octaves.

At bar 191 the cor anglais enters with a descending augmented third from E flat to B flat, finishing on A, a tritone from E flat, mirroring the mood of the oboe solo from the beginning of the piece. While the melodic pitch material is different, the *arabesque* character and modal nature of the material is similar. The re-entry of this double-reed wind sound at the end of the piece is calculated to give a sense of symmetry to the work, and reinforce the overall sense of an arch structure for the piece.

This cor anglais solo continues to the end of the piece with the strings merging into a pedal chord and with brief filigreed interruptions from the clarinets.
The piece ends with a long held B flat on the cor anglais, and a single struck G on the chimes which is left to vibrate.
Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, I would have to say that I was pleased, overall, with the standard and range of work I produced. It will be noted, however, that my portfolio does not include a vocal piece, which I regret. I had originally intended to include such a piece and had explored and written sketches for a choral piece based on the life of St. Bridget, along with a song cycle for soprano and harp about the famine. I had also explored a dramatic piece for string quartet and baritone. In each case however, I felt stymied by the lack of suitable texts and concluded that I would either have to write these texts myself, or have them written for me. In each case, these would have become larger projects possibly involving collaboration with a librettist or poet. I intend to continue work on these pieces and hope to complete them in time.

I would have to say that, during the period of preparation for this portfolio, I found the process of composition to be a surprisingly stressful one. Perhaps this stress resulted from the fear of losing ideas before they could be accurately submitted to paper, or that ideas would somehow cease to flow. Or it may, perhaps, have been some deeper fear of exploring unconscious ideations and motivations.

I was often, though, surprised at the manner in which ideas would spontaneously flow, once one settled into a writing mode. As mentioned in my introduction, starting a new piece was generally the most difficult task, but I found that a playful attitude, which was not goal oriented, was often the best approach. Most of all, I think, I learned that application was most necessary for inspiration.

I was also taken by surprise at the way in which some unconscious influences would arise in my work. Often, on hearing passages of music I had written, I would note an influence from some composer or other, although I was seldom aware of any influences at a conscious level while writing.
At no stage did I feel any necessity to quote or pay homage to anybody else's work, and I had no organised program of listening to the work of others in the search for ideas. Regarding my mode of working, this varied according to the piece I was writing. For the most part, I used a combination of keyboard exploration and the Sibelius notation software. I combined this with the Garitan Personal Orchestra sampling program which gave me quite accurate instrumental sounds. This was particularly important for my orchestral piece, where timbres and doublings were paramount. Using such a combination also provided the facility of minutely working out complex rhythmic patterns. It also, in itself, provided a source of inspiration as I often found that playing back some passage of a piece would immediately suggest ideas on how that piece should proceed, very often in non-obvious or surprising ways. I would often 'hear' the following passage quite clearly in my head. It also enabled me to create a sense of balance within pieces as I could often tell, merely by listening, when material had been explored to its fullest extent, or when a need for a change of pace or material was required in order to avoid repetition or staleness in the piece. In the case of *A Peace Worth Willing*, however, my work was almost completely done using only pen and paper, along with the keyboard and cello. While I found this mode of working more challenging, both psychologically and physically (a hand injury made it more difficult to write accurate notation) I also found it quite liberating and it provided a more meditative experience of composing. I would very much like to adopt and explore this mode of working in the future, and reduce my reliance on technology and software. I felt no inclination, however, to explore the use of technology in other ways, such as the use of electronic media or the genre of electro-acoustic music. While acknowledging that both of these are valid and rapidly developing genres, they have, at this stage of my career at least, little appeal to my taste.
Another important lesson I learned during my project was that it can be extremely easy to write music which turns out to be very difficult to play. This is why, I believe, it is very important, as far as possible, to collaborate with actual performers, as their feedback is invaluable to the writing process. This feedback need not only be negative, in terms of what they may find too difficult or indeed impossible to play, but also positive, in that they can alert you to alternative and/or extended techniques which you might not have initially been aware of.

Regarding future plans, I would like to explore the incorporation of dramatic elements into my work and perhaps build up to working on an opera, as contemporary opera is a genre in which I have a particular interest. As a composer, I would also like to develop my craftsman-like skills as fully as possible, as I believe that the element of craftsmanship, so often absent in the modern conceptual-art based approach to creative work, is vital to the true exposition and realisation of any creative enterprise.
Appendix: Table of Contents and Notes for Recordings & Simulations.

Track-list:

Track 1: Jo-Ha-Kyu for Flute, Violin and Piano
Track 2: Duo for Violin & Cello
Track 3: Yanco for String Quartet
Track 4: Kalliope for Clarinet Quartet
Track 5: A Peace Worth Willing for Cello & Modified Piano (very quiet at beginning)
Track 6: Dark Disney for Flute, B flat Clarinet, Violin, Cello & Piano.
Track 7: A Mearing Dream for Symphony Orchestra

Note: All tracks, with the exception of track 5, are simulations.

These simulations were produced utilising the music notation program Sibelius 4 in conjunction with Garitan Personal Orchestra which uses actual, not synthesised, orchestral sounds. Because of the very large computer resources which these simulations require, some small imperfections may persist. The actual scores are to be considered the definitive versions throughout.

Whilst some recordings were made while pieces were being work-shopped, these were mainly unrehearsed sight-read play throughs, and I felt that simulations produced in the above manner would give a more accurate rendition of the pieces concerned.

Track 5, A Peace Worth Willing, is an actual recording made at a public concert with Martin Johnson, Cello and Jane O'Leary, Piano.

Unfortunately, Mirror Talk was not recorded while being work-shopped, and neither was it possible to produce an accurate simulation due to the nature of the work.

Note also, that some sounds, such as Col Legno Battuto in the strings could not be reproduced accurately and are approximated by using pizzicato in most cases.

Similarly, key clicks in the winds are not reproduced.
Jo-Ha-Kyu

for

Flute, Violin & Piano

Dermot McDermott

Duration Circa 4 mins
Jo-Ha-Kyu

With Delicacy

Flute

Violin

Piano

5

10
Duo

for

Violin & Cello

Dermot McDermott

Duration Circa 6 mins
Duo

Vln.

\[ \frac{1}{4} \]

Vln.

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Mirror Talk

for

B♭ Clarinet & Piano with E-Bow

Dermot McDermott

Duration Circa 4 mins
Mirror Talk

Dermot McDermott

Clarinet in B♭

Piano

E-Bow

Slowly depress pedal until clear tone establishes

Partially lift pedal to get string 'buzz'

Let tone build

Let tone build

Slowly tear pieces of tape from strings
Opposite directions, overlapping.

Sing top note

Let ring

As softly as possible

6

Cl.

Pno.

4"
Cl.  
\[ \text{let ring} \] 

Pno.  
\[ \text{Percussive effect on taped strings} \] 

Cl.  
\[ \text{As softly as possible} \] 

let ring.
Really soft

Gentle slap tongue

Rapid random notes from this range

Pause before multiphonic if needed
Lift E-Bow gently from string to string, allow tone to build on each. Let ring.

Remove E-Bow gently, keep pedal down. Release after all tone has ceased.
Yanco
for
String Quartet

Dermot McDermott

Duration: Circa 5 mins
Yanco

Note: If possible, 1st Violin should be separated from the other three players and in a different acoustic space.

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Dermot McDermott
Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

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Kalliope

for

Clarinet Quartet

Dermot McDermott

Duration Circa 5 mins
A Peace Worth Willing
for Cello and Modified Piano
Dermot McDermott
A Peace Worth Willing

With Delicacy

Violoncello

Piano

Vc.

Pno.

Copyright © Dermot McDermott

(allow tone to build)

(played, buzzy sound)

Lift pedal just enough to mute F#, but continue G tone.

(played, buzzy sound)

Lift pedal just enough to mute F#, C# but continue G & D tones.

Diffuse bowing sounds, G,D strings

Copyright © Dermot McDermott
L.H. move slowly from D string node
D 1/5 Bridge end to D 1/5 Peg end (or V.V.)

2"

L.H. move slowly from G string node
G 1/4 Bridge end to G 1/4 Peg end

2" 3" 4"

Lift pedal just enough to mute F♯, C♯ but continue D & G tones.
\( q = 55 \) (but very free)

Vc.

Pno.

L.V.

G

\( \text{mp} \)

H

\( \text{poco rall.} \)

J

\( \text{poco rall.} \)
Replace E-bows on D, G strings, sustain pedal raised.

Replace E-bows on D, G strings, sustain pedal raised.

Replace E-bows on D, G strings, sustain pedal raised.

Replace E-bows on D, G strings, sustain pedal raised.

Replace E-bows on D, G strings, sustain pedal raised.
Vc. bend

Pno.

Vc.

Pno.

Vc.

Pno.

Vc.

Pno.

Semper L.V. Let E-bow tone build.
Nat. Harm (durations very free)

Vc.:
- Hammered on strings inside piano, soft beater.

Pno.:
- Minimal attack L.V. (softer than cello)
Hammered on strings inside piano, soft beater. L.V.
Remove e-bows with pedal down & allow tone to die away completely.
Performance Notes

Natural harmonics are notated at actual pitch.

Violoncello

Tape over, or otherwise mute these strings on the piano to produce a percussive sound only.

Piano

Two E-Bows required for performance.

- Before start of piece, place one e-bow squarely on string at pitch indicated. E-bows should be switched on to the normal setting (switch should be to the left, the thick indicator line, as it stands upright)

- Lift sustain pedal just enough to momentarily alter sound of the e-bow, but not mute it completely (Ideally, a buzzing Tambura-like sound, may be instrument dependent)

- Hammered strings inside piano, use a soft beater. (old felt covered piano hammers will be supplied)

ALL durations and tempos given are approximate and are to be interpreted very freely.

Duration of piece approx 10 mins.
Dark Disney

for

Flute, Clarinet in B\text{b}, Violin, Cello & Piano

Dermot McDermott

Duration Circa 5 mins
Dark Disney

Dermot McDermott

Flute
Clarinet in B♭
Violin
Violoncello
Piano

Play alternate black/white clusters with rocking palm movements

Score in C
A Mearing Dream

for Symphony Orchestra

Dermot McDermott
Score in C

1 Piccolo
2 Flutes
2 Oboes
1 Cor Anglais
2 Clarinets in B flat
1 Bass Clarinet
2 Bassoons
1 Contrabassoon
3 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in C
2 Trombones
1 Bass Trombone
1 Tuba
Timpani
Percussion: (3 players)
   Xylophone
   Wood Blocks
   Almsglocken
   Snare Drum
   Tubular Bells
Strings
( 1 C-Extension Dbl.Bass required)

Duration: Approximately 10 minutes.
ppp