Sounding out the past

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of the author's knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the relationship between music composition and historical narrative, and considers whether the creative works inspired by historical events offer an alternative perspective on the past.

To test this idea the thesis focuses on two significant, though unrelated, moments in history: Australia's involvement in World War One, and the shifting social and economic chronicle of Detroit since the mid-twentieth century. I address these two periods of history from a number of perspectives. Firstly, I analyse how other composers have creatively engaged with and reflected upon each moment. In particular, I examine the musical language of Australian composers who have been inspired by World War One, and American composers writing Detroit-focussed works, to show how their musical language underpins the histories they aim to reflect. I also assess critical responses to various works, demonstrating how the reception of music can differ depending on current social and political factors.

I then seek to establish my personal and creative connection to each of these historical narratives, outlining the historical research I undertook prior to writing compositions, *Gassed Shell (Severe)* and *Hum*. The works, premiered in Melbourne and Detroit respectively, represent a major component of the thesis. Their scores are included in full. The connective tissue between these elements is a detailed exploration of how my research informed and shaped my creative practice. Moreover, I provide insight into the musical techniques and decisions I made to fulfil my compositional intentions and, in turn, to gain fresh perspectives on the historical events. I seek to push beyond a conventional exegesis to self-reflexive analysis. In conclusion, I frame the music of composers dealing with the past through an interdisciplinary lens, drawing upon cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz's idea of 'thick description' to recontextualise these creative processes as akin to historical practice, and, as such, potential methods for obtaining new viewpoints on history.

Sequence

Please view in the preferred order, as set out below.

1. Introduction
2. Chapter 1
3. Listen to recording of *Gassed Shell (Severe)* with score
4. Chapter 2
5. Chapter 3
6. Listen to recording of *Hum* with score
7. Chapter 4
8. Conclusion

Links to the full recording and score of *Gassed Shell (Severe)* and *Hum* are provided before chapters 2 and 4. The full text of each piece is included in the front of the score.

As this thesis is interdisciplinary, I have also included optional links to audio excerpts of the notated figures within chapters 2 and 4. These audio excerpts are intended to support the figures by providing a sonic representation of the notation. Please note, however, that the excerpts have been derived from the original stereo sound recordings; as a result, it is not possible to isolate or 'solo' specific instruments in moments where multiple instruments are playing together. The excerpts can be streamed online by clicking on the music notes icon that looks like:

(They can also be downloaded if required).

Lastly, all notated figures are written at concert pitch, except where stated in the footnotes.

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Introduction

> We found that for all of the media coverage it's hard to pin down exactly what happened and what she [Anna Nicole] was like," said Mr Thomas, the librettist. "There are too many conflicting accounts. At some point we had to decide for ourselves what she was…thereafter we've stayed as anchored to the documented facts as we can. But of course there's an element of fantasy, as there has to be in a piece like this.
>
> —Richard Thomas, librettist for the opera *Anna Nicole*[1]

Composers have long engaged with history as a source of creative inspiration. Western classical music is replete with landmark works that reflect upon the past; Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony,[2] Tchaikovsky's *1812* Overture,[3] Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*[4] and Schoenberg's *A Survivor From Warsaw*[5] are but a few. The tradition remained alive in the late twentieth century, with American composers such as Anthony Davis, John Adams and Wynton Marsalis creating new works based upon political and social

[1] Michael White, "A Tabloid Star Is Joining the Sisterhood of the Fallen," *New York Times*, 13 February 2011, AR1, New York edition. *Anna Nicole*, an opera based on the life of American model and celebrity Anna Nicole Smith, premiered in London in 2011. Mark Antony Turnage composed the music.

[2] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Beethoven, Ludwig Van," by Douglas Johnson et al., accessed 24 March 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.40026. Beethoven's Third Symphony, composed in 1803, was originally entitled *Bonaparte*, reflecting the composer's deep admiration for Napoleon as a heroic leader. After Napoleon declared himself Emperor of France in May 1804, Beethoven changed the dedication to read "composed to celebrate the memory of a great man." It is unsure whether this new dedication was for Napoleon or Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia.

[3] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Il'yich," by Roland John Wiley, accessed 23 February 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.51766. Tchaikovsky's *1812* Overture was composed in 1880, and premiered in 1882 to commemorate the seventieth anniversary of Russia's victory over the invading French Grande Armée commanded by Napoleon.

[4] Jennifer DeLapp-Birkett, "Government Censorship and Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait* During the Second Red Scare," ed. Patricia Hall, *The Oxford Handbook of Music Censorship* (Oxford University Press, 2016), accessed 23 February 2019, https://dx.doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199733163.013.20. Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait*, written for narrator and orchestra, was composed in 1942 following a commission from conductor André Kostalanetz for works paying tribute to outstanding Americans. The piece incorporates selected passages of Lincoln's words.

[5] Joy H. Calico, *Arnold Schoenberg's a Survivor from Warsaw in Postwar Europe*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014), 1, accessed 23 February 2019, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt5vjzd3. Arnold Schoenberg's *A Survivor From Warsaw* Op. 47 was composed in 1947 in response to the Holocaust, and was written after the composer had emigrated to America. Twelve-tone technique underpins the work, which features three different languages. Schoenberg wrote both the music and text for the work.

history.[6] More recently in Australia, the centennial commemorations of the nation's involvement in the Great War, beginning in 2015 with the hundredth anniversary of the Anzac[7] landings at Gallipoli, generated numerous new Australian compositions.[8]

What might motivate a composer to write music about the past? Looking beyond financial incentives, writing music about history has provided cohesion and purpose for a number of composers. American composer Michael Daugherty, for example, has spoken of his search for "an emotional core"[9] through making "connections between things past and present."[10] Similarly, the war service of Helen Gifford's father, which Rosalind Appleby described as "imprinted upon [her] childhood,"[11] significantly impelled the Australian composer's desire to create music about the First World War. Within my own artistic practice, personal connections have influenced my desire to engage with historical narratives. Among the dividends for actively exploring these relationships has been the affirmation of my creative ethos and musical style, and the opportunity to study several individual stories in depth. However, engaging with the past has also presented some challenges to the intentionality of my work, and the procedures I have used to give voice to a historical narrative through music.

Just prior to commencing my doctoral studies in 2013, I went through a process of (re)critiquing and contemplating the ethical implications of my compositional practice.[12] The catalyst for this scrutiny was a work I had written a year earlier. In 2012,

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[6] Anthony Davis's historically themed operas include *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* (1986), *Tania* (1992) and *Amistad* (1997). John Adams's operas include *Nixon In China* (1987), *The Death of Klinghoffer* (1991) and *Dr Atomic* (2005). Wynton Marsalis's oratorio *Blood On The Fields* premiered in 1994.

[7] I have used the conventional spelling of Anzac throughout my thesis; however, when others have used variations of this, for example 'ANZAC,' I have kept their spelling.

[8] Commonwealth of Australia, "Anzac Centenary Arts and Cultural Fund," Department of Communication and the Arts, 2014, Funding and support webpage, accessed 8 June 2018, https://www.arts.gov.au/funding-and-support/anzac-centenary-arts-and-culture-fund. The Australian Federal Government, through the Anzac Centenary Production and Commissioning Fund, funded many of these new compositions. A comprehensive list of works that were produced can be found under the "Who We've Funded" tab at the aforementioned website of the Australian Government's Department for Communication and the Arts.

[9] Kathryn Shattuck, "A Symphonist of Elvis and Barbie," *New York Times*, 14 May 2000, 42.

[10] Ann McCutchan, *The Muse That Sings: Composers Speak About the Creative Process*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), PDF e-book, 333.

[11] Rosalind Appleby, *Women of Note: The Rise of Australian Women Composers* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2012), 56.

[12] I do not want to suggest this was the first time I had questioned my artistic procedures and intentions; indeed, I regularly go through a process of reaffirming my commitment to ideas such as establishing and maintaining formal structure, and incorporating improvisation, before commencing a new work. At the beginning of my doctorate, I was looking for ways to create

Australian pianist Zubin Kanga commissioned and premiered my piece *The Drumfire Was Incessant, and Continued All Night With Unabated Fury*,[13] a composition that took its inspiration from my great-great uncle's experiences at the Battle of Pozieres during World War I. The outcome for *The Drumfire* was intellectually and creatively satisfying, with both audience and critics receiving the piece well.[14] Yet, aspects of my process for writing the work highlighted the precarious nature of connecting music with history. I had mapped out elements of the battle's progression and used this as a template for the composition's formal design. Although this approach was structurally useful, after the work's premiere I realised it risked being overly prescriptive with listeners.[15] It created the potential for audience members to look for signposts in the music, inadvertently engaging them in a riddle-solving exercise, rather than searching for their own emotional connection to the work. I concluded that using historical narrative as a creative springboard raised procedural and philosophical issues that warranted further investigation.

This desire to examine my creative practice in relation to historical narrative was the catalyst for my doctoral work. I decided to compose music inspired by two significant, but unrelated historical events: the First World War, and the decline and gradual rebirth of Detroit. My grandfather's experiences—particularly his wounding by gas—at the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917, and a text of Jamaal May, a Detroit-based poet, would provide the lens on each respective event. My choice to musically engage with these narratives raised questions about authenticity, legitimacy and the role of the individual voice within the contexts of composing music and engaging with history. Would these concepts present challenges to my artistic process that warranted investigation? As I examined this scenario further, I became aware of a cross-disciplinary overlap between discussions about the interpretation of historical narratives by some within the academy,

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music that satisfied my aesthetic and artistic outlook, and probed and explored historical narratives without becoming literal or contrived.

[13] For the sake of brevity, I have abbreviated the title of the work to *The Drumfire* for the remainder of my thesis.

[14] Peter McCallum, "Seven Composers, from Emerging to Venerable, Each with a Unique Voice," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 August 2012, 14. Zubin Kanga's performance of the work was shortlisted for the Performance of the Year Award at the 2013 Australian Music Centre Art Music Awards. McCallum's review in the *Sydney Morning Herald* described *The Drumfire* as, "clamorous and intense, [with] an imperious whistle, blown from the audience [that] signalled the start of interpolated sections creating unpredictable dynamic tension in the structure."

[15] After the premiere, a family member asked me to guide him through the structure of the piece in order to gain a better understanding of the battle sequence that involved our great-great uncle. Following this conversation, I began to question whether my intentions for the work were clear.

and ethical decisions I was making within my creative practice. The convergence of these conversations, which I outline below, subsequently provided an intellectual and theoretical framework that influenced my research methodology, compositional process, and post-compositional analysis. This discursive confluence also uncovered questions about the relationship between history and music, and the ways composers engage with historical narrative in their artistic practice. My thesis seeks to examine and address some of these issues.

It is also important, from the outset, to emphasise that both compositions written for my doctorate employ text as a major component of their design. I was not writing on a blank page when referring to, and engaging with, the past. *Gassed Shell (Severe)* incorporates excerpts from my grandfather's war record and his unit diaries, as well as a poem by Wilfred Owen, whilst Jamaal May's poetry is a central feature of *Hum*. There is, therefore, little ambiguity about the historical narrative with which each piece engages.[16] Moreover, the music does not function or exist in isolation, but rather is dialogically intertwined and integrated with the text, thereby affording the listener an opportunity to connect with the history that inspired each work.

Authenticity

Questions about authenticity have been a point of debate in both historical and musicological research. Within the realm of historiography, recent discussion about authenticity partly focuses upon the practice of historical reenactment.[17] Over the past fifteen years a number of historians[18] have considered whether historical

[16] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Programme Music," by Roger Scruton, accessed 22 March 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.22394. Strictly speaking, *Gassed Shell (Severe)* and *Hum* do not fit the definition of programme music, which the Grove Dictionary of Music describes as "music of a narrative or descriptive kind…that attempts to represent extra-musical concepts without resort to sung words," or in the case of *Hum*, spoken words. This means the broader debate about what my compositions 'represent' as pure musical entities—a vexed and complicated area—is not relevant to this research.

[17] "The Australian Living History Federation," The Australian Living History Federation Inc., 2009–16, organisation website, accessed 3 February 2019, https://www.alhf.org.au/index.html. The Australian Living History Federation, which claims over 100 different member groups, defines historical reenactment as the "practices of recreating as accurately as possible, artefacts, details, events or settings from an historical period."

[18] Alexander Cook, "The Use and Abuse of Historical Reenactment: Thoughts on Recent Public History," *Criticism*, 46, no. 3 (2004): 487–96; Vanessa Agnew, "History's Affective Turn: Historical Reenactment and Its Work in the Present," *Rethinking History*, 11, no. 3 (2007): 299–312; Iain McCalman and Paul Pickering, "From Realism to the Affective Turn: An Agenda," in *Historical Reenactment: From Realism to the Affective Turn*, ed. Iain McCalman and Paul

reenactment[19]—once viewed with scepticism[20]—can be utilised to do what Paul Pickering and Iain McCalman describe as "narrow[ing] the gap between past and present."[21] Participants in reenactments regularly claim they experience a living form of history by being 'in the moment', something they believe cannot be attained by merely conducting archival research.[22] Some reenactors maintain they create a direct connection to an historical narrative, allowing them to experience what it felt like to be there during the making of history.[23] By actively inserting themselves into the retelling of an historical event, these often-amateur enthusiasts profess to capture, in the words of Katherine Johnson, an "authentic experience of the past."[24]

Ideas about authenticity have also reverberated around the musical world for some time. The Early Music Revival[25] movement, pioneered in the 1890s by Arnold Dolmetsch, placed authenticity at the centre of its philosophical ethos. The movement's musical practitioners sought to recreate works using the performance techniques and production methods of the Renaissance and medieval times. This quest for historical accuracy included making instruments to the exact specifications of contemporaneous models, dressing in period clothing and using candles for lighting during concerts.[26] The movement gained momentum, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, eventually spawning a musical genre centred on period-specific performativity—known

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Pickering (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1–17. These texts all provide further insights into historical reenactment.

[19] A common spelling variation of reenactment is 're-enactment.' I have chosen to spell the word without the hyphen throughout the thesis, however I have kept the hyphenated spelling where others have used it.

[20] Greg Dening, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 5. Dening wrote that reenactments "tend to hallucinate a past as merely the present in funny dress, [and] patronise the human condition in hindsighted superiority."

[21] McCalman and Pickering, "From Realism to the Affective Turn: An Agenda," 1.

[22] Katherine M. Johnson, "Rethinking (Re)Doing: Historical Re-Enactment and/as Historiography," *Rethinking History*, 19, no. 2 (2015): 194, accessed 29 July 2015, https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2014.973709

[23] Stephen Gapps, "On Being a Mobile Monument: Historical Reenactments and Commemorations," in McCalman and Pickering, *Historical Reenactment*, 50. See Gapps's discussion about an American Civil War re-enactor who was portraying her great-grandmother.

[24] Johnson, "Rethinking (Re)Doing: Historical Re-Enactment and/as Historiography," 194.

[25] Early music refers to music of the medieval and Renaissance period.

[26] Kate Bowan, "R. G. Collingwood, Historical Reenactment and the Early Music Revival," in McCalman and Pickering, *Historical Reenactment*, 138–46.

as historically informed performance or ‘HIP’—that operates within the broader sphere of Western classical music to this day.[27]

However, there have been challenges to the claims of authenticity made by early music performance specialists. Richard Taruskin has argued that whilst historically informed performers appear to be focussing on precision and clarity to obtain the essence of a work, modernist principles of the period in which they live still imbue their performances.[28] Moreover, Joseph Kerman has noted that many listeners and consumers of early music approach these historically informed performances with a thoroughly contemporary mindset.[29] As a result, an irrevocable authenticity gap between the early music period and historically informed performers has been recognised including by some of its musical proponents.[30] Yet, this acknowledgement does not entirely undermine the intentions of the HIP movement. Indeed, musicologist Kate Bowan embraces this temporal dilemma for the purposes of historical revelation and discovery. She states that

> It may be impossible to have an ‘authentic’ affective relationship with the past, however the act of trying to form such an emotional connection can reveal much about that particular instance both past and present.[31]

Other scholars have considered the importance of authenticity in terms of artistic self-origination. Peter Kivy argues that authenticity within a musical performance is evident when an artist displays an original voice that consciously avoids imitating others.[32] Denis Dutton takes this a step further with his concept of “expressive authenticity,”[33] which he defines as an artist being true to one’s self rather than a broader historical

[27] Since the 1970s, numerous historically informed performance ensembles have become mainstays at concert venues across the world. These included The Tallis Scholars, the Hilliard Ensemble, the Boston Camerata and Les Arts Florissants, to name but a few.
[28] Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 5.
[29] Joseph Kerman, *Musicology* (London: Fontana Press/Collins, 1985), 189.
[30] Bruce Haynes, *The End of Early Music: A Period Performer’s History of Music for the Twenty-First Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), PDF e-book, 226. Bruce Haynes, who played oboe and recorder in the HIP movement, wrote, “our ultimate concern is *trying* to approach historical performing. We can never know how close we get.”
[31] Bowan, “R. G. Collingwood, Historical Reenactment and the Early Music Revival,” 150.
[32] Peter Kivy, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 6.
[33] Denis Dutton, “Authenticity in Art,” ed. Jerry Levinson, online ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (Oxford University Press, 2005), accessed 2 September 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199279456.003.0014.

tradition. In the sphere of popular music, authenticity has become a critical term with its meaning moving beyond notions of creative originality and uniqueness.[34] A number of studies have also considered how musicians strive for authenticity by, amongst other things, rejecting the commercial influence and acceptance of the broader popular music industry, choosing instead to define themselves within smaller subcultural communities, or by their own independent standards.[35]

My approach to authenticity as a consideration within my creative practice takes its point of reference from these discussions. When I started composing my doctoral pieces, my primary focus was engaging with the narratives of my grandfather, Andrew Maddocks and poet Jamaal May. By limiting my scope in this manner, I created a pathway to creatively explore their individual stories and personal experiences in detail, rather than only speaking to a broader historical narrative surrounding their particular circumstances. For example, when I began writing my First World War-inspired piece, *Gassed Shell (Severe)*, I was not aiming to create a musical representation of Australian sacrifices in the Great War, or seeking to address a lack of Australian music inspired by the Great War.[36]

Early on in my doctorate, I also recognised a dilemma I faced when composing works about history. On the one hand, I needed to satisfy my artistic intentions, however, at the same time, I was committed to faithfully representing the historical narratives of Andrew Maddocks and Jamaal May. I was cognizant of the required balance between

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[34] Roy Shuker, *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), 17.

[35] Robert Walser, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 99–100; Tricia Rose, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Hanover, New Haven: University Press of New England, 1994), 11; Steve Redhead and John Street, "Have I the Right? Legitimacy, Authenticity and Community in Folk's Politics," *Popular Music*, 8, no. 2 (May 1989): 179–81.

[36] Christopher Latham, "Chris Latham's Diggers' Requiem to Be Performed in Amiens and Canberra," *Canberra Times*, 18 April 2018, accessed 1 October 2019, https://www.canberratimes.com.au/national/act/chris-lathams-diggers-requiem-to-be-performed-in-amiens-and-canberra-20180418-h0ywu7.html; Christopher Bowen and Pamela Traynor, "An Australian War Requiem," interviewed by Andrew Ford, *The Music Show*, ABC Radio National, 9 August 2014, accessed 1 October 2019, https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/musicshow/an-australian-war-requiem/5649976. Australian musicians have noted their desire to speak to these bigger issues. Christopher Latham, artistic director of the Flowers of War project, spent "three years building a great requiem [*The Diggers' Requiem*] for those World War I dead." Furthermore, composer Christopher Bowen recounted his surprise upon discovering that, by the end of the twentieth century, the narrative of the First World War had only inspired a handful of Australian composers to write music about it.

my compositional craft and the evidence of my historical research. I did not want to divorce my creative choices from the historical data I had uncovered. Moreover, when working in the archives researching the First World War, or walking the streets of Detroit, I was always aware I was constructing and formulating an understanding of historical events through the lens of my lived experience. Like E. H. Carr's comment that an "historian is engaged in a continuous process of moulding his facts to his interpretation and his interpretation to the facts,"[37] my creative practice was in a dynamic, reciprocal dialogue with my research. My objective, therefore, was to create music that presented my own reflections on each topic and allowed the audience to fill in the gaps: to insert their own connections to the First World War or Detroit within the rhetorical spaces that I chose to leave blank.

This idea had particular relevance to my Detroit-inspired composition *Hum*. I believed it was important the work did not have the perception of didacticism in its final form, particularly as the poet Jamaal May actively eschewed this in his creative practice. Indeed, May's lack of direct Detroit references and clichés allowed a rich and personal perspective to emerge from within his poetry. In a similar fashion, I was cognisant of resisting any influence of Detroit's popular musical heritage on my aesthetic and creative principles. I was not interested in referencing Motown or techno, although I knew that both of those cultural markers had a significant impact upon the social environment of Detroit from which Jamaal came. Here, again, I believed that signposting the audience to something inherently familiar would not provide them with the optimal platform to grasp the subtleties of May's text. The opposite, in fact, was an impetus within my creative practice; I looked for other tropes within Jamaal's poetry to engage with, such as rhythmic and literary motives. Presenting the audience with something they could recognise yet was not readily obvious in terms of cultural referencing, allowed them to fill in the gaps and create connections with the piece (and historical narrative) through their own personal experiences.

Legitimacy

Like authenticity, the concept of legitimacy has played an important role in the development of historical and musicological studies. From the 1960s, a broad epistemological shift across the humanities provoked historians to reconsider how the past was constructed and presented; as such, testing what legitimate historical research

[37] E. H. Carr, *What Is History?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1961; repr., 2001), 24.

and historiography looked like. As part of this process, historians such as E.P. Thompson contended that, on occasion, the production of Western history overlooked certain groups within society, often those on the margins.[38] Facing such redefinitions, the disciplinary boundaries of historiography progressively expanded, with the work of figures such as cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz and literary theorists Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida influencing historical research.[39] Recent trends such as the 'literary turn' have further unfettered the limitations of historiography by acknowledging the importance of narrative—indeed, its fundamentally subjective influence—upon the interpretation of the past. [40]

The advent of 'new musicology'[41] in the United States during the 1980s ushered in innovative academic perspectives for understanding music. This scholarship drew more attention to the worldly contexts from which music emerged, and prioritised fresh and divergent interpretations of music by drawing upon disciplines such as gender studies, history and critical theory.[42] One aspect of this epistemological shift involved the re-evaluation of the disciplinary limits of musicology; particularly in light of its recognised

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[38]E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1963), 12. Thompson famously stated that his aim was "to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity."
[39] Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1997), 101–17. Georg G. Iggers provides an excellent summary of the historiographical influence of these figures, amongst others, in his chapter, "From Macro- to Microhistory: The History of Everyday Life."
[40] Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge*, 118–33; Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Literary Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). Iggers again provides a worthy overview of the linguistic turn in the chapter, "The "Linguistic Turn": The End of History as a Scholarly Discipline?" Conversely, Clark's book is a comprehensive analysis of the topic.
[41] Joseph Kerman, "How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out," *Critical Inquiry*, 7, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 311–31. Scholars generally acknowledge Kerman's article as the catalyst for the 'new musicology' movement.
[42] A seminal book of the early new musicology movement was Kerman's aforementioned *Musicology*, published in 1985 (It was published in the United States with the title *Contemplating Music: Challenges to Musicology*). Other significant new musicology texts include Richard Leppert and Susan McClary, eds., *Music and Society: The Politics of Composition, Performance and Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Lawrence Kramer, *Music as Cultural Practice, 1800–1900* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Rose Rosengard Subotnik, *Developing Variations: Style and Ideology in Western Music* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991); and Phillip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary C. Thomas, eds., *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

bias towards Western art music.[43] Consequently, musical genres once considered on the margins of the musicological canon—or even outside it—found a place within the academy. Moreover, subsequent research into these musical styles, particularly Western popular music idioms, served to rejuvenate and redefine musicology by broadening its methodological application and cementing its position within interdisciplinary humanities scholarship.[44]

Notions of legitimacy and outsider status are pertinent to Harvey G. Cohen's study of Duke Ellington's extended composition *Black, Brown and Beige*.[45] Premiered at Carnegie Hall on 23 January 1943, *Black, Brown and Beige* was acknowledged as a breakthrough for African-Americans because it proudly brought their achievements and history into the consciousness of mainstream America.[46] The premiere furthered Ellington's reputation as a "serious composer who created works outside of the usual popular music experience."[47] Yet, as Cohen points out, Ellington's piece received mixed critical responses. One reviewer questioned his ability to produce and sustain a large-scale extended composition due to his lack of legitimate formal training, whilst another was sceptical of his efforts to synthesize jazz with art music.[48] Cohen insists, however, these critics failed to understand that Ellington's status as an outsider to European composition methods reinforced and strengthened his creativity.[49] In fact,

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[43] Kerman, *Musicology*, 11. Joseph Kerman stated musicology had come to be "the study of the history of Western music in the high-art tradition." He believed the discipline was "constricted" by this definition and needed to widen its scope to include other styles of music.

[44] As well as the aforementioned books by Robert Walser and Tricia Rose, other important titles about popular music include Mark Anthony Neal, *What the Music Said: Black Popular Music and Black Public Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Suzanne E. Smith, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999); George Lipsitz, *Dangerous Crossroads: Popular Music, Postmodernism, and the Poetics of Place* (New York: Verso, 1994); Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); and Andrew Ross and Tricia Rose, eds., *Microphone Fiends: Youth Music and Youth Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

[45] Harvey G. Cohen, "Duke Ellington and 'Black, Brown and Beige': The Composer as Historian at Carnegie Hall," *American Quarterly*, 56, no. 4 (Dec 2004): 1003–34.

[46] Cohen, "Duke Ellington and 'Black, Brown and Beige,'" 1003.

[47] Cohen, "Duke Ellington and 'Black, Brown and Beige,'" 1005.

[48] Cohen, "Duke Ellington and 'Black, Brown and Beige'" 1023–24. Cohen notes Irving Kolodin from the *New York Sun* commented *Black, Brown and Beige* would be better suited to a traditional orchestra, whilst Robert Bagar, critic with the *New York Telegram*, complained about Ellington's abrupt musical treatment of transitional sections between the movements of the work. Cohen also points out Bob Thiele, editor of *Jazz* magazine, claimed *Black, Brown and Beige* was not legitimate jazz.

[49] Cohen, "Duke Ellington and 'Black, Brown and Beige,'" 1029. Cohen states that Ellington's position as an artist "free from the dictates of the conservatory" gave him the chance to create "a new school."

Black, Brown and Beige benefited from Ellington's distance to Western art music, as this gave him space to construct his own rules and explore new ways of writing music.

My own relationship with legitimacy has been multifarious. I questioned my legitimacy to compose music about historical events not directly connected to me, especially in relation to *Hum.* Despite my close connection to Jamaal May,[50] I saw myself as an outsider when it came to Detroit's historical narrative. As such, what gave me the right to create music that engaged with the city? Should I leave this to a local composer? I addressed these questions by attempting to narrow the temporal and epistemological gap between my subject matter and me; aiming to take what Pickering and McCalman describe as a "strenuous imaginative leap into the past."[51] I read numerous secondary accounts of Detroit's history, travelled to the city—following R. H. Tawney's maxim to "lay aside [my] books in favour of…boots,"[52]—and interviewed May about his life and his work. My intention was to become less of an outsider; to gain some experience and knowledge of what it meant to be in the city. What's more, by conducting research for *Hum* I sought to minimise the possibility of appearing to be disinterested in Detroit's history. Whilst this would not have necessarily prevented the premiere of the piece, it could have resulted in a less credible reaction to the work. It may also have influenced Jamaal May's interest in working on the piece with me.

Conversely, by also embracing my outsider status I was able to avoid any obligations or allegiances to Detroit's historical past. Similar to Cohen's observations that Ellington's outsider status gave him freedom to "stretch out",[53] so I felt no requirement to incorporate commonly recognised cultural references to Detroit into my creative process. Moreover, the avoidance of Detroit clichés had the effect of consolidating my legitimacy as a composer able to reflect upon the city's history without constraint or any duty to myopic nostalgia.

I found legitimacy easier to rationalise for *Gassed Shell (Severe)* as I was composing a piece about my grandfather and his small, but personally significant, contribution to Australian history. The timing of the work's creation also coincided with the centenary

[50] Jamaal May's manager, Khalid El Hakim, first introduced us in 2007 with a view to us collaborating on a project. I provide more detail about our creative relationship in chapter 4.
[51] Pickering and McCalman, "From Realism to the Affective Turn: An Agenda," 3.
[52] Eric Kerridge, "Ridge and Furrow and Agrarian History," *The Economic History Review, New Series*, 4, no. 1 (1951): 14.
[53] Cohen, "Duke Ellington and 'Black, Brown and Beige,'" 1028.

of the outbreak of World War I, which generated public interest and support for cultural representations and reflections on the legacy of the conflict.[54] Moreover, a number of historians had observed that present public attitudes towards the Anzac legacy, and its place within Australian society, were positive and receptive. (Indeed, some argued the definitive national narrative of the Anzac myth had gone too far).[55] Whilst these preconditions were not crucial to my composition—I would have written the piece regardless—they bolstered my sense of legitimacy to creatively engage with my grandfather's First World War experiences.

Nevertheless, I felt that reflecting upon such a significant national narrative came with a responsibility to tell stories diligently; I therefore conducted extensive research into my grandfather's unit and the Battle of Third Ypres more broadly, and interviewed family members to gain their perspectives on my grandfather and his involvement in the war. I was also mindful to remain informed about current debates on Anzac and its place within broader Australian society.[56] However, I did not want this public discourse to overly influence my compositional aspirations and intentions; the sense of responsibility I felt was at a personal level. Unlike Duke Ellington's aspirations that *Black, Brown and*

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[54] Commonwealth of Australia, "Anzac Centenary Arts and Cultural Fund," Department of Communication and the Arts. In March 2014, the Ministry for the Arts in the Federal Attorney-General's office announced the Anzac Centenary Arts and Culture Fund would receive $4.7 million to support arts projects that interpreted and evaluated the Anzac legacy within Australian society.

[55] Mark McKenna, "Anzac Day: How Did It Become Australia's National Day?," in *What's Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History*, ed. Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds (Sydney: New South/UNSW Press, 2010), 127; James Brown, *Anzac's Long Shadow: The Cost of Our National Obsession*, (Collingwood: Schwartz Publishing, 2014), PDF e-book, 3; Tom R. Frame, "Anzac Day Controversy and Criticism," in *Anzac Day Then and Now*, ed. Tom R. Frame, (Sydney: New South/UNSW Press, 2016), 1–14; Kenneth Stanley Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*, 3rd ed. (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2008), 436. The Anzac myth has become the dominant national identity for many Australians. Mark McKenna writes, "In the early twenty-first century, Australians have embraced the Anzac legend as their most powerful myth of nationhood," Similarly, James Brown labels the idea of Anzac, "our longest eulogy, our sacred rite, our national story." John A. Moses and Tom R. Frame have noted the hallowed overtones currently bestowed upon Anzac Day, observing that present-day Australian society treats it with reverence. Younger generations investigating the war service of their forebears have also been partly responsible for a renewed interest in the Anzac legend. Ken Inglis states that for young people marching on Anzac Day, "the wearing of fathers' and forefathers' medals is…significant, and is connected with a surge of interest in family history."

[56] Robin Prior, "The Myths of Gallipoli," in *Beyond Gallipoli: New Perspectives on Anzac*, ed. Raelene Frances and Bruce Scates (Clayton: Monash University Publishing, 2016), 13–20. The passage of time has brought about new perspectives and interpretations of the war's narrative. In his article, Robin Prior critiques the importance of the Anzac myth within the broader development of nationhood, and raises questions about the labelling of the Gallipoli landings as the 'birthplace of a nation.'

Beige correct the record about African-American history and the perception of blacks in America,[57] my artistic instincts for *Gassed Shell (Severe)* were to move away from reflecting upon the grand narrative of the broader Anzac legend. Rather, I believed I could compose a more compelling work by limiting its scope to my grandfather's experiences at the Battle of Passchendaele.

Individuality

The previous discussion about legitimacy leads into an assessment of individuality as an important methodological tool for interpreting the past. Historians are recognising the affective power of individual narratives to directly connect with audiences.[58] Indeed, given the popularity of historical reenactment and history-based television reality programs, Jerome de Groot has suggested that, at a certain level, public history could be summarised as "essentially a set of narratives performed by individuals in the present."[59] From a different perspective, Sheila Fitzpatrick has also suggested that historians who embrace their individuality and insert themselves directly into their research—"playing themselves off against their subjects, or even constituting themselves as part of [their work],"[60]—can uncover an intuitive understanding of the past that may not be apparent in data alone.

Tanya Luckins considers the preference towards individuality in her analysis of the 2014 ABC television documentary *The War That Changed Us.* The show examines the impact of World War I upon Australian society by tracing the lives of six Australians and their experiences throughout the war. Personal letters and diaries present much of the show's historical narrative, with a minimal amount of broader, authoritative voiced-

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[57] Cohen, "Duke Ellington and 'Black, Brown and Beige,'" 1006. Cohen states that, in 1941, Ellington told a journalist he saw his work as being a counter to the more cerebral versions of black history supplied by African-American classical composers associated with the Harlem Renaissance.

[58] Michael G. Kenny, "A Place for Memory: The Interface between Individual and Collective History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 41, no. 3 (July 1999): 420–37; Amos Goldberg, "The Victim's Voice and Melodramatic Aesthetics in History," *History and Theory*, 48, no. 3 (October 2009): 220–37. Michael Kenny explores the reciprocal relationship between individual narratives and collective memory. In a similar way, Amos Goldberg examines the dramatic power of individual voices from the Holocaust to overpower the broader narrative of their persecution by the Nazis.

[59] Jerome de Groot, "Affect and Empathy: Re-Enactment and Performance as/in History," *Rethinking History*, 15, no. 4 (December 2011): 594, accessed 2 March 2014, https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2011.603926.

[60] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Getting Personal: On Subjectivity in Historical Practice," in *Unsettling History: Archiving and Narrating in Historiography*, ed. Sebastian Jobs and Alf Lüdtke (Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Campus Verlag GmbH, 2010), 183–87.

over narration. This editorial choice allows the lives of the show's main characters to control the story. Luckins argues that, by employing this production approach, the war becomes, "understood best not from historians' blow-by-blow accounts of battles and military strategy, but individual points of view."[61]

On the one hand, this contention offers an oversimplified and, in some ways, outdated understanding of the difference between broad narrative and individual stories; Bill Gammage's book *The Broken Years* and Ken Burns's television series *The Civil War* both combine individual narratives and larger historical observations in a compelling manner.[62] Nonetheless, aspects of Luckins's observation resonated with my ideas about individuality and its influence upon my creative process. (Discussions about individuality within musicological literature generally pertained to differentiating the idiosyncratic qualities of artistic expression by a given performer or a composer; these concepts were less relevant to my research).[63] When assessing my grandfather's role in the First World War, and the Detroit-influenced poetry of Jamaal May, I was aware that it was only one person's story I was mediating and reflecting upon. In many ways, this was liberating. The responsibility of telling the history of both individuals was significant, however an overarching allegorical point of view was largely absent from the storyline of each of my protagonists. The broader perspective of Passchendaele and Detroit partly defined Maddocks's and Mays' individual narratives, but their stories were not required to explain the entire circumstances of those historical events. As such, both narratives offered an important perspective to my research, and were fundamental to the development of my compositional process for each of the pieces. Naturally, their

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[61] Tanja Luckins, "'To Make the Past Present, to Bring the Distant Near': Affective History and Historical Distance in the War That Changed Us," *Australian Historical Studies*, 46, no. 3 (2015): 474.

[62] Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* (Canberra, Australia: The Australian National University Press, 1974); Ken Burns, *The Civil War,* vol. 1–3, (Magna Pacifica, 1990), DVD, DBX03020.

[63] Claire Taylor-Jay, "The Composer's Voice? Compositional Style and Criteria of Value in Weill, Krenek and Stravinsky," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 134, no. 1 (2009): 85–111; Clemens Wöllner, "How to Quantify Individuality in Music Performance? Studying Artistic Expression with Averaging Procedures," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 4, article 361 (19 June 2013), accessed 1 October 2019, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2013.00361; Bruno Gingras, "Individuality in Music Performance: Introduction to the Research Topic," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, article 661 (25 June 2014), accessed 1 October 2019, https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00661. Claire Taylor-Jay examines the value of various criteria used to determine whether a composer has established an individual creative 'voice.' Clemens Wöllner considers methods for quantifying individuality as a means of determining levels of artistic expression; similarly, Bruno Gingras looks at individuality in music performance.

experiences were not the only ways of telling the history of Passchendaele or Detroit; there were undoubtedly countless thousands of other equally compelling stories about these events. Regardless, the narratives of Maddocks and May were unique within themselves, and this ultimately gave me freedom to speculate and experiment when reflecting each story through composition, without needing to engage in any didactic processes.

In light of exploring the preliminary considerations that influenced my artistic practice, this thesis seeks to interrogate two main questions; one relating to my creative work, the other with a broader scope. Firstly, when I engage with primary and secondary historical sources before and during my compositional phase, how does this inform my creative process? Secondly, can a composer contribute to our understanding of the past? For example, if a composer incorporates texts about historical events into their work, is there a meaningful relationship evident between those texts and the music that, in turn, helps us comprehend the historical moment that inspired the creation of the texts?

To address these questions my thesis is organised into two parts; part one focuses on musical reflections of World War I, and part two looks at music inspired by Detroit's recent history. Each part begins with a contextual chapter examining works by other composers inspired by these historical narratives, and then proceeds to an exegetical chapter looking at my own creative engagement with these subjects. Structuring the thesis in this way allows me to examine how other musicians have engaged with the history of World War I and Detroit, and moreover, how the process of researching these works informed my own creativity. Importantly, it clarifies the perspective that I intended to emphasise when engaging with these narratives. By actively reaching out to history—by employing, in the words of R. G. Collingwood, "the power of thought to overleap…a[n] [historical] gap"[64]—I was seeking to move beyond mere familiarity with an historical moment to a position of informed intimacy with each narrative.

Chapter 1 is an overview of Australian classical music about the First World War, written before 2014.[65] Using a combination of musical analysis and historical musicology, this chapter considers how various Australian composers have engaged with the Anzac narrative as its fundamental positioning within wider Australian society

[64] R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946; repr., 1961), 293.

[65] I explain the significance of 2014 as a critical date to this research in chapter 1.

has evolved and altered. Moreover, it locates my creative practice within a broader national tradition of First World War-inspired music, and highlights how this research informed my own compositional process and intellectual precepts.

Chapter 2 reveals how the research I undertook in chapter one was integral to the creation of *Gassed Shell (Severe)*, my World War One-inspired work and first doctoral composition. Using my piece as a case study, I provide a detailed examination of my compositional process, describing how my creative intentions reflect upon and engage with the narrative of Maddocks's military experiences. This analysis also functions as an interdisciplinary probe, testing the notion that we can gain insight into Maddocks's historical circumstances through the affective nature of a musical work.

Chapter 3 looks at American classical compositions inspired by the history of Detroit. Here I trace a link between the evolving industrial and economic narrative of the city and the musical language of composers who have creatively reflected upon the Motor City from the sixties to the present day. In particular, I highlight the immersive compositional methods of a number of present-day composers who have consciously inserted themselves into the narrative of Detroit's culture and community to lend authenticity and legitimacy to their creative projects.

Chapter 4 looks at my artistic engagement with Detroit within my second doctoral composition *Hum*. Using my work again as a case study, I examine how I reflect musically upon Detroit's recent past by engaging with Jamaal May's poetry, treating his text as both a primary source and a mediating device to interrogate and explore historical narrative.

Through this discussion of my music, and that of other composers who have engaged with similar historical narratives, I will test the notion that composers can provide another means of understanding history. By way of this examination, I will also demonstrate the usefulness and importance of well-informed historical research to my creative practice.

Chapter 1
Sounds from the trenches: Australian composers and the First World War[1]

> I began composing it about three and a half months ago and I now have about half of it written down…You must not expect shell and rifle fire in it! It is rather a contrast to all of that, being somewhat idyllic.
>
> —Frederick Septimus Kelly, letter to Jelly d'Arányi, August 1915[2]

The First World War casts a long shadow over the history of Australia. A significant number of books have been written examining Australia's involvement in the Great War and its aftermath, from numerous perspectives. My research does not add to this long list of titles.[3] To this day, the Anzac legacy—including the perpetually popular notion that Australian sacrifices at Gallipoli, and later the Western Front, forged our nationhood—remains a source of fierce debate among historians.[4] There is agreement, however, that the First World War was a calamitous tragedy that shaped Australian society and identity, and, for good or ill, continues to do so.

It is therefore not surprising that the Great War had an important influence upon the creation of the nation's cultural iconography, having been a focal point for numerous

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[1] Andrew Harrison, "Sounds from the Trenches: Australian Composers and the Great War," in *The Great War and the British Empire: Culture and Society*, ed. Michael J.K. Walsh and Andrekos Varnava (London: Routledge, 2017), 265–78. This book chapter contains some of the initial research presented in chapter 1.

[2] Joseph MacLeod, *The Sisters d'Arányi* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), 110. Australian composer Frederick Septimus Kelly wrote this letter to his friend, violinist Jelly d'Arányi, during his time on the Western Front. Kelly is referring to a violin sonata he was writing for her; recent performances of the piece have formally titled it as the *Gallipoli Sonata* in concert programming.

[3] At the top of a list of books on Australia's involvement in the Great War must be Charles Bean's monumental official documentation, C.E.W. Bean, ed. *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918*, 12 vols. (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1921–42). Other important works include the previously mentioned Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War*; Michael McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War* (West Melbourne, Victoria: Nelson, 1980); and Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2013). Populist books on Australia's First World War history, which are numerous, do not fall within the sphere of this thesis.

[4] Graham Seal, *Inventing Anzac* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2004), 1–9. For opposing opinions on the debate about the role of Anzac within contemporary Australian society, also see Marilyn Lake et al., eds., *What's Wrong with Anzac?: The Militarisation of Australian History* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2010) and Mervyn F. Bendle, *Anzac & Its Enemies: The History War against Australia's National Identity* (Sydney: Quadrant Books, 2015).

seminal Australian artists. Arthur Streeton's wartime images capture the ravaged towns and villages of Northern France. Sidney Nolan's mid-1950s Gallipoli-inspired paintings pull the observer into the contradiction between the soldier as warrior-hero, and the mental anguish of men gripped by fear. Frank Hurley's vivid war photographs speak of the overwhelming brutality of the military industrial-complex, and man's struggles to survive against the odds. Henry Lawson's book of war poetry, *My Army, O My Army*, published in 1915, revels in caricatures of Australian military bravery and larrikinism, tempered with melancholic realism.[5] Alan Seymour's controversial play *One day of the year*, written in 1958, intimates that the legend of Anzac was fast becoming an irrelevant and alcohol-infused farce. Peter Weir's film *Gallipoli*, released in 1981, tells the tragic story of young Australian men with so much to live for, mercilessly cut down in the prime of their life.[6]

Yet, until recently, one group of creative Australians apparently showed little interest in broadly engaging with the First World War. Indeed, before the start of the World War I Centenary in 2014,[7] only a small number of Australian classical composers had written music reflecting upon the conflict. Consequently, when I began to compose *Gassed*, no single iconic Australian art music composition about the Great War found a place on the above list of national cultural signifiers. That said, several large-scale war-inspired compositions premiered during the Anzac Centenary period. These include Christopher Bowen's *An Australian War Requiem*, premiered in 2014, and the 2015 *Gallipoli Symphony* and the 2018 *The Diggers' Requiem,* both directed and curated by Christopher Latham and featuring multiple Australian composers.[8] Time will tell

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[5]Arthur Streeton, "Collection of Various Artworks," 1918–19, 201 paintings, Canberra, Australia War Memorial; Sidney Nolan, "The Gallipoli Series," 1955–78, 252 drawings and paintings, Canberra, Australian War Memorial; James Francis (Frank) Hurley, "Collection of Various Photographs," 1917–18, 715 photographs, Canberra, Australian War Memorial; Henry Lawson, *My Army, O, My Army! And Other Songs* (Sydney: Tyrells, 1915).

[6] Alan Seymour, *The One Day of the Year* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1962); Peter Weir, *Gallipoli: A Film by Peter Weir*, (20th Century Fox, 1981), DVD, 95722SDO.

[7] Australia officially recognised the centenary years of World War I as the Centenary of Anzac 2014–2018. As part of the commemorations, the Australian Federal Government provided $4 million to the Anzac Centenary Arts and Culture Fund for "arts and culture projects that interpret, explore and contribute to the Anzac story and the Anzac legacy." See "Anzac Centenary Arts and Cultural Fund," Department of Communication and the Arts.

[8] Christopher Bowen and Pamela Traynor, *An Australian War Requiem*, (Australian Music Centre, 2014), DVD (Non-commercial), accessed 19 September 2019, https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/workversion/bowen-christopher-australian-war-requiem/29653; "The Diggers' Requiem," *The Flowers of War*, The Flowers of War.org, accessed 1 July 2019, http://theflowersofwar.org/diggers; *The Gallipoli Symphony*, (ABC Classics, 2016), CD, 4812629.

whether any of these more substantial compositions make it into the aforementioned cultural collection. (Or, whether any smaller-scale works also find wider recognition). On a similar point, the music of Australian-born composer Frederick Septimus (F.S.) Kelly—who served with British forces and died on the Western Front—has received some renewed attention with the benefit of a century's hindsight; I briefly discuss this within the chapter.

Notwithstanding these recent works, it is not easy to discern the reasons for the historical lack of Australian compositional engagement with the war. Perhaps the dark shadow of a horrific and pointless war, which cast itself across so many families, left too many psychological scars on composers, and they simply chose to forget? Was it possible that, with the construction of state-funded war monuments, sufficient official memorialization of the war had occurred, and the national cultural discourse had moved on?[9] Did the visibility of irrevocably damaged returned servicemen—and the hardships endured by their families—bring an aspect of shame upon Australian society, which the broader community, including artists, wished to ignore?[10] Alternatively, was it simply there were not enough Australian composers with adequate skills to construct a sophisticated musical language that could honour those who served and perished, and those who continued to suffer? Whilst the search for a deeper understanding of these propositions is ongoing, I will address some of them in this chapter, particularly in the discussion of Helen Gifford's *Choral Scenes: the Western Front, World War I.*[11]

What can be examined, propitiously, are the works and the motivations of a number of Australian composers, both working during the War and more recently, who have used the Great War as a point of reference for their artistic output. Composers such as F.S. Kelly and Helen Gifford were inspired—perhaps even compelled—to write music about the war through a personal connection to the battlefields; my examination of their music will focus upon this. On a similar note, a discussion of the development of my own compositional procedures, in light of my family's connection to World War I, will also consider the importance of family ties. Elsewhere, composers such as Martin Mather

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[9] For a comprehensive examination of the memorialisation of Australia's involvement in World War I, see Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*.

[10] Australian composer, Helen Gifford, mentions shame when discussing her composition. I explore this later in the chapter.

[11] Helen Gifford, *Choral Scenes: the Western Front, World War I*, (Grosvenor Place, NSW: Australian Music Centre, 1999), accessed 3 October 2019, https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/workversion/gifford-helen-choral-scenes/11260.

and Vincent Plush were motivated to explore how the concept of Anzac fitted into a broader Australian culture that was changing due to such things as the Vietnam War. This cultural questioning of Anzac had also previously occurred during the early post-war years. Indeed, concerns about a disregard for the solemnity of the Anzac legacy prompted annual cultural celebrations around Anzac Day and a large-scale musical attempt to signify Australian sacrifices in war. Finally, when discussing these artistic reflections on Australia's First World War history, I need to clarify the chapter specifically concentrates on art music. Australian popular music of the war and compositions for ensembles such as brass bands are outside the scope of this research.

Music in the frontline: Frederick Septimus Kelly

On 23 April, 1915, two days before the Anzac landings at Gallipoli, the English poet Rupert Brooke succumbed to septicaemia brought on by an infected mosquito bite, and died aboard a French hospital ship moored in the Aegean Sea. Brooke and a group of friends, including composer Frederick Septimus Kelly, had volunteered for the Royal Naval Reserve at the outbreak of the war. An olive grove on the island of Skyros became the final resting place for Brooke's body. In the hours after the poet's death, Kelly—affectionately known as 'Cleg' to his friends—gathered with other close friends of Brooke to build a funeral cairn over his grave. Kelly felt Brooke's death heavily. He later noted in his diary: "For the whole day I was oppressed with the sense of loss…[before] the sense of tragedy gave place to a sense of passionless beauty."[12] Kelly began composing a homage to his friend, *Elegy for String Orchestra; In Memoriam Rupert Brooke*, two months later in Alexandria, whilst recuperating from wounds sustained at Gallipoli.[13] He finished the piece on 27 June 1915. The depth of Kelly's musical eulogy was recognized in the Balliol College War Memorial Book as "no mere expression of personal grief or loss, but, a symbol, rather, of the continuity of life."[14] More recently, Bruce Steele and Richard Divall described it as "a haunting memorial to both Brooke and to the losses sustained in the Dardanelles Campaign."[15]

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[12] Frederick Septimus Kelly, *Race against Time: The Diaries of F.S. Kelly*, ed. Thérèse Radic (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2004), 382.
[13] Frederick Septimus Kelly, *Elegy for String Orchestra*, (London: Edwin Ashdown, c1926), accessed 3 October 2019, https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/12897430. The National Library of Australia has an online version of this edition.
[14] John Buchan, ed. *Balliol College War Memorial Book 1914–1919*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Balliol College, 1924), 319.
[15] Frederick Septimus Kelly, *Music from the Great War*, ed. Bruce Steele and Richard Divall, 1st ed., (Melbourne: Marshall-Hall Trust, 2005), introductory notes.

The power of the work lies in its simple beauty. Kelly begins the piece with a short unadorned melody in the Dorian mode, referencing the Greek resting place of the deceased Brooke. The melody moves entirely by stepwise motion, save for two consecutive leaps of a minor third and a perfect fourth.

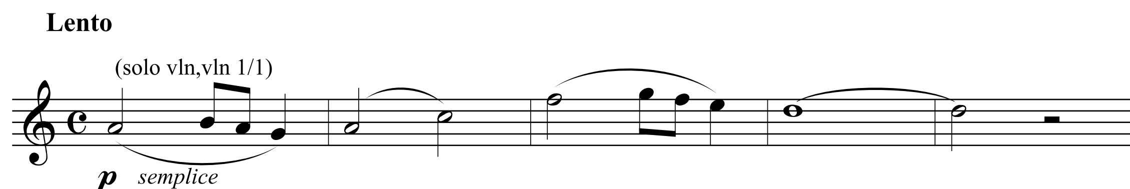

Figure 1-1. ***Elegy for String Orchestra,*** **F.S. Kelly, bars 1–5, solo violin, first violins**

Within this motive, Kelly lays out much of his compositional material for the piece, and provides a blueprint for its intended affect. Looking back upon Kelly's diary entry, the "passionless beauty" that he refers to is implied in the stepwise movement that is heard in many of the short phrases prescribed to the strings, often in rhythmic unison. By contrast, Kelly emphasizes his grief—his "sense of loss"—through the expansion of the initial leap of a fourth to a perfect fifth. Beginning at bar 30 and continuing through to bar 50, this short gesture begins with an ascending fifth, evoking a cry of despair before returning to the tranquillity—and futility—of stepwise motion and a descending minor third.

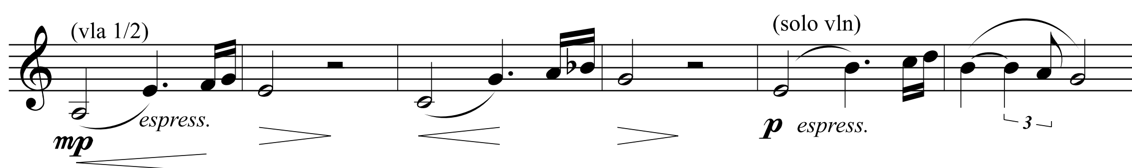

Figure 1-2. ***Elegy*****, Kelly, bars 30–35, violas I and II, solo violin**

Kelly also introduces a new accompaniment figure to underpin the melodic material. Beginning at bar 31, oscillating quaver triplets—moving either by step or by small leaps—are heard *pianissimo* in the first and second violins and cellos, providing a shimmering backdrop for the melody.

Figure 1-3. ***Elegy*****, Kelly, bars 31–33, first violins, second violins, cellos**

At bar 39, the role of the triplets switches momentarily from background to foreground material, when the rhythmic values of the triplet figures in the first violins are halved from quavers to semiquavers.

Figure 1-4. ***Elegy*****, Kelly, bars 39–42, first violins**

This variation brings about a lighter texture whilst simultaneously amplifying the intensity of rhythmic material. The oscillating semiquaver triplets, mostly rising and falling in stepwise increments, evoke the rustling of the wind through an olive tree that,

in Kelly's own words, "bends itself over [Brooke's] grave as though sheltering it from the sun and rain."[16]

Kelly's musical memorial to Brooke portrays the intensity of their friendship, and the impact of the poet's death upon the composer. It is the antithesis, however, of earlier forms of music written about war, sometimes called battle music.[17] There is no trace of nationalism or triumphalism, no use of dissonance or rhythmic turmoil, and the overall dynamic is soft. American musicologist Glenn Watkins has identified this trait of rejecting overt war symbolism amongst other art music of the period. He argues that, when considering much of the music written during World War I, the question that often comes to mind is "where is the war?"[18] Examining Kelly's *Elegy* within the context of Watkins's question could thus imply an apparent absence of the war from his work.

Musicologist Eric Saylor's study of English pastoral music by Edward Elgar and Ralph Vaughan Williams, however, provides an answer to Watkins's question. Indeed, his research allows the alignment of Kelly's *Elegy* to a broader musical movement of significant influence. Saylor maintains that pastoral music contemporaneous to the war modified "its conventional signifiers in ways that were relevant to contemporary culture…and therefore exemplif[ied]… pastoralism's engagement with modernity."[19] This artistic approach was noticeably different from the more dissonant music of contemporaneous European composers such as Igor Stravinsky and Arnold Schoenberg. Nonetheless, Kelly's use of modal harmony, a narrow dynamic palette and lyrical melodic gestures in the *Elegy* indicate he was still hoping to achieve a contemporary work that would, in Saylor's words, "evoke the unsettling stillness war leaves in its wake—the barren fields [and] the silent dead."[20] The Australian violinist Chris Latham

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[16] Kelly, *Race against Time: The Diaries of F.S. Kelly*, 382.
[17] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Battle Music," by Alan Brown, accessed 24 April 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.02318.
[18] Glenn Watkins, *Proof through the Night: Music and the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 7.
[19] Eric Saylor, "'It's Not Lambkins Frisking at All': English Pastoral Music and the Great War," *The Musical Quarterly*, 91, no. 1–2 (2008): 45, accessed 2 October 2013. https://doi.org/10.1093/musqtl/gdn030.
[20] Saylor, "'It's Not Lambkins Frisking at All,'" 50.

reinforces this point, describing Kelly's compositional process of writing in a pastoral style as "a survival mechanism, a way of being home."[21]

Kelly remained at Gallipoli until the conclusion of the campaign, winning the Distinguished Service Cross for bravery and earning a promotion to the rank of Lieutenant. He transferred to France in May 1916, commanding B Company of the Hood Battalion. On 13 November, Kelly died whilst leading an attack on a machine gun post at Beaucourt-sur-Ancre, during the final days of the Battle of the Somme. He left behind around twenty works, some finished, some incomplete. These include a collection of piano pieces, art songs, a violin sonata and a piano sonata, plus some chamber music and minor orchestral works.[22] Some of these pieces were composed whilst Kelly was on active service. Recent recordings and public performances of Kelly's music have occurred using updated titles for some of his works. His violin sonata in G has been publicly acknowledged as the *Gallipoli Sonata*,[23] whilst the last piece Kelly was working on before he died—sketches of an orchestral piece which have recently been arranged for violin and piano—has been named the *Somme Lament*.[24] The new titles potentially infer an inspiration between these pieces and the war, however Kelly never talked of these works in such ways; the new descriptions were added in by other people many years after his death. Moreover, in 1916, after contemplating writing a battle-inspired composition in the style of the *1812* Overture he concluded that, "these sort of works aren't really in my line."[25] Notwithstanding this observation, Kelly's *Elegy for String Orchestra* evinces a connection to the Gallipoli campaign through its reflection upon Rupert Brooke's friendship with the composer, and the tragic circumstances of Brooke's death en route to war.

Frederick Kelly's position within Australian musical history remains a moot point, and it is beyond the scope of my research to offer any answers to this debate. Christopher

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[21] Christopher Latham, "Chris Latham and the Trumpeter Who 'Stopped Gunfire'," interviewed by Andrew Ford, *The Music Show*, ABC Radio National, 25 April 2015, accessed 2 May 2015, https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/musicshow/chris-latham/6418296.

[22] The Marshall Hall Trust has published most of Kelly's works, and these are available from the National Library of Australia.

[23] Frederick Septimus Kelly, *Sonata in G major for Pianoforte and Violin*, unpublished score, 1915, rev. 1916, accessed 3 October 2019, http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/musikhs/content/pageview/6802849. A copy of the score is held at the National Library of Australia, and can be also viewed online at the link above.

[24] Frederick Septimus Kelly, *A Race against Time*, (ABC Classics, 2016), CD, 4814576, liner notes.

[25] MacLeod, *The Sisters d'Arányi*, 110.

Latham, artistic director of The Flowers of War, has described Kelly as, "one of Australia's greatest sons…[and] a composer of true genius."[26] Conversely, composer and musicologist Larry Sitsky has labelled him, "a well-meaning amateur…[whose music] has turned out to be somewhat of an embarrassment in musical circles."[27] Despite these polarised viewpoints, Kelly's story remains a fascinating one, particularly as he kept meticulously detailed diaries about much of his adult life. (The diaries begin in 1907 and finish on 11 November 1916, two days before his death).[28] Thérèse Radic, who edited eight of the composer's diaries, best describes Kelly and his place within our national cultural narrative as "a puzzle that needs solving."[29]

Post-war to the sixties: Exploring the Anzac legacy

The decades following the Armistice saw the creation of a small number of art music compositions that dealt with the war. Henry Tate's solo piano piece *The Australian*, written in 1929, examined several perspectives on the war in various movements with titles such as *The Mother*, *Youth's Unrest, Surge and Spindrift*. Tate ended the work with a choir hidden offstage, singing an a cappella chorale entitled *Gallipoli Threnody*.[30] The Anzac Fellowship of Women, founded by Dr Mary Booth in Sydney on Anzac Day, 1921, played an important role in cultivating an engagement between composers and the Great War. Embedded within the group's original constitution was a pledge to advance and grow the spirit and traditions of Anzac Day.[31] A decade on saw

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[26] Christopher Latham, "F. S. Kelly: Unsung Australian Hero," *Limelight Magazine*, Arts Initiative, 17 January 2017, accessed 4 October 2017, http://www.limelightmagazine.com.au/features/f-s-kelly-unsung-australian-hero.

[27] Larry Sitsky, *Australian Chamber Music with Piano*, (Canberra: ANU E-Press, 2011), PDF e-book, 23–24.

[28] In 1979, the National Library of Australia purchased eight of F. S. Kelly's diaries. Other associated papers and materials that form part of the Kelly collection are MS Acc.13.201, MS10144 and MS3095. Thérèse Radic edited these diaries for the monograph *Race Against Time*. In 2014, the National Library of Australia bought an additional diary from Kelly's war years; see Thérèse Radic, "Music Composed During the Gallipoli Campaign in F.S. Kelly's Newly Discovered Wartime Diaries," *Context: Journal of Music Research*, 40 (2015): 4, accessed 1 October 2019, https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=362297937370038;res=IELAPA Kelly's wartime diaries were edited by Jon Cooksey and Graham McKechnie and published in 2015; see Jon Cooksey and Graham McKechnie, eds., *Kelly's War: The Great War Diary of Frederick Kelly 1914–1916* (London: Blink Publishing, 2015).

[29] Thérèse Radic, "Editing the Diaries of F.S. Kelly: Unique Insights into an Expatriate's Musical Career," *Context: Journal of Music Research*, 19 (2000): 28, accessed 1 October 2019, https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=171752450081118;res=IELHSS.

[30] Henry Tate, *The Australian:* Cycle for Piano Solo, (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1929).

[31] Bridget Brooklyn, "The 1920s: A Good Decade for Women in Politics," in *Seizing the Initiative: Australian Women Leaders in Politics, Workplaces and*

further consolidation of this initial recognition of the cultural value of memorializing the Great War. In 1931, the executive of the organization assembled a number of men and women from the worlds of music, drama and education.[32] From this cultural gathering the Anzac Festival Committee formed, vowing to "emphasise the value of the Arts in helping to foster the Anzac tradition."[33] With an ironically prescient warning to present-day Australia, the Fellowship realized that "Anzac Day, being now a public holiday, would probably become an ordinary sports day unless something constructive was done to maintain its commemorative character."[34]

In 1932, the Sydney Conservatorium hosted the inaugural Anzac Eve Festival. A highlight of the festival was a competition that included a prize for the best musical setting for voice or voices of an original poem about Anzac history. Australian composer Alfred Hill wrote the art song "ANZAC Day" for the occasion, setting the text of Dora Wilcox's poem to music.[35] The composition competition ran from 1932 until 1940, and again from 1950 until 1957, although music prizes did not feature every year. The Anzac Eve Festival competition became a notable opportunity for musical reflection on the Great War. Its association with two prominent female composers—Miriam Hyde and Dulcie Holland—also highlights the significant role that woman have played in the creative commemoration of the war.[36] From 1934 until the middle of 1960s, Hyde and Holland were amongst a handful of Australian composers engaging with the First World War, save for Roy Agnew's *Anzac Symphony* that remained incomplete at his death in 1944. (A number of lesser-known composers each won the 'Anzac Song Prize' once).[37] Holland won in 1937 with her composition entitled

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Communities, ed. Rosemary Francis, Patricia Grimshaw and Ann Standish (Melbourne: eScholarship Research Centre, The University of Melbourne, 2012), 161–64.

[32] "Anzac Eve Festival Concert Program," (Sydney: ANZAC Fellowship of Women, 1935).

[33] "Anzac Fellowship of Women (1921–1957?)," *The Australian Women's Register*, The Australian Women's Archives Project, 3 November 2004, updated 20 November, 2018, accessed 31 August 2019, http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE1108b.htm.

[34] "Anzac Fellowship of Women (1921–1957?)," *The Australian Women's Register,* The Australian Women's Archives Project.

[35] Alfred Hill and Dora Wilcox, "ANZAC Day," (Sydney: Chappell and Co., 1932).

[36] Both composers felt the impact of war upon their own lives. The outbreak of World War II in 1939 forced Dulcie Holland to cut short her studies at the Royal College of Music in London and return home to Australia. Later in the war, Miriam Hyde's husband, Marcus Edwards, became a German prisoner of war after the fall of Crete in 1941.

[37] "Anzac Anthem," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 December 1934, 8; "Results Announced: Anzac Festival Competition," *Mercury*, 27 March 1939, 4; "Results of Anzac Competitions," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 April 1953, 2. James Brash won the 'Anzac Song Prize' in 1934 for his setting of W. L. Williams's poem "The Rising Sun," whilst Mrs P. D. Clucas won the 1939

"ANZAC Day," in 1954 with "Welcome Song For The Queen," and again in 1956 with "Song of the Constant Spirit" (a setting of a poem by Kathleen E. Murray).[38] Miriam Hyde won the prize in 1951 with "ANZAC Threnody," in 1952 with "Dawn Service" and lastly in 1955 with her composition "The Illawarra Flame."[39] Each of these short pieces were written for voice or voices with piano accompaniment, and composed in a lyrical style suitable to Anzac Day commemorative services.

Miriam Hyde also composed an orchestral work, *Heroic Elegy*, during this period of musical reflection upon themes of war.[40] Written in 1935, Hyde dedicated the composition to a friend's husband who had served in the Great War and subsequently died in an unrelated accident. *Heroic Elegy* received a negative review in the *Sydney Morning Herald* after its premiere in 1940.[41] Hyde subsequently used this critical reaction to her piece to highlight a lack of support given to Australian composers, and argue the case for the establishment of an orchestra that could primarily rehearse new Australian works.[42] (Hyde was later a driving force behind the establishment of the Australian Composers' Guild).[43]

Martin Mather's large-scale work *ANZAC Requiem*,[44] composed in 1967 and premiered in 1976, was the next composition to deal with the war in an extended fashion, and the

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prize with her song "The Anzac Way." Lastly, in 1953 John Gordon won with his song "Stars of ANZAC," a setting of a poem by Lloyd Williams.

[38] Dulcie Holland and Dora Wilcox, "ANZAC Day," unpublished score, 1937; Dulcie Holland and Kathleen E. Murray, "Welcome Song for the Queen," unpublished score, 1954; Dulcie Holland and Kathleen E. Murray, "Song of the Constant Spirit," unpublished score, 1956. Scores for "ANZAC Day" and "Welcome Song for the Queen" are held by the National Library of Australia in the collection MS 6853.

[39] Miriam Hyde and Dorothea Dowling, "ANZAC Threnody," (Wollongong, NSW: Wirripang, 2010); Miriam Hyde and Mary Bertram, "Dawn Service," (Wollongong, NSW: Wirripang, 2010); Miriam Hyde and Patricia Francis, "The Illawarra Flame," (Wollongong, NSW: Wirripang, 2010).

[40] Miriam Hyde, *Heroic Elegy*, (Sydney: Australasian Performing Right Association, 1939), accessed 3 October 2019, https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/product/heroic-elegy-for-orchestra.

[41] Neville Cardus, "Miss Hyde's 'Heroic Elegy'," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 October 1940, 9. Cardus stated, "frankly, Miss Hyde's composition disappointed me. It sounded obviously conventional…the work was clearly written in a mood of sincere feeling and good intention. Alas, sincerity and good intention are not enough in the practice of the arts."

[42] Miriam Hyde, "Local Musicians: To the Editor of the Herald," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 November 1940, 6.

[43] Peter McCallum, "Ninety Years of Making Music: Dr Miriam Hyde, AO, OBE, Musician, 1913–2005," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 January 2005, accessed 19 September 2019, https://www.smh.com.au/news/Obituaries/Ninety-years-of-making-music/2005/01/20/1106110874441.html.

[44] Martin Mather, *ANZAC Requiem*, (Grosvenor Place, NSW: Australian Music Centre, 1967),

first orchestral work since Hyde's *Heroic Elegy*. Following bravely in the footsteps of Britten's 1961 seminal *War Requiem*,[45] Mather's composition was inspired by the idea that "a new image for Anzacs had been long overdue in the arts."[46] Ambitious in scope and size, *ANZAC Requiem* called for extensive forces: solo voices, mixed chorus, boys' choir and orchestra. The text of the work came from the Missa Pro Defunctis, the Liber Psalmorum and poetry written by servicemen of Australia and New Zealand.[47] A detailed analysis of *ANZAC Requiem* is beyond the scope of this research; however, it is worth noting Mather's use of harmonic ambiguity to build tension within the work. Although written using key signatures, these implied tonalities—when heard in combination with melodic material—often produce instability by emphasising chromatic uncertainty. An example of this occurs in the opening bars of the piece. Here the key signature is nominally that of F minor: B♭, E♭, A♭ and D♭. The ensemble, however, pedals a low D♮ and sustains a two-note dyad of G♭–A♭. The opening melody, heard in unison in the soprano and tenor voices, moves between the pitches A♭, A♮ (spelt as B♭♭) and B♭.

accessed 3 October 2019, https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/workversion/mather-martin-anzac-requiem/6458.

[45] Benjamin Britten, *War Requiem*, (London: Boosey and Hawkes, 1962).

[46] Martin Mather, "*ANZAC Requiem* Premiere Concert Program," (Adelaide: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1976), 9.

[47] Mather, "*ANZAC Requiem* Premiere Concert Program," 15. The *ANZAC Requiem* used extracts from the following war poems: "Sonnet to the Unknown Soldier" by Douglas Stewart, "Infantry in Palestine" by Val Anderson, "Stand To" by Paul Buddee and "Argument" by John Quinn.

Figure 1-5. *ANZAC Requiem*, Mather, bars 1–5, choir and piano reduction

The combination of pitches within these five bars—D♮, G♭, A♭, A♮ and B♭—obfuscates the written key signature. Similarly, the final bars of the work, nominally written in B♭ minor, create harmonic ambiguity by incorporating the pitches C♭, F♭ and D♮ into the closing phrases.

Figure 1-6. *ANZAC Requiem*, Mather, final six bars of work, choir and piano reduction

Mather's work ultimately suffered the unfortunate fate of receiving its premiere in the wake of the Vietnam conflict; a time when the Anzac tradition was perceived as being at odds with a modernizing Australia. In Australian classical music, composers such as Peter Sculthorpe, Larry Sitsky and Richard Meale were defining a new set of aesthetics and creating a fresh sonic landscape. Seemingly appropriating Glenn Watkins's earlier question of "where is the war?" reviews of Mather's piece criticized him for being anachronistic and out of touch with the meaning of war.[48] The *Adelaide Advertiser*'s Warren Bourne argued that Mather's late-Romantic compositional approach utilised a musical language that ceased at the end of the war. Moreover, Bourne contended that Mather's piece failed to capture the tragedy of the conflict, asking how Mather could "approach the dislocation of war in the comfortably secure idiom of a past era?"[49] And whilst Ralph Middenway's review in the *Australian* acknowledged that *ANZAC Requiem* displayed some compositional technique—albeit antiquated—he suggested the dense texture of the work meant that much of the detail was lost, and that improvements could be made by "cutting out many notes on many pages."[50]

Recent music about the Great War

Following an absence from the musical landscape in the 1970s, the First World War returned as a creative theme in Vincent Plush's 1984 composition *Gallipoli Sunrise*,[51] composed for solo tenor trombone accompanied by seven other trombones.[52] Peter Weir's film *Gallipoli* provided the motivation for Plush's piece. Viewing the film numerous times whilst residing in the United States, Plush observed how Weir's portrayal of Australian soldiers as larrikins sharply changed when they were about to land at Anzac Cove, stating, "like the twist of a knife in the stomach, the mood of the

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[48] Watkins, *Proof through the Night*, 7.
[49] Warren Bourne, "Mather's Requiem 60 Years Too Late," *Adelaide Advertiser*, 12 November 1976, 28.
[50] Ralph Middenway, "Requiem Swamped by Sound," *Australian*, 16 November 1976, 10.
[51] Vincent Plush, *Gallipoli Sunrise* for Solo Tenor Trombone and Seven Other Trombones (5 Tenors, 2 Basses), (Grosvenor Place, NSW: Australian Music Centre, 1984), accessed 3 October 2019, https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/workversion/plush-vincent-gallipoli-sunrise/4348. One or two live players can also perform the work, with the other trombone parts heard on pre-recorded tape.
[52] Ralph Middenway and Andrew Taylor, *Barossa: Ein Singspiel*, (Grosvenor Place, NSW: Australian Music Centre, 1988), accessed 19 September 2019, https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/product/barossa-ein-singspiel. Although not the central focus, the Great War also serves as a backdrop for Ralph Middenway's singspiel *Barossa*, set in South Australia's Barossa Valley in November 1918. The South Australian College of Advanced Education commissioned this work in 1988 to celebrate Australia's bicentenary. Featuring a libretto written by Andrew Taylor, *Barossa* had several performances at the Scott Theatre in Adelaide in October of that year.

film changed in a split-second."[53] Subtly challenging the national sentiment surrounding Anzac Day—"baptized in blood, Australia became a nation that day…or so our social historians would have it…"[54]—Plush embeds two Australian folksongs, *Waltzing Matilda* and *The Road To Gundagai,* into the work. The composer included the latter folksong as a signifier to John Simpson and his donkey. Two bass trombones present it as a "reluctant lumbering canon"[55] within the piece.

The late 1990s saw the arrival of two large-scale works inspired by the Great War. In 1998, the Australian Ballet commissioned Graham Koehne to compose *1914*, based upon David Malouf's novel *Fly Away Peter*.[56] Mindful of his audience, Koehne aims for a compositional language that is melodic and approachable. He noted the music is often conventional, reflecting the Edwardian setting of the book.[57] Following on from this point, the writing is reminiscent of a film score through its lush orchestration and melodic hooks.

Composed one year later in 1999, Helen Gifford's *Choral Scenes: the Western Front, World War I*—commissioned by the Astra Chamber Music Society—took a starkly different approach to Koehne's sentimentality and Mather's Romanticism.[58] Gifford utilizes a tightly controlled compositional vocabulary to underscore the various war texts heard in the work with pathos and poignancy. Written for speakers, choir and ten instrumentalists, it is arguably the finest example of an extended Australian work that deals with World War 1 written before the Anzac centenary.

Helen Gifford's personal connection to the Great War comes through her father, John. John Gifford was a soldier in the 14th Battalion, joining up just before the beginning of the Gallipoli campaign in April 1915. After surviving the war, Gifford and his brother returned to Melbourne and started a successful shoe and boot factory in Abbotsford. In 1923, he became the secretary of the 14th Battalion Association, remaining in this position until his death in 1958. Gifford says her father "felt so guilty coming back; [he]

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[53] Plush, *Gallipoli Sunrise*, performance notes.
[54] Plush, *Gallipoli Sunrise*, performance notes.
[55] Plush, *Gallipoli Sunrise*, performance notes.
[56] David Malouf, *Fly Away Peter* (Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1983).
[57] Graham Koehne, *1914*, (ABC Classics, 1999), CD, 465 209-2, liner notes.
[58] I have subsequently shortened the title of Gifford's composition to *Choral Scenes*.

had survived and the others hadn't."[59] He determined to look after other returned soldiers from the 14th Battalion—"those that were hard up [and] couldn't get work"[60]—assisting them financially during the Depression and beyond. Essentially, Gifford's father was concerned about the marginalisation of his former comrades within broader Australian society.

Gifford considered composing *Choral Scenes* for some time, however she states she could not have written it "when the old boys [her father and his friends] were alive…it would have been too personal for them."[61] She also contends that composers born between the wars, (she was born in 1935), were reluctant to write music about the Great War because "they felt they couldn't speak with their own voice"[62] about it. This disinclination to creatively engage with the war connected to the fact that too often, women were the ones left to contend with the aftermath of the war and its impact upon families. Gifford notes that, like so many others, her mother and aunt deliberately chose to forget the war; "they were the powerful generation in their prime in the mid-century [and] they didn't want to hear about it."[63]

Gifford has talked of the shame that overshadowed many families after the war, and the desire of many people to simply get on with their lives, noting that, "men were told not to talk about it [because] they wouldn't have known how to lie about it."[64] In many ways, this conscious act of forgetting and ignoring was the easiest solution to the problems faced in post-war Australian society. Stephen Garton writes, "even for the able-bodied, civilian life after years away from home presented difficult social and psychological adjustments."[65] Research into post-war life within Australian families has demonstrated the ongoing hardship endured by many households. Permanently disabled returned soldiers had to be looked after by family members, however, as Marina Larsson points out, "their work was largely absent in official discussions of war

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[59] Helen Gifford, "Interview with Author," 15 May 2015, Hawthorn, Victoria, recording held by author.
[60] Gifford, "Interview with Author."
[61] Gifford, "Interview with Author."
[62] Gifford, "Interview with Author."
[63] Gifford, "Interview with Author."
[64] Gifford, "Interview with Author."
[65] Stephen Garton, "Demobilization and Empire: Empire Nationalism and Soldier Citizenship in Australia after the First World War – in Dominion Context," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 50, no. 1 (2015): 130.

disability and not widely reported in the public domain."[66] Furthermore, the broader memorialisation process often failed to acknowledge the families of soldiers who died after returning from the war. Marina Larsson describes how "the grief of the post-war bereaved was disenfranchised within Australia's national public commemorative traditions of war."[67] There was a general sense that the war, and *ergo* its survivors and those who died upon returning home, was not something to memorialise. This harsh attitude—save for the ongoing cultural efforts of the Anzac Fellowship of Women—appears to have encroached upon the art music world.

Helen Gifford makes apparent connections with some of these aspects of postbellum Australian life in *Choral Scenes*. Her use of a minimal—almost barren—texture punctuated by stark dissonant gestures and *subito* dynamic changes, achieves a powerful emotional affect. Moreover, Gifford's background as a theatre composer strengthens the piece's dramatic tension, displaying her mastery of text setting and, what Rosalind Appleby calls, Gifford's "profound connection with the Great War."[68]

The scoring of Charles Vildrac's "Reléve," the twelfth movement of her work, reveals the composer's astute understanding of text-music interplay. The poem describes the anxiety and anticipation of soldiers waiting to be relieved of their duty in the trenches, and their joy as they finally arrive safely beyond the terror of the front line, back to some semblance of normality. The piece begins with a solitary ominous D♭ on the tuba, calling the men to arms. However, almost immediately, a momentary sense of calm is invoked by a rich six-note harmonic response in the choir that immediately recontextualises the D♭ as the root of a chord. The tuba breaks this respite by sounding another single melancholy note, an E♭, triggering the beginning of the poem reinforcing the reality of the troops.[69] The composer further intensifies this tension by transitioning from the tuba to solo cello with a descending tritone interval.

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[66] Marina Larsson, "'The Part We Do Not See': Disabled Australian Soldiers and Family Caregiving after World War I," in *Anzac Legacies: Australians and the Aftermath of War*, ed. Martin Crotty and Marina Larsson (North Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2010), 41.

[67] Marina Larsson, "A Disenfranchised Grief: Post-War Death and Memorialisation in Australia after the First World War," *Australian Historical Studies*, 40, no. 1 (March 2009): 80.

[68] Appleby, *Women of Note: The Rise of Australian Women Composers*, 62.

[69] *A notre place/ On a pose/ Des soldats frais/Pour amorcer/La mort d'en face*. [In our place/Fresh troops have come/Sent up the line/As bait for death/Met face to face]. Translation by Christopher Middleton, supplied by composer in score.

Figure 1-7. ***Choral Scenes: the Western Front, World War I*, Helen Gifford, bars 340–45, choir, tuba and cello**

As the narrator describes the drastic measures the soldiers must undertake to flee the trenches,[70] the cello returns to the tuba's opening note—C♯/D♭—this time as a series of percussively repeated semiquavers. This recurring rhythm fuels the sense of the soldier's urgency further, spurring them on to take their chance. Gifford conveys the soldier's sense of dread—"each man picking his moment, trusting to nerve and instinct and his star"[71]—by gradually slowing down the pulse of the cello's repeating C♯, implying the decreasing rate of a beating heart.

As the men escape the danger of the firing line, the composer changes the instrumentation of "Reléve" markedly to reflect their relief and happiness. In this next stanza,[72] a flute plays a rapid phrase, almost imitating bird-song. In contrast to the rhythmic monotony of the cello's C♯, the flute's phrase bursts joyously forth in a quasi-improvised fashion. A clarinet[73] soon joins the flute, and together they engage in a

[70] *Il a fallu toute la nuit pour s'evader. Toute la nuit et ses ténèbres/Pour traverser, suant, glacé/Le bois martyr et son bourbier/Cinglé d'obus.* [We needed all night to make our escape/All night and its darkness/Sweating, frozen, to cross/The martyr forest and its swamp/That shrapnel scourged.] Translation by Christopher Middleton, supplied by composer in score.

[71] Helen Gifford, *Choral Scenes: the Western Front, World War I*, (Grosvenor Place, NSW: Australian Music Centre, 1999), 6.

[72] *Mais passé le dernier barrage/Mais hors du jeu/sur la route solide/Mais aussitôt le ralliement Aux/lueurs des pipes premières/Dites, les copains, les heureuz gagnants*. [But beyond the last entanglement/Out of it all, on the firm road/Met together, with no delays/In the glow of the first pipes lit/Then, mates, O lucky winners]. Translation by Christopher Middleton, supplied by composer in score.

[73] When I refer to the clarinet throughout the thesis, I specifically mean the B♭ clarinet. Conversely, I always call the bass clarinet by its full name.

humorous dialogue that imitates the textual description of men happily meeting together, and lighting their pipes on the road after reaching safety.

(flute)
(speaker)
Mais passè le dernier barrage, *Mais hors du jeu,* *sur la route solide,*

(flute)
(Bb clar.)
Mais aussitôt le ralliement Aux, *lueurs des pipes premières,* *Dites, les copains, les heureuz gagnants,*

Figure 1-8. ***Choral Scenes*****, Gifford, bars 362–67, flute, B♭ clarinet and speaker**

The compositional techniques described in this small example demonstrate the composer's close affinity with the text and her broader ability to set words to music. As a complete work, *Choral Scenes* is a fine example of her compositional style, creating theatrical and musical drama through subtle and nuanced instrumental textures that feature a variety of performance techniques, especially for voice and percussion.[74]

Gifford has composed two other World War I-inspired pieces. Premiered in 2005, solo piano piece *Menin Gate*[75] takes its inspiration from Will Longstaff's painting *Menin Gate at Midnight*.[76] Her 2010 choral work *The Tears of Things*,[77] commissioned again by the Astra Chamber Music Society, tells the story of Australian nursing sister Mary

[74] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Gifford, Helen," by Thérèse Radic, accessed 19 March 2015, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.11114.
[75] Helen Gifford, *Menin Gate*, (Grosvenor Place, NSW: Australian Music Centre, 2005), accessed 21 September 2019, https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/workversion/gifford-helen-menin-gate/15060.
[76] Gifford's connection to Longstaff's painting formed at an early age as a print of the work hung on display in the family home.
[77] Helen Gifford, *The Tears of Things*, unpublished score, 2010.

Tilton and includes a role for speaker.[78] A number of other small-scale pieces about the First World War were composed during the first decade of the twenty-first century. These include Monique Carole-Smith's "War Song" for voice and piano, Grant Sheridan's first string quartet entitled *ANZAC*, and Graham Koehne's piece for brass ensemble *The Voyage*, inspired by the first soldiers who departed Albany Harbour in 1915, bound for the Middle East.[79]

As noted, thinking about and discussing the work of previous composers provided me with some conceptual markers, and required me to undertake formal analysis of their work that deepened my vision. This allows me to better discuss my own examination of the war from an artistic perspective. In 2011, Australian pianist Zubin Kanga commissioned me to write a piano piece that reflected my family's connection to the Great War. The title of the piece, *The Drumfire Was Incessant, and Continued All Night With Unabated Fury,*[80] is a quote from British historian Newton Wanliss's harrowing account of the Battle of Pozieres.[81] That battle had occurred between July and August 1916 as part of the Somme Offensive. The composition focuses on the days leading up to 9 August 1916, when my great-great uncle Private Leslie Robins, an infantryman in the 14th Battalion, was shot and wounded.

In the early stages of writing the piece, whilst conducting preliminary research into the Battle of Pozieres, the glaring disconnection between the British High Command's notion of formulating a plan for the battle, and the actuality of what occurred once soldiers went over the top into no-man's land stood out to me. This dichotomous concept—exerting control over an inherently fluid and dynamic situation—I found to be most intriguing. It fitted in well with my aesthetic explorations of the role of

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[78] "Helen Gifford: Represented Artist," Australian Music Centre, composer biography (current to October 2010), accessed 30 June 2019, https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/artist/gifford-helen.

[79] Monique Carole-Smith, "War Song," (Grosvenor Place, NSW: Australian Music Centre, 2003), accessed 30 June 2019, https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/workversion/carole-smith-monique-war-song/12981; Grant Sheridan, *String Quartet 1: ANZAC*, (Grosvenor Place, NSW: Australian Music Centre, 2006), accessed 30 June 2019, https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/workversion/sheridan-grant-string-quartet-number-1/23105; Graham Koehne, *The Voyage*, (Sydney: G. Schirmer, 2009).

[80] Andrew Harrison, *The Drumfire Was Incessant, and Continued All Night with Unabated Fury*, (Grosvenor Place, NSW: Australian Music Centre, 2012), accessed 3 October 2019, https://www.australianmusiccentre.com.au/product/the-drumfire-was-incessant-and-continued-all-night-with-unabated-fury-for-solo-piano.

[81] Newton Wanliss, *The History of the Fourteenth Battalion, A.I.F.* (London: Naval and Military Press & Imperial War Museum, 1929; repr., 2010), 138.

improvisation (a dynamic process) within a larger notated context (a controlled environment). I decided that this dichotomy would play a fundamental role within the piece.

The composition breaks down into three distinct parts; the main notated section, and two structured improvisations; *Counterattack 1* and *Counterattack 2*. The work begins with a sombre march, reminding us of the fear that filled many soldiers as they made their way towards the line of fire. A torrential rhythmic onslaught abruptly subsumes the march, symbolising the artillery bombardment that both the Allied and German soldiers endured throughout the Battle of Pozieres. The bombardment comes to a jarring halt as *Counterattack 1* gets underway. After a brief period of introspective respite following *Counterattack 1*, the bombardment returns, building to a crescendo before giving way to *Counterattack 2*. In the aftermath of *Counterattack 2* the melancholia of the opening march returns, serving as a poignant reminder of those that fell during the battle.

The *Counterattack* sections seek to capture some of the pandemonium and chaos of hand-to-hand combat. Each of the *Counterattacks* is a structured improvisation, leaving the overall shape of the section to the pianist's discretion. A trench whistle, blown by a designated person seated in the audience, cues in each improvisation. The entry point of each *Counterattack* is variable, adding an element of unpredictability to each performance. In other words, in theory the pianist is never quite sure of when they will move to the structured improvisation. The following excerpt from *Counterattack 1* exemplifies the flexible notation approach used within the structured improvisations.

2

♩ = c.132 aggresively; fast ♪ patterns

use note order freely

use note order freely

use note order freely

hands 'tussling' over notes

3

♩ = c..50

Very slow and sparse; ♩ = 40 or less

Play RH notes in any order. Strike each note/chord once only.
Use extremes of dynamics, and vary articulations. Don't use
a clear pulse, and use extremes of note length.

Don't strike any RH and LH notes together

ppp sempre

Play LH chords once only. Let chords ring. LH must be played *ppp*

senza ped. throughout

Figure 1-9. *The Drumfire Was Incessant, and Continued All Night With Unabated Fury*, Andrew Harrison, Counterattack 1: sections 2 and 3, piano

The official commemoration of the Anzac Centenary 2014–2018 saw numerous pieces commissioned and premiered across Australia, commemorating the significance of the event within our cultural and historical narrative.[82] However, the production of these new works did not mean the ink was dry on the page in terms of musical reflection upon the Great War. Indeed, the official line artificially drawn by the Anzac century—and inadvertently reinforced by government funding—not only marked a new phase in the musical commemoration of World War 1, but also a break in the historical understanding of pre-2014 compositions about the war. Furthermore, future attempts to realize the sounds from the trenches will undoubtedly provide scholars with rich material for analysis and comparison.

[82] Commonwealth of Australia, “Round 2 Production and Commissioning Fund Grant Recipients,” Department of Communication and the Arts, 12 April 2016, Funding and support webpage, accessed 1 July 2019, https://www.arts.gov.au/departmental-news/round-2-production-and-commissioning-fund-grant-recipients. As well as the previously mentioned large works from Christopher Latham and Christopher Bowen, musical organisations such as the Australian Art Orchestra, the Australian Chamber Orchestra and the Hunter Singers officially commissioned new World War I-themed compositions.

NOTE:

Before reading Chapter 2, please listen to the recording of *Gassed Shell (Severe)* in its entirety, preferably whilst reading the score.

Here is a link to the recording (.wav).
Gassed Shell (Severe) recording

NB. The file can be downloaded, or streamed online by clicking on the music notes icon that looks:

Here is a link to the score (.pdf).
Gassed Shell (Severe) score

NB. The file can be downloaded or viewed online.

Chapter 2
"The old Lie": *Gassed Shell (Severe)* and the personal narrative of war

> My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
> To children ardent for some desperate glory,
> The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
> Pro patria mori.
>
> —Wilfred Owen, "Dulce Et Decorum Est"

In late 2012, Paul Grabowsky commissioned me to write a new work for the Monash Art Ensemble.[1] During our initial discussions about the prospective piece, I indicated that, given my earlier success with *The Drumfire,* I wished to continue exploring my family's connection to World War 1 through music. I suggested composing a work that reflected upon the experiences of my maternal grandfather, Andrew Maddocks, at the Battle of Passchendaele. He responded enthusiastically. This commission coincided with my interest in undertaking a PhD and, in fact, inspired the research question which underpins it: could I be both composer and historian, remaining ethical to the constraints of both disciplines and thereby explore a pathway to an affective understanding of the past? Accordingly, at the beginning of 2014, I turned my attention to a new composition as part of a PhD by creative work, exegetical analysis and historical research. The chapter to follow considers this configuration, and the issues arising from it, through a detailed analysis of my composition *Gassed Shell (Severe).*

The starting point for the project was constructing a chronology for Maddocks's war service. Having obtained a copy of his personal service record, I believed I had a good grasp on this. However, the process of researching and piecing together his story revealed some significant gaps. Important aspects of Maddocks's time on the Western front—such as the exact location of his wounding—were absent from official records. To address these silences in the narrative, it became necessary to cast a wider net and

[1] "Monash Art Ensemble," Monash University, The Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music, list of student ensembles, updated June 2019, accessed 4 July 2019, https://arts.monash.edu/music/student-ensembles. Paul Grabowsky founded the Monash Art Ensemble in 2012. The artistic vision of the ensemble is to "support the development of excellence in young Australian musicians, foster a culture of innovation amongst established Australian musicians and encourage community encouragement with Australian musicians and music." As of June 2019, they have commissioned ten new Australian works and released six commercial recordings.

consult the diaries of men in the various military units in which he served. Additional information came from diaries of others in peripheral units and the records from the headquarters of the Second Division Artillery, as well as various monographs on the Battle of Passchendaele.

Determining the story of Andrew Maddocks's war service also provided deeper insight into the broader military campaign that occurred in Belgium in 1917. The daily terror and inhumanity faced by soldiers on all sides became blatantly clear. The atrocious weather conditions—throughout August 1917, the first month of the battle, there were only three days without rain—and constant shelling caused the ground to become so boggy it was almost impossible to move men or artillery unimpeded.[2] These factors, in combination with little progress and an appallingly high number of casualties,[3] meant that Passchendaele truly represented, in the words of historian Lyn Macdonald "all that was dismal [and] all that was futile."[4] Hence, whilst the catalyst for the piece was the connection to my grandfather's military service, ultimately, *Gassed Shell (Severe)*[5]—a concert aria for mezzo-soprano and large chamber ensemble—also became an artistic reflection upon the futility and horror of war.

A quiet "red-ragger": a perspective on Andrew Maddocks[6]

Andrew Maddocks was born on 21 June 1895 in Maldon, Victoria. He was the second of six children to Frederick and Hannah Maddocks. Helen Seymour, Maddocks's daughter, described Andrew's early years as an "old-fashioned country life,"[7] denoted by a calm and orderly home. His parents were quiet and caring people who created a close-knit, middle-class Presbyterian household that valued books and poetry; Scottish bard Robert 'Rabbie' Burns was a particular favourite.[8] From an early age, Maddocks showed an interest in practical problem solving and was fascinated by the way that

[2] Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *Passchendaele: The Untold Story* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 96–7.
[3] Prior and Wilson, *Passchendaele: The Untold Story*, 196.
[4] Lyn Macdonald, *They Called It Passchendaele: The Story of the Third Battle of Ypres and of the Men Who Fought in It* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), 4.
[5] For the sake of space, I have often abbreviated the title of the work to *Gassed* throughout the chapter, and the thesis.
[6] I compiled the information for Andrew Maddocks's biography from a series of interviews conducted with his four surviving daughters—Helen Seymour, Kay Harrison (my mother), Lyn Capuano and Judith Maddocks—between July and November 2017.
[7] Helen Seymour, Susan Curtin, and Kay (Cathrine) Harrison, "Interview with Author," 21 July 2017, Drysdale, Victoria, recording held by author.
[8] Judith Maddocks, "Interview with Author," 23 September 2017, Strathmore, Victoria, recording held by author.

things worked.[9] He attended the local state school until his mid-teens, after which he began a fitting and turning apprenticeship at Thompson's Foundry in Castlemaine.

When Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, a national call to arms went out across Australia as men were, to quote Bill Gammage, "roused by a sense of adventure"[10] to volunteer to defend the Empire. This enthusiasm for war soon reached the Maddocks household. Frederick Junior, Andrew's older brother, enlisted with the Australian Imperial Force on 28 January 2015. Known as 'Freddy', he embarked Australia in May with the 22nd Battalion, bound for the Gallipoli Peninsula. He served there from September to December 1915, before heading to France in March 1916. In June, Freddy transferred into the Second Division's V2A Heavy Trench Mortar Battery;[11] a newly formed artillery unit that carried a light gun capable of bombing enemy trenches.[12]

Andrew was also keen to join the war effort, despite his father's opposition.[13] He enlisted in Bendigo on 29 March 1916, embarking from Australia with the 38th Battalion on 20 June, one day before his twenty-first birthday. The battalion arrived in Armentieres in late November and saw some action throughout December. By this time, however, the Battle of the Somme had finished, and both sides began preparations for coping with the oncoming winter.[14] With the war entering an enforced recess, Andrew was apparently 'claimed'[15] by Freddy so they could serve together in the same unit. On 27 December 1916, he transferred into the Second Division's V2A Heavy Trench Mortar Battery.

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[9] Maddocks, "Interview with Author."
[10] Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War*, 9.
[11] This may have been a stroke of luck for Freddy, as the 22nd Battalion subsequently sustained substantial losses during their engagement at the Battle of Pozieres in July and August 1916.
[12]Neville Foldi, "Trench Mortars in the A.I.F., 1916–1918," *Sabretache*, 39 (June 1998): 13.
[13] I have no written evidence of his father's disapproval of Andrew's enlisting, however my mother and her sisters stated that Andrew told them this.
[14] C.E.W. Bean, "Winter," in *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918, Vol. 3: The Australian Imperial Force in France, 1916* (Sydney, NSW: Angus and Robertson, 1941, 12th ed.), 953.
[15] Again, there is no written evidence of this in any official war record, however my mother and her sisters maintain this is how my grandfather described the process that saw him transferred into the trench mortars.

Figure 2-1. Andrew (L) and Frederick (R) Maddocks in uniform. Photo probably taken in London in 1917, before Andrew left for Belgium

Now officially Gunner Maddocks, Andrew spent the first six months of 1917 in France, where he undertook trench mortar training. In July, the unit moved north into Belgium in preparation for Douglas Haig's Flanders campaign.[16] During this planning phase for Third Ypres—which officially started on 31 July—Maddocks's unit worked with the Fifth Field Artillery Brigade and the Second Division Artillery Column, contributing fatigue relief by building forward gun positions, salvaging shells and loading ammunition wagons. Later, as the Battle of Menin Road got underway, the Heavy

[16] Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War*, 317. Haig had argued for a campaign in Flanders for some time, however British Prime Minister Lloyd George opposed him and felt that Haig had little regard for the lives of British soldiers. The British War Cabinet finally granted Haig's wish in July 1917.

Trench Mortars formed part of the Second Division's artillery that successfully punished the Germans on 20 September 1917.[17] Following the Menin Road success, Andrew's unit was relieved in late September when 1 ANZAC took over for the push into Polygon Wood.

Between 1 and 22 October, the Heavy Trench Mortars performed more non-combat duties in preparation for the next advance towards Passchendaele Ridge. These included building and consolidating forward gun positions, and constructing new underground shelters and headquarters. On 26 October, the unit returned to active duty, attached to batteries of the Fourth and Fifth Field Artillery Brigades. The guns of the Second Division provided support to Canadian troops as they began the Second Battle of Passchendaele. Over the next five days, the Heavy Trench Mortars found themselves in the middle of fierce artillery-fire, killing one gunner and wounding another.[18] The Germans were merciless with their deployment of poison gas; Andrew's unit diary reported heavy and sustained bombardments of gas shells and high explosives throughout their time at the front.[19] On 1 November, thirty ranks from the unit were working with the Fifth Field Artillery Brigade, constructing forward gun positions for the next phase of the campaign. They continued to endure an incessant German artillery barrage, with the unit diary noting, "enemy shelling batteries with shells of large calibre during the day, and firing large quantities of gas shells during the night."[20] All members of the unit evacuated the area after exposure to poison gas. Andrew was amongst those wounded, with his condition listed in his casualty record as severe.[21] He spent time recuperating in Bethnal Green Military Hospital after repatriation to England.[22] After recommencing active duty in France on 5 March 1918, Andrew returned to the Trench

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[17] Bean, "Winter," 761. C.E.W. Bean noted, "in this battle, the infantry were little more than a necessary adjunct to the artillery's effort."

[18] "Entry for 28–29 October, and 30 October 1917," V2A Heavy Trench Mortar Battery Unit Diary, October 1917, AWM4-13/96/3. The gunner killed in action was No. 3630, Sergeant Richard Hamilton Taylor, who died on 30 October 1917. No. 2793, Gunner Francis James Staig sustained wounds on the previous day.

[19] "Entry on 30 October 1917," V2A Heavy Trench Mortar Battery Unit Diary, October 1917, AWM4-13/96/3.

[20] "Entry on 1 November 1917," V2A Heavy Trench Mortar Battery Unit Diary, November 1917, AWM4-13/96/4.

[21] "Entry on 4 November 1917: Casualty Form - Active Service," Service record of Andrew Maddocks, 1916–19, NAA: B2455.

[22] "Entry on 25 November 1917: Casualty Form - Active Service," Service record of Andrew Maddocks, 1916–19, NAA: B2455. On 25 November 1917, Maddocks's classification was 'B1A1', which meant that he was suitable for light duties only, presumably as a direct result of being gassed.

Mortars, which, in his absence, had gone through a restructure.[23] He contracted pneumonia in August, spending two more weeks in hospital. Upon returning to the frontline, he transferred into the Second Australian Divisional Artillery Column, where he remained until war's end. After being demobilised, Andrew left London in July 1919, bound for Australia.[24]

Back home, Andrew's post-war life picked up where it had left off. Formally discharged from the army, Andrew returned to Castlemaine to finish his apprenticeship at Thompson's Foundry. However, like many returned soldiers, Andrew took a long time to settle down into civilian life.[25] Upon completion of his apprenticeship in the mid-1920s, Andrew headed north in search of work, travelling in a newly purchased Morris Cowley. He eventually stopped in Mackay, where he found permanent employment at the Farleigh Sugar Mill. Towards the end of the decade, Andrew met Helen Elizabeth Gray-Moffatt (known as Nell), and they married in Herberton on 30 September 1929.[26] He was 34 years of age, and she was nineteen.

By this time, the armistice that ended the Great War was ten years past, however Andrew's military service continued to have an impact upon his life. It affected his health and, as a direct result, his employment opportunities. When the Great Depression started, Andrew and Nell left Queensland and returned to Maldon, Victoria to live with his parents. In 1931 their first daughter Betty was born, followed by Helen in 1933. Andrew struggled to secure regular work, eventually finding a job grinding tools at the Patience and Nicholson factory in Maryborough. However, his lungs, which suffered permanent damage from poison gas, reacted badly to the dust generated by the grinding process, forcing him to resign.

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[23] Before Andrew returned to the front, the V2A Heavy Trench Mortar Battery disbanded and all trench mortar units consolidated into two new batteries, the 3rd and 4th Australian Medium Trench Mortar Batteries. Unfortunately, it is unclear where Andrew transferred to, as there is a listing for both the Third and Fourth Battery in his war record.

[24] "Entry on 1 July 1919," Service record of Andrew Maddocks, 1916–19, NAA: B2455.

[25] Kay (Cathrine) Harrison, "Interview with Author," 23 September 2017, Aberfeldie, Victoria, recording held by author.

[26] "Wedding at Herberton: Maddocks - Moffatt," *Cairns Post*, 10 October 1929, 10. Nell came from a well-known wealthy grazing family that owned numerous properties in Mackay, Queensland. Consequently, Andrew and Nell's wedding attracted much local attention. It was described in the Cairns Post as "a wedding of interest to a large circle in two States…[where] the wedding presents were numerous and costly, and many telegrams of congratulations were received."

The war also influenced Andrew's social and political views. He came from a religious family that espoused middle-class conservative Victorian values. Andrew rejected most of these and adopted a left-wing political outlook that never wavered throughout the rest of his life. In 1936, after accepting a job as an engineer's fitter at the Newport workshop of the Victorian Railways,[27] Andrew joined the Amalgamated Engineer's Union, and subsequently remained a lifelong trade unionist. He also took a strong interest in communism; his wife Nell, who was a committed supporter of Robert Menzies and the Liberal Party, would refer to him as "the old red-ragger."[28] He disavowed the British monarchy, (I remember him voicing his dislike of the royal family), and completely turned his back on religion.[29] He believed that if God had allowed the First World War to occur, then he was unable to continue attending church.[30]

Yet, Andrew never forced his political and social opinions upon other people and they never got in the way of his home life.[31] Once he became a family man, the war and its consequences were things that happened at a previous time in his life, and he seemed inclined to pay them little mind; he had no time for sentimentality.[32] He was not a boisterous man; rather he was a private person who enjoyed activities such as reading quietly to his children.[33] He was tolerant and eschewed violence; given the emotional trauma borne by many returned servicemen, Andrew never physically reprimanded his children and was always respectful of his wife.[34]

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[27] There is much family speculation about how Andrew got this job. The story, described separately by several family members, is that after he left Patience and Nicholson in Maryborough, one of Andrew's friends contacted J.J. Brown, who was then a state official in the Australian Railways Union (ARU). Brown apparently found work for Andrew in the Newport Workshop. Brown later became federal president of the ARU and a prominent Communist.

[28] Harrison, "Interview with Author."

[29] Harrison, "Interview with Author." When the Queen came to Melbourne in 1954, her motorcade came down Mount Alexander Road in Moonee Ponds, approximately 800 metres from Andrew's home. Nell took her three younger daughters to see the celebrations, whilst Andrew apparently steadfastly refused to go. Similarly, when Andrew was approaching his hundredth birthday, he used to say to his family that he did not "want to hear from her [the Queen]" by way of a congratulatory letter.

[30] Lynn Capuano, "Interview with Author," 4 November2017, Essendon North, Victoria, recording held by author.

[31] Andrew and Nell held strong opposing views on a range of issues, yet from all accounts this had little impact upon their marriage.

[32] Maddocks, "Interview with Author."

[33] Seymour, Curtin, and Harrison, "Interview with Author."

[34] Seymour, Curtin, and Harrison, "Interview with Author,"; Maddocks, "Interview with Author."

After a gap of eleven years, Andrew and Nell had three more daughters, Cathrine (known as Kay), Lynn and Judith. As he was fifty-five years old when Judith was born, he did not retire from the Victorian Railways until he was sixty-eight. Nell and Andrew's marriage remained a happy one until her death in 1984. He lived for another ten years. Five daughters, ten grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren survived him when he died on 30 December 1994.

Figure 2-2. Andrew Maddocks outside his shed at his home in Moonee Ponds, Victoria, circa 1960s

Gassed Shell (Severe): early creative considerations

After Maddocks's war narrative was completed, I began considering a number of questions that would determine the trajectory of my compositional process. Should the

work incorporate text, or should it be a purely musical reflection? Moreover, if I did use text, how should the music support and enhance it? Should the music actually sound like war? Should the work focus solely upon Andrew Maddocks's story, or should it also present a broader artistic critique of the war?

Although the idea of creating an instrumental composition inspired by the Great War was not without merit—Ralph Vaughan Williams's *A Pastoral Symphony* and Maurice Ravel's *La Tombeau de Couperin* are both masterful illustrations of this—in the case of *Gassed*, I believed the inclusion of text was important for several reasons. Anchoring the piece in text enabled me to immediately draw the audience into the space that Maddocks's narrative occupied. There would be little ambiguity about the source of the work's inspiration, and in turn, this provided a philosophical and aesthetic pathway for those listening to the work. Furthermore, I felt the non-descript, dispassionate language of Maddocks's service record and his unit diaries created a surreal irony that I could musically exploit within the composition. I detected a palpable disconnection between the unit diary's mundane description of events—such as "21 other ranks returned to billets in Ypres, reported heavy bombardment with gas shells and H.E. [high explosives]"[35]—and the horrible reality the troops endured. Finally, I knew of numerous examples of previous compositions about the First World War that incorporated text,[36] and these works demonstrated the substantial contribution text could make to the overall dramatic power of a piece of music.

I intended that the work should creatively reflect upon the role of the conflict in shaping Maddocks's post-war life. He expressed his disregard for the concept of war; however, he rarely discussed his gassing with his immediate family. Andrew rather preferred to downplay those memories and leave them in the past.[37] Nonetheless, the official assessment of his wounds as severe suggests that on 1 November 1917, Maddocks and other gas victims in his unit would have been in a terrible state. Indeed, Charles Bean described poison gas victims as being in a "pitiful" condition, with "eyes swollen and streaming, voices gone, and bodies blistered."[38] Furthermore, although poisonous gas

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[35] "Entry on 30 October 1917," V2A Heavy Trench Mortar Battery Unit Diary.
[36] Compositions such as Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem,* Mark Antony Turnage's *The Torn Fields* and Helen Gifford's *Choral Scenes: the Western Front, World War I* are but few a examples of important World War I-inspired works featuring text.
[37] Seymour, Curtin, and Harrison, "Interview with Author."
[38] Bean, "Winter," 933.

resulted in few immediate front-line deaths,[39] Bean emphasised that the ongoing respiratory issues faced by returned soldiers created an enormous ongoing burden for the country.[40] The internal nature of gas-related injuries meant they remained hidden from public view, becoming an insidiously invisible veteran's health problem unnoticed by general society.[41] After learning about the serious ongoing effects of poison gas, I decided it was essential my piece acknowledge the trauma experienced by Maddocks and other gas victims, and provide some substantive detail to the perfunctory description of his condition—"wounded in action (gas)"[42]—described in his casualty record.

To this end, I decided to integrate Wilfred Owen's seminal war poem,[43] "Dulce Et Decorum Est,"[44] into the narrative of *Gassed* to provide important contextual information, and serve as an emotional conduit for insight into the consequences of Maddocks's gassing. I mobilised the poem's provocative and affective language to address the gaps in our knowledge surrounding poison gas in Maddocks's official war record, and to give voice to specific details about his wounding that he chose to purposefully silence. In dramatic and horrific detail, Owen's poem describes a gas attack upon a group of soldiers, and the chaotic aftermath during which one of the men presumably dies after failing to secure his gasmask in time. "Dulce"[45]—perhaps the best-known poem of the First World War[46]—portrays the reality of war in brutal and shocking honesty. Owen first drafted it in October 1917 whilst recuperating at Craiglockhart Military Hospital in Edinburgh. In early 1918, he edited and redrafted it

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[39] "How Gas Became a Terror Weapon in the First World War," Imperial War Museum, 6 February 2018, accessed 14 March 2018, https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/how-gas-became-a-terror-weapon-in-the-first-world-war. Statistics show that three per cent of troops died from the immediate effects of poisonous gas.
[40] Bean, "Winter," 933.
[41] Marina Larsson, *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), 16.
[42] "Entry on 3 November 1917: Casualty Form - Active Service," Service record of Andrew Maddocks, 1916–19, NAA: B2455.
[43] Santanu Das, "'Dulce Et Decorum Est,' a Close Reading," *Discovering Literature*, The British Library, 25 May 2016, accessed 14 April 2018, https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/a-close-reading-of-dulce-et-decorum-est. Santanu Das notes that the term 'war poem' has come to mean 'anti-war' over the course of time.
[44] Wilfred Owen, *The War Poems*, ed. Jon Stallworthy (London: Chatto and Windus, 1994), 29–30.
[45] I have shortened the name of Owen's poem to "Dulce" throughout the chapter.
[46] Max Saunders, "Friendship and Enmity in First World War Literature (Wilfred Owen)," *Literature and History*, 17, no. 1 (2008): 62.

again, before its publication.[47] Owen served in France from January to April 1917, before being evacuated to England in May after a diagnosis of shell shock. Although the poet did not serve during the Passchendaele campaign, he returned to the war in 1918, winning the Military Cross in October during an assault on the Hindenburg line. Tragically, he died in action on 4 November 1918, one week before the Armistice. It remains unclear whether Owen wrote "Dulce" from a personal experience; Kenneth Simcox notes that, during the second stanza of the poem, "Owen introduces himself into the action through witnessing his comrade dying in agony."[48] Regardless of the factual basis of "Dulce," Wilfred Own was a witness to the most hideous aspects of war whilst on active duty.[49] In short, he was fully qualified to write about the terror of a gas attack. Considering this, I felt the premise of "Dulce" brought drama and context to the narrative of *Gassed*. Furthermore, I believed it would serve as an eloquent account of what could easily have transpired during Maddocks's wounding on 1 November 1917.

My decision to build the formal design of *Gassed* around the text of Maddocks's war records and Owen's poem necessarily influenced the role of the musical component within the piece. It made no sense to overpower—sonically or emotionally—the carefully crafted words of "Dulce" and the austere words comprising Maddocks's war documentation. However, in my judgement it was equally important that the natural strength of the musical forces be maximised effectively. Consequently, the music functions in a number of ways. On occasion, it is similar to a film score, supporting the narrative through accompaniment, and allowing the dialogue to be the focal point.[50] Given that actual events of a compelling nature formed the basis of the narrative, I concluded that, at certain points, I could support the drama of the work with music that was not overly extravagant. Conversely, at other times I deliberately wrote music that buttressed up to the text, creating the sense they were organically intertwined[51] in a manner more akin to music-drama.[52] When establishing the role that music would play

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[47] Das, "'Dulce Et Decorum Est', a Close Reading."
[48] Kenneth Simcox, "Poetry Critique: 'Dulce Et Decorum Est'," The Wilfred Owen Association, 2000, accessed 14 April 2018, http://www.wilfredowen.org.uk/poetry/dulce-et-decorum-est#.
[49] Wilfred Owen, *War Poems and Others*, ed. Dominic Hibberd (North Sydney: Random House, 1986), 50.
[50] Joel Douek, "Music and Emotion—a Composer's Perspective," *Frontiers in Systems Neuroscience*, 7, article 82 (19 November 2013), accessed 23 March 2018, https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fnsys.2013.00082/full.
[51] James Anderson Winn, *Unsuspected Eloquence: A History of the Relations between Poetry and Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 283.
[52] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Music Drama (Opera) [Musical]," by Barry Millington, accessed 25 March 2018,

within the work, I felt it was important to avoid any clichés or overt suggestions of war. I knew that it was trite to infer any pretence of militarism. Moreover, I strongly agreed with Grove's assessment that "as far as battle music is concerned, the 20th [and 21st] century has lost its naivety."[53] For me, it was pertinent that *Gassed* conveyed pathos, irony and chaos as reflected in the text of the work.

Before commencing the compositional process, I decided to limit the narrative scope of the work. I felt a musical reflection that specifically focussed upon Maddocks's experiences in Belgium could achieve a greater sense of legitimacy and authenticity than a work seeking to provide a broader commentary on the Battle of Passchendaele. From an historical viewpoint, I believed shining a light on Maddocks's individual experience was an effective way of connecting directly with audiences. The articulation of his story provided others with an opportunity to understand an aspect of the past. Moreover, contemplating the war from Maddocks's perspective reinforced the legitimacy of gaining insight into broad historical moments by focusing on an individual protagonist's voice.

Yet, despite my original impetus for *Gassed* being the creative engagement with my grandfather's wartime experiences, I also acknowledged my piece could inevitably become part of a broader discussion about Third Ypres. Maddocks's story was like many thousands of others who served in World War I; it was easy to make and justify connections and parallels with the experiences of other participants. Moreover, the scale and drama of Passchendaele, described by Paul Ham as, "an epic of pointless butchery that…entered the realm of the infernal and monumentally futile,"[54] meant the battle and its consequences will surely be scrutinised again in the future. Indeed, Prior and Wilson noted, "no other Great War campaign excites stronger emotions."[55] Recognising this created a conundrum to be dealt with during the process of composing *Gassed Shell (Severe)*: how could I write a work that was inherently personal, yet might be also be used as evidence to understand an important historical event? Successfully meeting this

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https://doi-org.virtual.anu.edu.au/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.O008945. A music-drama is a "dramatic work with music…in which the music plays a primary role." It is most closely associated with the works of Richard Wagner.

[53] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Battle Music."

[54] Paul Ham, *Passchendaele: Requiem for Doomed Youth* (North Sydney, NSW: William Heinemann, 2016), 2.

[55] Prior and Wilson, *Passchendaele: The Untold Story*, xix.

creative challenge meant I needed to compose a work that gave me artistic satisfaction and contributed to the growing body of music scrutinising and examining the war.

"Some desperate glory": narrative, conflict and music

After settling upon the text for *Gassed*, I started gathering my pre-compositional materials in preparation for the formal writing process. My initial compositional procedures revolved around consolidating various pitch collections and rhythmic concepts, particularly pitch material I could use equally in a melodic and harmonic capacity.

As stated earlier, I always intended to make Maddocks's war experiences the focus of the piece. Accordingly, I measured any creative decisions regarding the treatment of text or musical material against the integrity of his narrative. Overall, this limitation did not impinge upon my compositional approach. However, I was cognisant that my desire to incorporate improvisation into the piece required some planning. In keeping with my established compositional *modus operandi*, I intended to include some aspects of performer-led musical activity within *Gassed.*[56] As I worked through my creative process and the form of the piece became apparent, I identified several opportunities for integrating improvisation into the piece. Whilst relinquishing full control of musical material within a large-scale composition might seem a risky decision, I believed that some moments of extemporisation would ultimately bring further depth and perspective to the drama of *Gassed*'s narrative.[57]

Text setting and literary concepts

The textual combination of Maddocks's official war record and Wilfred Owen's poem gave me a rich resource for creating a musical work that explored a variety of emotions, and dealt with confronting subject matter. Both sources of text served the work's narrative in a different capacity, built around the idiosyncrasies of their internal design.

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[56] My background as both a jazz pianist and a classical composer means I aim to incorporate improvisation into most of my notated works.

[57] Derek Bailey, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 63. American composer Earle Brown described overcoming concerns about including improvisation into his string quartet by including pre-conceived material that the players freely develop. "In the string quartet, there is an improvised ending but they have certain controls in there, they are given a repertoire of material…if I had not written those materials, I would probably be dissatisfied with the results. [Potential players might] start quoting the repertoire they know best and I've always tried to provoke the musician to go beyond his habits." Like Earle Brown, I also included specific materials to guide the players as they improvised in *Gassed*.

As such, my use of each text within *Gassed* was representative of its original function. The unit diaries and war record mundanely document the daily activities of Maddocks and his comrades on the Western Front, detailing both frontline and non-combat duties. Conversely, Owen's formalised poetic language exposes the war in all its cruelty and disappointments. (Owen famously stated that he was "not concerned with Poetry...[but] War, and the pity of War.")[58] In particular, "Dulce" not only captures the brutality of war in graphic detail, but also the trauma of war, and, as Max Saunders notes, how "such horror won't go away, but keeps recurring."[59]

Although both textual sources deal with the same subject—the subjection of troops to a poisonous gas attack—the differences between them are striking. The unadorned and straightforward recording of events in the official war documentation stands in stark contrast to Owen's highly evocative and emotive description of exhausted soldiers desperately trying to survive. Thus, I decided these distinctive writing styles required separate compositional approaches, enabling me to create music that best served each text.

The chronological structure of the war records immediately suggested they would be well suited to actuate the narrative and to fulfil the function of plot and its exposition.[60] I decided to treat them in a quasi-recitative manner, directing the singer to speak each text as a monologue.[61] The role of recitative, particularly within its traditional operatic context, has been contentious at some points in music history. Herbert Lindenberger notes the role of recitative within the dramatic structure of a work has been "relegated…to the realization of low points against which subsequent high points could be defined."[62] This is partly because recitative, particularly in eighteenth century opera, functioned principally to progress the narrative through dialogue, leaving the process of reflection and passion to (sung) arias.[63] In the case of *Gassed*, I determined that spoken text would not play a minor part within the piece, or have its dramatic intention

[58] Owen, *The War Poems*, 98.
[59] Saunders, "Friendship and Enmity in First World War Literature (Wilfred Owen)," 62.
[60] Herbert Lindenberger, *Opera: The Extravagant Art* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 82.
[61] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Recitative," by Dale E. Monson, Jack Westrup, and Julian Budden, accessed 23 February 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.23019. Recitative is a method of vocal writing, generally within the operatic tradition, where the voice imitates the rhythms and nuances of speech within a singing style.
[62] Lindenberger, *Opera: The Extravagant Art*, 82.
[63] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Recitative."

diminished. On the contrary, reading the war records aloud heightened the trauma inherently imbedded within the plain language of Maddocks's official war documentation. Historian Lyn McDonald observed a similar realisation when working with soldier's recollections of the Battle of Passchendaele, stating, "there was no need for [my] imagination to be brought to bear on them, for the events were beyond imagining."[64]

Furthermore, it was important to acknowledge the overarching narrative created by the combination of these three war record texts. Thus, I decided to differentiate each of the monologues by instructing the singer to speak each in a different vocal tone and style; almost as if I, or they, imagined they were in character. The delivery of the first monologue—the opening text of the piece—was in the manner of a news broadcast: clear and well-articulated. This opening statement introduces the poison gas trope through troop descriptions of sustained enemy artillery attacks of high explosive and gas shells.[65] The second war record monologue outlines the circumstances of Maddocks's gassing. The presentation of the text—"30 ranks were attached to various batteries of 5th Field Artillery Brigade for fatigue duty…30 ranks evacuated gassed"[66]—is intimate and unsettling. In this instance, I directed the singer to speak the text as if she was reading a letter aloud to herself, inadvertently allowing the outside world to witness a private moment. The final spoken component of the piece features the least amount of text, yet these few words are the crux of the work. The last sentence confirms Maddocks's gassing: "Gunner 1667 Andrew Maddocks, wounded in action (gas)." Here my performance instruction was that the singer speak "in a dreamlike and detached manner," suggesting a surreal and illusionary state. Moreover, I marked the final four words as "half sung/spoken" (also known as *Sprechgesang* or *Sprechstimme*)[67] to further emphasise their dramatic significance, and the moment of Maddocks's trauma. Many troops considered poison gas an appalling weapon of modern warfare.[68] It reportedly caused widespread panic amongst troops, and was perceived as a weapon of true barbarism.[69] In this final section of *Gassed* I wanted to emphasise that, until World

[64] Macdonald, *They Called It Passchendaele*, xiii.
[65] "Entry on 30 October 1917," V2A Heavy Trench Mortar Battery Unit Diary.
[66] "Entry on 1 November 1917," V2A Heavy Trench Mortar Battery Unit Diary.
[67] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Sprechgesang," by Paul Griffiths, accessed 31 August 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.26465. *Sprechgesang* or *Sprechstimme* is a contemporary vocal performance technique between singing and speech. It is often associated with the Second Viennese School.
[68] William Philpott, *Attrition: Fighting the First World War* (London: Little, Brown, 2014), 44.
[69] Ham, *Passchendaele: Requiem for Doomed Youth*, 41.

War I, the idea of death or maiming from poison gas was unimaginable. Therefore, the surreal—and horrific—nature of the events surrounding Maddocks's wounding required the singer to deliver her words as if detached from reality.

I approached the formally crafted verse of "Dulce Et Decorum Est" from a different compositional and performative standpoint. I decided that singing, rather than speaking, best served the poem's dramatic language. This ensured the stylised performativity of singing would not only provide contrast to the declamatory nature of the monologues, it would also bring depth and power to the text through the natural richness of the mezzo-soprano vocal range.

"Dulce" divides into three separate components,[70] identified by literary scholar Santanu Das as "a night march, a gas attack and traumatic neurosis."[71] These discrete experiences dovetail neatly with the chronology outlined in Maddocks's war record excerpts. As Owen unveils these three moments throughout the course of his poem, a number of tropes emerge: fatigue; what Santanu Das labels as the "ecstasy of survival"[72] that overcomes troops during a gas attack, and the notable immorality of gas as a weapon of modern warfare.[73] These literary concepts play a fundamental role throughout *Gassed*, serving as markers within the context of Maddocks's narrative. They also shaped my approach to the work's aesthetics and orchestration. The opening section of the work revolves around the notion of fatigue, which I inferred through rhythmic layering within the orchestral texture, and the constant expansion and contraction of the vocal and instrumental melodies. In the second section of *Gassed*, I invested heavily in the dual—and seemingly oppositional—notions of "ecstasy" (to borrow Das's term) and basic human survival. Hence, an emphatic beat, propelled by rhythmic unison figures, dominates much of this section's orchestration. This rhythmic

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[70] Originally, Owen's "Dulce Et Decorum Est" was written in four stanzas. The first, second and fourth stanzas are all between six and twelve lines in length, whilst the third stanza—the recurring nightmare that Owen experiences of the dying soldier 'guttering, choking, drowning'—comes in shorter at two lines. When establishing the formal design of *Gassed*, I decided to join the second and third stanza of the original poem together. This had a natural fit with Andrew Maddocks's wartime narrative. Within my thesis, I refer to the combination of these two stanzas with *Gassed* as stanza two.

[71] Das, "'Dulce Et Decorum Est,' a Close Reading."

[72] Santanu Das, "Wilfred Owen, 'Dulce Et Decorum Est,'" *World War One*, The British Library, online video, 9 mins, 34 secs, accessed 20 April 2018, https://www.bl.uk/world-war-one/videos/wilfred-owen-dulce-et-decorum-est.

[73] Gary Sheffield, *The First World War in 100 Objects: The Story of the Great War Told through the Objects That Shaped It* (London: Andre Deutsch, 2013), Advanced Gas Mask, 218.

unity represents the primal desperation of men struggling to survive the gas attack. (Das similarly refers to a central "pulse of pain"[74] that permeates "Dulce"). Elsewhere within *Gassed*'s second section, the heady and ecstatic moments where the soldiers stare down death—a feeling Owen once described as "an immense sense of exultation"[75]—are chaotic and euphoric, with multiple linear musical threads playing together, creating a busy and dense orchestral texture. The final of Owen's literary concepts—the sheer madness of a poison gas attack—emerges out of a sparse orchestral texture pre-empting the surreal nature of the final monologue. Here, as the final section of *Gassed* unfolds, the text boldly outlines the damage and horror of war. In response, the musical accompaniment becomes increasingly thicker and disparate. As the singer delivers the final climax revealing the fallacy of war, "The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est / Pro patria mori"[76] ("Dulce" 27–28) the orchestration comes together in a quasi-*chorale* manner, with all instruments reinforcing harmonic and rhythmic aspects of the vocal material.

Initial impressions of *Gassed* may infer I intended for a clear binary distinction between the musical treatment of the spoken and sung texts within the composition. If, for example, the spoken war record monologues played a role similar to operatic recitative, could *Gassed*'s sung poetic elements be compared to an aria within the context of an eighteenth-century *opera seria*?[77] The answer is no. As with my decision to present the war records as monologues, so I co-opted and purposefully integrated the literary concepts of Owen's poem into the larger personal narrative of Andrew Maddocks. Moreover, these literary concepts required little orchestral enhancement to highlight the inherent drama of the text and the narrative to which they allude. Unlike opera, which tends toward a larger than life version of events,[78] the narrative of *Gassed* was framed around two textual sources informed by first-hand knowledge and personal experience of the brutal reality of war. In this instance, I decided the reality spoke for itself.

Formal design and tempo

The narrative based upon Maddocks's experiences at Passchendaele between 30 October and 1 November 1917 is the central element of *Gassed*'s structural design. To

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[74] Das, "Wilfred Owen, 'Dulce Et Decorum Est.'"
[75] Das, "Wilfred Owen, 'Dulce Et Decorum Est.'"
[76] This translates into "It is sweet and noble to die for your country."
[77] Lindenberger, *Opera: The Extravagant Art*, 82. Often, the basis of an eighteenth-century *opera seria* of the eighteenth century was heroic or tragic narrative. Formally, *opera seria* consisted "largely of the alternation of recitative and aria."
[78] Lindenberger, *Opera: The Extravagant Art*, 51.

this end, I wanted the form of the work to primarily function as a support for the drama of Maddocks's story; thus, the temporality of the narrative determines the compositional plan, rather than an overarching aesthetic notion of unity or balance.[79] Within the formal plan, my decisions regarding the treatment and structural placement of musical material, as well as the manipulation of tempo, served the dramatic impact of the narrative by shaping and moulding its temporal space.

Gassed is comprised of three main sections. These correspond to different stages of Maddocks's narrative: before the gas attack, during the gas attack, and after the gas attack. Each section features a spoken monologue extracted from Maddocks's official war documentation, and a sung stanza from "Dulce."[80] New musical material is employed to accompany the sung components—the majority of the text—of each section; by definition, *Gassed* is predominantly through-composed.[81] To this end, changing the musical material throughout the piece allowed me to generate forward motion for the piece's narrative, and reinforce the impression that the story unfolds across time.

In order to establish the integrity of each separate structural part, I also envisaged that tempo needed to play a key role within *Gassed*'s formal design. I believed the tempo within each section would be integral in emphasising momentum shifts between the three discrete sung components that underpin the narrative, thereby illuminating the literary concepts at their core. Moreover, I wanted tension to be apparent between the overarching momentum conveyed by each sung stanza, and the disruptive effect of temporal stasis created by the monologue passages heard within the sections. As such, the commonalities between the musical accompaniments of each of the monologues reinforce this tension. Indeed, establishing and reinforcing a similar musical landscape for each spoken component allowed me to transport the narrative into a mutable space where, for a moment, time appears suspended and inert.

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[79] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Form," by Arnold Whittall, accessed 24 March 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09981.

[80] As previously noted, the second sung stanza of *Gassed* combines the second and third stanza of Owen's poem.

[81] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Through-Composed," by Ian Rumbold, accessed 24 March 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.27904. Through-composed means a work with "a relatively uninterrupted continuity of musical thought and invention."

A brief discussion of the formal elements of the piece, and a comparative examination of tempo within each section, (see table 1 below), demonstrates how I employed temporal elasticity and passivity as a compositional element. It also highlights my overarching approach to speed as a fundamental contributor to the unfolding drama of Maddocks's story.

Section 1:	**Before the gas attack**			
Rehearsal letter:	Opening - F	G - H	I - J	K
Main musical component:	Prologue: instrumental	Monologue 1: spoken	Stanza 1: sung	Short improv: clarinet
Tempo (BPM):	56	56	56	56
Text:		Maddocks's war record	*Dulce et decorum est*	

Section 2:	**During the gas attack**					
Rehearsal letter:	L - M	N - O	P	Q - S	T	U
Main musical component:	Stanza 2.1: sung		Improvisation: trumpet	Stanza 2.2: sung	Improv: all ensemble inc. voice	Monologue 2: spoken
Tempo (BPM):	50, 120 -> 140	140 -> 100 ->140	140	140 (70 final bars)	Free tempo	40
Text:	*Dulce et decorum est*			*Dulce et decorum est*	*Dulce: 'guttering, choking, drowning'*	Maddocks's war record

Section 3:	**After the gas attack**					
Rehearsal letter:	V	W - X	Y	Z - AA	BB	CC - DD
Main musical component:	'Ominous' fanfare: instrumental	Stanza 3: sung				Monologue 3: spoken
Tempo (BPM):	112	88	72	58	50	40
Text:		*Dulce et decorum est*				Maddocks's war record

Table 1. The formal design of *Gassed Shell (Severe)*

The pre-gas attack section begins *largo* (♩ = 56) and remains fixed at this slow-moving tempo throughout its entirety. From the outset, the plodding nature of this rate of

pulse—highlighted initially by the surging and lumbering interaction between the electric guitar, piano and drums in the opening instrumental prologue—enabled me to convey a sense of weary and lurching soldiers. Indeed, I aimed to create a musical terrain that captured the inhospitable environment of the Passchendaele battlefields, where, as Prior and Wilson note, "the ground was so boggy that unencumbered movement was almost impossible."[82]

Subsequently, during the first war record monologue which follows the instrumental prologue at bar 49, I sought to bring the gravity of Maddocks's predicament into focus. At this point, I supported the text— an extract from the V2A Heavy Trench Mortar unit diary on 30 October 1917—by underpinning it with an accompaniment built around the slow rate of speed and a sparse instrumental texture. Beginning with a harmonic on the violin, the electric guitar playing *tremolando*,[83] and a snare drum roll marked *pianissimo*, I established a musical environment designed to feel inherently static and detached, reflecting the unearthly nature of the decimated Flanders landscape confronting Maddocks and his Australian comrades, who were so far from home. As the monologue progresses, I continued to expand the ensemble texture through the addition of other instruments, culminating—through the combination of flutter-tonguing winds,[84] muted trumpets and the double bass, marimba and piano all playing *tremolando*—in a shimmering musical backdrop that seems momentarily calm, and removed from the horrors of war. As such, the ethereal nature of the instrumental accompaniment by the first monologue section's conclusion allowed me to create an impression of the text floating within a motionless environment, alluding to the all-too-brief stillness that occasionally came over the frontlines of the trenches in Ypres.[85]

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[82] Prior and Wilson, *Passchendaele: The Untold Story*, 98.

[83] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Tremolo," by David Fallows, accessed 5 October 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.28314. *Tremolando*, or tremolo, describes a "rapid reiteration of a single note or chord without regard to measured time values."

[84] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Flutter-tonguing," accessed 5 October 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.09904. Flutter-tonguing is a performance technique for wind instruments, whereby "the instrumentalist rolls the letter 'r' on the tip of his tongue while playing." An effect which results in a rapidly-moving note, I used this technique in the bass clarinet and flutes to convey a sense of unease and tension in the instrumental texture.

[85] Macdonald, *They Called It Passchendaele*, 40. Lyn McDonald notes that, in the hours that led up to the Battle of Messines on 7 June 1917, nightingales began to sing when silence befell the frontlines around Wytschaete.

For the third part of the ‘before the gas attack’ section—the first sung stanza of “Dulce”—I decided to return the instrumental accompaniment to a lumbering and sluggish feel to infer the faltering and stumbling progress of the soldiers described in Owen’s opening lines; “Bent, double, like old beggars under sacks (“Dulce” 1). At the beginning of this part, I alluded to the unsteadiness of the soldiers by having the bass clarinet and trombone play a series of short figures, slightly out of time with each other. I then utilised other instruments to reinforce this sense of lethargy by a similar process of rhythmic independence; for example, the vibraphone chords heard from bars 66 to 77 do not rhythmically align with the bass clarinet and trombone figures, whilst the drums hold the time with a sparse repeating pattern that also works independently of the other accompanying instruments. Although the tempo here is the same as the monologue, I intended that the musical material supporting the first stanza of “Dulce” give the impression of time moving forward for the troops, albeit in a slow and staggering manner.

In contrast to the fixed tempo of *Gassed*’s first section, I decided that the tempo of the piece’s second section—during the gas attack—needed to fluctuate frequently. I felt that numerous sudden changes in tempo would create an impression of time being inherently unstable and unpredictable, and dramatically convey the sense of panic felt by the terrified soldiers portrayed within the second stanza of “Dulce” as they struggled to survive a gas attack. Thus, after a brief period of inertia at the beginning of the section—where the singer whispers and then shouts “gas” over an ominous sustained note in the piano, double bass and bass drum—the tempo accelerates quickly, moving from ♩ = 120 to ♩ = 140. Almost immediately, a *ritardando* slows the tempo back to ♩ = 100 at bar 124. Following another momentary stasis, the tempo then abruptly returns to ♩ = 140 at bar 130, as the first half of the second stanza of “Dulce” draws to a close at the beginning of the trumpet improvisation. Following this instrumental section, the second half of stanza two of “Dulce” returns at ♩ = 140, before metered time abruptly dissolves across the entire ensemble, signalling the beginning of an ensemble improvisation. Here, as the second stanza of “Dulce” comes to its conclusion, I wanted this disintegration of the pulse to infer the chaos of the aftermath following the gas attack, again suggesting that, in terms of the reality of the soldiers, time had collapsed and ground to a halt.

Following the ensemble improvisation, the second war record monologue—another official diary entry from Maddock's trench mortar unit—begins, slowly drawing the gas attack section of the piece to a close. In the initial stages of the monologue, I wanted the passage of time to appear restored, albeit at a funereal pace. However, as the passage unfolds, I intended for the temporal plane of the second monologue to become inherently linked with the first monologue of the pre-gas attack section. Thus, the *rubato* musical accompaniment which supports the spoken text subsequently reiterates the feeling that time is again motionless and stationary. I further reinforced this sense of suspended time by directing the singer to speak *freely and without urgency*, allowing her delivery pace of the text to direct the flow of the music, rather than a fixed beat provided by the conductor. As the second section of *Gassed* concludes, I sought to create a dreamlike moment of repose, allowing the listener to reflect upon the horrific events that had just taken place within Maddocks's world.

My formal approach to tempo for *Gassed*'s final part—after the gas attack—focussed on the concept of a large-scale *ritardando* that gradually unfolds across the section. The text of the final stanza of Owen's poem, which outlines a growing agitation about the barbarous nature of poison gas as a weapon of war, fuels the progressive slowing of the section's overall speed. As such, my intention for this section was to convey a sense of war weariness, whilst also articulating the inherent rage of "Dulce." Thus, as mustard gas corrodes the internal organs of a person,[86] so I planned the music to seemingly capitulate, ultimately surrendering whatever energy it has mustered to the fate brought upon it. Nonetheless, I allowed an element of defiance to linger on by starting each phrase of the third stanza at a louder volume than its predecessor.

The section begins at ♩ = 112 with a short foreboding fanfare, before the vocal entry at bar 197 precipitates the gradual tempo descent. Following the opening four lines of the third stanza, which are presented at ♩ = 88, I utilised another decrease in tempo—♩ = 72 at bar 214—to highlight a longer vocal melody describing the horrific effects of gas upon the "froth corrupted lungs" ("Dulce" 22) of the dying man. At this point, I designed the accompanying music as the loudest and most intense of the stanza thus far, to convey a sense of the mute soldier depicted in Owen's poem vainly attempting to

[86] Das, "'Dulce Et Decorum Est', a Close Reading."

find his voice.[87] Nonetheless, I immediately undermined the soldier's defiance through another tempo change—♩ = 58—with the intention of highlighting the moral significance of the closing lines of the section. To achieve this, I then presented Owen's final crucial declaration of "The old Lie" ("Dulce" 27) *fortissimo* at ♩ = 58, before reiterating it with a powerful *crescendo* to *fff* heard across the entire orchestra, beginning at the stately tempo of ♩ = 50 and finishing *molto ritardando*. However, I also sought to attach a sense of irony to the arrival point of the tempo and its relationship to the narrative. Indeed, I intended that the grandiosity of orchestral volume would not hide the fact that this final shift in speed alluded to an overwhelmingly sense of defeat and melancholy which is unrecognised by those who Owen maintains are "ardent for some desperate glory," ("Dulce" 26).

Following this orchestral climax, the third war record monologue—the last component of the piece—brings back the temporal stasis of the monologue from the previous section. Succumbing to the continual *ritardando* moving across the section, the tempo decreases to ♩ = 40 one last time, with the performance indication again *very slow and still*. This third spoken episode provided me with the opportunity for one final reflection upon the depravity of Maddocks's gassing, creating yet another surreal musical landscape where time seems to be frozen.

Pitch material and intervallic structures

As with the formal design of *Gassed*, I intended that, in the first instance, the work's narrative direct the creation and transformation of raw pitch material. I then applied this principle when constructing melodic and harmonic ideas from the pitch collections. Furthermore, as with my conceptual considerations about form and tempo, I wanted to musically underscore the drama of Maddocks's experiences at Third Ypres through my creative decisions. Again, concepts such as struggle, fatigue and futility became focal points within my compositional process.

To this end, a number of important melodic instances unfold through a process of constant expansion and contraction of their internal intervallic structure. Although these modifications occur at a micro-level within the melodic development, they contribute to an overall sense that internal forces within the music are impeding forward motion and

[87] Das, "Wilfred Owen, 'Dulce Et Decorum Est'." Santanu Das describes this as giving voice to "the actual lacerated tongue of the soldier who can no longer speak."

melodic progression. Other composers, such as Harrison Birtwistle, have used this method of melodic construction to create the effect of stilted forward motion.[88] For example, Jonathan Cross describes how, in Birtwistle's composition *Melencolia I*,[89] the "line weaves its way through the work, though its progress is rarely straightforward—moving on, then stopping, turning back on itself, before meandering forward again."[90]

My use of intervallic expansion and contraction is evident in the opening bars of *Gassed.* Bar 7 introduces a languid melody played in unison by the guitar and piano. Beginning on a B♭, the phrase initially descends a semitone to A before rising a tone to B♮. At once, it starts again, descending from B♭ to A before rising a minor third to C♮ and a semitone to C♯. The final part of the phrase consists of a leap of a perfect fifth up to G♯, before a change in direction shifts the phrase down by a major third to finish on E.

Figure 2-3. *Gassed Shell Severe,* Andrew Harrison, bars 7–13, guitar and piano

[Listen]

[88] Birtwistle, however, did not apply these ideas within his piece to allude to war in any way.
[89] Harrison Birtwistle, *Melencolia1*, (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1976).
[90] Jonathan Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 203.

This melodic fragment outlines a subtle but important compositional concept pertaining to *Gassed*. The intervallic structure and direction of the opening four notes—B♭→down a semitone to A→up a tone to B♮→back down a semitone to B♭—represents the concept of an internal musical struggle. The melodic line, starting on B♭, first sinks backwards to A, before expanding and ascending beyond its starting point to B♮, only to find itself back at B♭ where it began. This simple musical gesture takes its genesis from Maddocks's experiences at Third Ypres. Particularly, it relates to the Passchendaele mud caused by the combination of unseasonably heavy rain that fell on Flanders in the summer of 1917 and the unceasing artillery bombardment that destroyed the region's existing drainage systems. This thick sludge brought havoc to the daily lives of soldiers.[91] For gunners like Maddocks, it rendered moving artillery to new forward positions a virtually impossible task.[92] Moreover, soldiers who fell into a shell hole filled with mud risked drowning due to the heavy weight of their pack and battle clothing.[93] Thus, as well as enduring constant shelling, poison gas and sickness, life at Passchendaele also became a miserable struggle against the weather and the decimated, deadly landscape.

My compositional engagement with the concept of struggle and impeded movement continues with the guitar and piano melody heard throughout the opening instrumental prologue. At bar 17 the line starts again from B♭, gradually moving its way forward until the piano melody has ascended almost two octaves—a compound minor seventh—away from its original starting point at bar 24. (The guitar part does not ascend as high as the piano; it drops down to middle C in bar 20 when the piano continues to ascend). The widest interval of this phrase remains the perfect fifth between C♯ and G♯, heard this time in bar 18.

[91] Prior and Wilson, *Passchendaele: The Untold Story*, 98.
[92] David Horner, *The Gunners: A History of Australian Artillery* (St Leonards, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 1995), 162.
[93] Ham, *Passchendaele: Requiem for Doomed Youth*, 207.

Figure 2-4. ***Gassed*****, Harrison, bars 17–24, guitar and piano**

[Listen]

A final statement of the melody begins at bar 39. This time it manages to break free from its previous constraints. Starting from the note D at bar 40, the melody leaps up a minor seventh to C, ascends a semitone to C♯, leaps a minor sixth to A and ascends a semitone to B♭ before finally dropping a tritone to E. The phrase finishes by ascending a tone to F♯, leaping a diminished sixth to E♭ before dropping back a semitone and resolving to a D harmonised with an F♯.

Figure 2-5. ***Gassed,*** **Harrison, bars 39–43, guitar and piano**

[Listen]

The concept of struggle and resistance also guided other melodic material within the piece. I decided the opening four phrases of the vocal melody, which introduce the first stanza of “Dulce,” would be constructed with a similar compositional intention. In this way, my structuring of the vocal melody was noticeably different to the previous one; unlike the guitar and piano melody, the vocal melody does not return to the same starting note at the beginning of each new phrase. Nonetheless, I implied a sense of difficulty and resistance through regular shifts of linear direction within each phrase, as well as the overall shape of the melody from bars 66 to 77.

The first phrase of the vocal melody exemplifies the compositional intentions I have just described. Beginning on B below the treble stave, the melody moves up a semitone to C and a minor third to E♭. A sudden leap of a minor sixth from B♭ to G is immediately

counteracted by a descending perfect fifth from F♯, bringing the melody back to its original starting note B.

Figure 2-6. *Gassed*, Harrison, bars 66–68, vocal melody

[Listen]

The second phrase begins on E♭, and, after moving through a series of small intervals, leaps up a major sixth from middle C to A. I believed that this ascending motion needed to be short-lived however, as the melodic line—accompanying the text "we cursed through sludge" ("Dulce" 2)—immediately plunges down a perfect fourth from B to F♯, closely followed by a major sixth from G to B♭.

Figure 2-7. *Gassed*, Harrison, bars 69–71, vocal melody.

[Listen]

The third phrase begins on the lowest note of the vocal melody thus far; A below the treble stave. At bar 72 it ascends progressively, emphasising the text "haunting flares" ("Dulce" 3) with a leap of a major sixth from E to C. At this point, there is a subtle shift in the poem's mood. The next words—"we turned our backs" ("Dulce" 3)—create a momentary illusion that the soldiers might escape their reality by shunning their surroundings. Here, I used the melody to uphold this brief sense of optimism with a descending figure, E♭–D–A–A. The stasis of the repeated A's provides a moment of stability, contrasting with the intervallic leaps that close out the previous two phrases.

Figure 2-8. *Gassed*, Harrison, bars 72–74, vocal melody

[Listen]

The melody for the fourth line of the stanza initially maintains the optimism momentarily established by the previous phrase. The opening words, “And towards our distant rest” (“Dulce” 4), are set with the same repeated A of the previous phrase, before the melodic line moves through a series of intervallic steps and arrives on the note F♯ via a descending perfect fourth from B. The reality of the situation then abruptly returns, with the final words of the fourth line—“began to trudge” (“Dulce” 4)—reinforced by a phrase that descends to finish on G below the treble stave in bar 77. This resonant mezzo-soprano note, which is the lowest in all four phrases, signals that the melodic line has made no real progress away from its starting point. I sought, therefore, to create the impression that all attempts to create momentum and forge a musical pathway have ultimately been futile; in fact, the vocal melody has finished lower than whence it began back in bar 66.

Figure 2-9. *Gassed*, Harrison, bars 74–77, vocal melody

[Listen]

Another important compositional element I employed in *Gassed* is the use of neighbouring chromatic pitch collections to emphasise larger unstable intervals such as sevenths and ninths.[94] Just as the use of limited semitonal and tonal movement in the

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[94] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. “Consonance,” by Claude V. Palisca and Brian C.J. Moore, accessed 11 August 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.06316; *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. “Fourth,” by William Drabkin, accessed 11 August 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.10065. Throughout my thesis, I use the term ‘stable’ to describe consonant intervals such as octaves, thirds, fourths and fifths, and ‘unstable’ to describe dissonant intervals such as seconds, sevenths, ninths and tritones. My use of these terms is deliberate. The concept of stability not only refers to the inherent ‘tonal

instrumental prologue's guitar and piano melody inferred the concept of struggle, so too these large intervals gave me an opportunity to build harmony, and underscore certain words in the text through dramatic leaps.

The first bars of *Gassed* demonstrate the minor ninth interval as a compositional building block. The internal structure of the opening chord is constructed using stacks of minor ninths. The first notes of the piece—an F♯ in the trombone and double bass, and a G in the bass clarinet—are separated by a minor ninth. Minor ninth intervals are also emphasised within the opening guitar chord, which is voiced (from lowest to highest) F♯, D, G and E♭.

Figure 2-10. *Gassed*, Harrison, bar 1–2, intervallic voicing of opening chord: trombone, double bass, bass clarinet and guitar

[Listen]

tension' contained within different intervals; it is also a useful way of connecting my creative intentions to the historical narratives of each of my doctoral pieces. For instance, the term unstable well-describes the weather conditions at the Battle of Passchendaele. Similarly, determining the future of Detroit also makes sense when seen through the lens of economic and social stability. Regarding music, the idea of stability sometimes interchanges with dissonance and consonance. Thus, when describing the interval of a fourth, the *Grove Dictionary of Music* notes, "by itself, [the fourth] is considered not so much dissonant as 'unstable'."

Here, I determined the upper woodwinds would highlight the minor ninth interval through their staggered entries within bar 1. The alto saxophone enters first on an E♭, followed by the second tenor saxophone which drops down a minor ninth to D. The first tenor saxophone enters next with an A followed lastly by the B♭ clarinet with a B♭ a minor ninth higher.

Figure 2-11. *Gassed*, Harrison, bars 1–3, intervallic voicing in upper woodwinds: B♭ clarinet, alto saxophone, tenor saxophones

[Listen]

The minor ninth interval also features as an integral element of a melodic motive sung in each section of *Gassed*. The interval first appears in section one, supporting the text "But limped on, bloodshod" ("Dulce" 6) between bars 79 and 81. On this occasion, I decided that the melodic figure should first ascend a minor ninth from A♭ to A, before descending a major third to F. Another descending major third interval, B–G, concludes the motive.

Figure 2-12. *Gassed*, Harrison, bar 79–81, vocal melody

[Listen]

The interval then appears at bar 119 in section two, set to the text “But someone still was…” (“Dulce” 11). Here the melody begins on A, leaps up to B♭ and then descends to G♭. The last two notes of the phrase are C and A♭.

Figure 2-13. *Gassed*, Harrison, bar 119–21, vocal melody

[Listen]

The final use of the minor ninth interval occurs at the pivotal moment where Wilfred Owen’s frank and deflating assessment of the war as “the old Lie” (“Dulce” 27) is articulated. Beginning at bar 234, the singer is directed to perform the first three notes of the motive—A♭, A♮ and F—in a nasal tone. At this point, I wanted this change in vocal timbre to bring a mocking and derogatory sense to the first statement of “the old Lie”. Further emphasising the cruel irony of the text, the singer then repeats the words “old Lie”, this time singing the notes B and G using a regular vocal tone. Focussing on the final words of Owen’s poem in this way allowed me to suggest a connection to Maddock’s general disdain towards the conflict in his later life; in fact, his daughter Helen stated, “he always felt the war was a useless waste of time.”[95]

Figure 2-14. *Gassed*, Harrison, bar 234–36, vocal melody

[Listen]

Rhythm and metre

Rhythm plays a fundamental role in supporting the drama of *Gassed* by manipulating the sense of temporality and space within the narrative. At times, I used rhythm to allude to moments of disorientation and unsteadiness felt by the soldiers by prioritising

[95] Seymour, Curtin, and Harrison, “Interview with Author.”

gesture and obfuscating any sense of conventional metric structure. Elsewhere, I employed rhythmic patterns that lock in with the underlying metre to magnify the urgency and intensity of primal survival instincts suggested within the text.

The opening section of *Gassed*—the "pre-gas attack"—is founded upon a pulse of ♩ = 56 that remains unchanged throughout its duration. This basic pulse subsequently breaks down into a variety of metric groupings throughout the section, emphasising metric groupings dividing the beat into simple time.[96] Consequently, the musical landscape aurally disguises much of the section's large-scale metric structure. This metric obfuscation creates the impression there are few physical reference points within the music, but rather, an unpredictable instrumental texture where gestures float freely and move erratically across the surface. I used this compositional procedure to suggest the desolate and lifeless environment of the Third Ypres battlefields, which Richard Van Emden describes as an "alien world in which easy orientation was nigh impossible."[97]

Emphasising this musical reference to Passchendaele's disconcerting and inhospitable environment, the instrumental prologue of the first section features the drums playing shifting rhythmic phrases that punctuate the sound environment. These insistent and uneven patterns, spread across the snare drum and three toms tuned high, medium and low, bring a nervous energy to the overall musical texture. In this instance, I wanted the drums perceived as somewhat separate and disintegrated from the larger musical texture. Hence, sometimes they align rhythmically with the guitar and piano melody; at other times, they appear detached from the other instruments.

The opening bars of the work demonstrate the disconnection between the drums and the rest of the ensemble. Beginning on beat three of bar 7, the drums play a rhythmic sequence made up of six discrete gestures. These gestures are connected by a common thread; beginning on a tom and ending with an accented "flam"[98] note on the snare, each phrase starts from a high pitch and moves through to a concluding low pitch. However, each gesture differs in terms of length and pulse subdivision. Moreover, this

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[96] Examples of simple time signatures are $\frac{2}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{4}{4}$.

[97] Richard Van Emden, *The Road to Passchendaele: The Heroic Year in Soldiers' Own Words and Photographs*, (South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword Military, 2017), PDF e-book, 4.

[98] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Rudiments," by T. Dennis Brown, accessed 6 April 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.J389400. A flam is a "two note [drum] pattern consisting of a principal note preceded by a grace note."

subtle internal difference in subdivision creates the undulating rhythmic surges by which I sought to underpin the narrative of the "pre-gas attack" section.

The opening four-beat gesture subdivides the pulse into groupings of three, then four. Similarly, the subsequent shorter gesture—the length of a dotted crotchet—follows by subdividing the pulse into groups of two, three and four. However, the third phrase—which is three and a half beats long—halts this pattern. Here I began by dividing the pulse into groups of four, shifts to groups of three and four, and ends with a group of three.

A

Light distortion

El. Gtr.

Pno.

Dr.

1st

Figure 2-15. *Gassed*, Harrison, bars 7–10, electric guitar, piano and drums

[Listen]

The last three gestures of the opening twelve bars reinforce the idea of unpredictable rhythmic groupings. The fourth phrase, just one beat in length, divides the pulse into four, while the following two-beat phrase divides the pulse into three. The last gesture of the sequence is the most varied of all, dividing its four-beat length into groupings of three, five and four.

Figure 2-16. ***Gassed*****, Harrison, bars 10–13, electric guitar, piano and drums**

[Listen]

Elsewhere in the first section, I used the idea of rhythmic uncertainty to underpin a small melodic motive that transforms into an *ostinato* accompaniment for the section's closing clarinet solo.[99] The marimba first alludes to the motive at bar 27, when it introduces it as a secondary accompanying figure to the unfolding trumpet melody. The double bass then presents a variation of the motive at bar 31; whilst lower in pitch, this iteration of the motive also functions as an accompanying counter-phrase to the main trumpet melody.

[99] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Ostinato," by Laure Schnapper, accessed 9 April 2018, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.20547. An *ostinato* is "the repetition of a musical pattern…in succession while other musical elements are generally changing."

D

27

B♭ Tpt. 1

B♭ Tpt. 2

Marimba

first iteration in marimba

Mrb.

29

B♭ Tpt. 1

B♭ Tpt. 2

Mrb.

31

B♭ Tpt. 1

B♭ Tpt. 2

pizz.

Bs

first iteration in double bass

Figure 2-17. *Gassed*, Harrison, bars 27–34, trumpets, marimba and double bass

[Listen]

Later, I altered the function of the accompaniment motive, transforming it into a more substantial musical component. When this occurs, the motive brings unsteadiness to the texture by minimising the underlying metric framework and varying the internal subdivision of the pulse.[100] The first indication of my new role for the accompaniment motive is implied at bar 78. This iteration of the motive, heard again in the double bass, lasts for five and a half beats, and is written across two bars totalling six beats ($\frac{4}{4}$ plus $\frac{2}{4}$). The first segment of the motive—a cell of two and a half beats—starts on G♭ and ascends to B, then D and F before dropping back to G♭ on the first half of beat three. I then bring the second segment in immediately, beginning on the second half of beat three. This ascending second cell lasts for three beats, beginning on A♭, rising to C and E♭, before finishing on A♮.

Figure 2-18, *Gassed*, Harrison, bars 78–79, double bass

[Listen]

Here, I used the new role of the motive to create instability in a couple of ways. For example, the duration of each of the cells—two and a half beats and three beats respectively—disguises the underlying metric structure. Thus, at bar 78, the syncopated

[100] The metric framework is the metre or time signature used in each bar, i.e. $\frac{4}{4}$.

entry of the second cell on the second half of beat three subverts the conventional beat subdivisions of simple quadruple time. However, it is the internal rhythmic design of each cell that has the greatest impact upon the accompaniment motive's underlying metric structure. I decided that the rhythmic design of the first cell's note sequence—G♭-B-D-F— would subdivide beats one and two of bar 78 into a grouping of three by way of a minim triplet. Moreover, within this triplet, the final crotchet beat further divides in half. The last quaver of the first cell, the G♭ to which the phrase returns, then divides the third beat of the bar into a grouping of two. Thereafter, I planned for the second cell's opening A♭ to enter as a quaver on the latter half of beat three, with the subsequent note C reverting the last beat of the bar to a subdivision of three. Finishing off the motive at bar 79, I intended the last two notes of the second cell, E♭ and G, to divide each beat of the simple duple metre into groups of two.

At bar 87, the double bass repurposes the accompaniment motive into an *ostinato* that underpins the closing clarinet improvisation. Once again, I aimed to establish a sense of metric obfuscation by undermining the underlying simple quadruple metre. In this case, my decision to use the combination of the double bass *ostinato,* the drums and the trombone and bass clarinet—each playing phrases of different lengths—created a shifting and unsteady texture.

Following the rhythmic uncertainty of the first section, the second section of *Gassed*, "during the gas attack", uses rhythm and metre to create the opposite effect. Here I deliberately emphasised the metric structure, often in rhythmic unison across the ensemble, to infer the racing and adrenalized heartbeats of soldiers panicking about chemical weapons.[101] At bar 107, much of the ensemble heralds the start of the gas attack with an accented quaver pattern in simple quadruple time, underpinning the text, "Gas! Quick, boys!" ("Dulce" 9). This harmonically static, repetitive accompaniment figure features throughout the section, providing an unrelenting drive for the narrative as it grows in intensity.

[101] Edgar Jones, "Terror Weapons: The British Experience of Gas and Its Treatment in the First World War," *War In History*, 21, no. 3 (2014): 355–56.

Figure 2-19. *Gassed*, Harrison, bar 107, mezzo-soprano, ensemble reduction and drums

[Listen]

Simultaneously, sudden metric changes disrupt the rhythmic momentum temporarily, alleviating the forward thrust of the accented quaver pattern. Emphasising this shift in movement, I structured the interrupting bars predominantly around irregular time signatures that move between quaver groupings of three and two. Bars 109 to 112 illustrate this compositional technique. Two bars of $\frac{5}{8}$—with quavers grouped in three and two respectively—followed by a bar of $\frac{4}{8}$—consisting of a group of two quavers followed by a quaver triplet—abruptly halt the momentum of the repeating quaver pattern. The rhythmic drive of the quavers is then quickly restored at bar 112, when the time signature returns to $\frac{4}{4}$.

Figure 2-20. *Gassed*, Harrison, bars 109–12, mezzo soprano, ensemble reduction and drums

[Listen]

Later in the section, I highlighted the ensuing chaos of the gas attack by underpinning the vocal melody with rapidly changing bars of irregular length. Beginning at bar 138, a four-bar metric sequence of $\frac{5}{8} \rightarrow \frac{6}{8} \rightarrow \frac{5}{8} \rightarrow \frac{7}{8}$ supports the text, “Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light” (“Dulce” 13).

Figure 2-21. *Gassed*, Harrison, bars 138–41, mezzo-soprano, ensemble reduction and drums

[Listen]

Almost immediately, at bar 144, the same metric sequence becomes the foundation for the next line of text, “As under a green sea, I saw him drowning” (“Dulce” 14). In

between, a repetitive quaver pattern—six groups of two quavers written as a bar of $\frac{4}{4}$ then $\frac{2}{4}$—divides the two lines of text. By switching suddenly between the quasi-heartbeat quaver pattern and the irregular interjectory bars, I intended to reiterate the unpredictability of the section's narrative, and reinforce the element of volatility and uncertainty that poison gas had on the psychological state of the troops at Passchendaele.

Improvisation

As I indicated earlier, improvisation has been an important component of my compositional practice for many years. Therefore, I always planned to include improvisation in *Gassed* in some form. From a practical perspective, incorporating improvisation into the piece made sense. The Monash Art Ensemble, and the group's founder Paul Grabowsky, are well known for blurring the boundaries between notated and improvised music, and the traditions of western art music and jazz. Nonetheless, I felt no obligation from the ensemble to include improvisation in the piece. Indeed, the previous musical endeavours of Grabowsky and the group did not influence my decision to use it. Within *Gassed*, I wanted improvisation to function as both a dramatic support to the narrative and an important structural element within the formal design.

In any military situation, the ability to improvise—to adapt and be flexible—is essential. Indeed, improvisation is often a distinguishing feature of great commanders.[102] Moreover, once troops are engaged in battle, the idea of pre-battle strategies being successfully executed is often thwarted; journalist Peter Baker observes that veteran Marine officers regularly stated, "a war plan lasts only until the war starts."[103] Expanding upon this point, I felt the broader narrative of Passchendaele referenced the concept of extemporisation in a number of ways. On the one hand, the ability to change and display ingenuity seemed to elude high-ranking commanders leading Third Ypres, notably Sir Douglas Haig; indeed, Brigadier J. P. Kiszely, M.C. states that, "finding senior [British] officers of originality on the Western Front is a hard…task."[104] At the other end of the spectrum, frontline soldiers at Third Ypres

[102] Brig. John Panton Kiszely MC, "The Contribution of Originality to Military Success," in *The Science of War: Back to First Principles*, ed. Brian Holden Reid (London: Routledge, 1993), 25.
[103] Peter Baker, "In War, Plans Yield to Improvisation," *Washington Post*, 24 March 2003, A16.
[104] Kiszely, "The Contribution of Originality to Military Success," in Reid, *The Science of War*, 29. Brigadier Kiszely goes on to conclude that Sir John Monash is the only British officer who displayed originality during World War I, also pointing out he was Australian.

regularly demonstrated ingenuity and endeavour in daily life in order to survive. They improvised their accommodation and living quarters when the weather became bad,[105] they hastily dug new trenches when they found themselves stuck in the middle of no-man's land, and they devised attack plans in the moment in response to changing military conditions and opportunities.[106] The ability to adapt was fundamental to existing within the horrors of an uncontrolled and unpredictable situation, thus improvisation was a routine part of life at Passchendaele. It runs deeply through the Third Ypres narrative.

I employed improvisation on three separate occasions within *Gassed*. Each time, my decision to use it pertained to the drama of the narrative. The first instance of improvisation comes at the end of the pre-gas attack section. Beginning at bar 88, the section closes with a short clarinet improvisation. I instructed the clarinettist to extemporise upon a collection of nine different pitches in a sparse and generally *piano* manner. The instrumentalist determines the order and register of the notes. Simultaneously, the underlying musical accompaniment strips back to the bass and marimba playing a unison *ostinato* and the drums maintaining a simple pulse. The only other accompanying instrumentation is the bass clarinet and trombone harmonising in thirds that are slightly out of alignment. The tempo is slow—♩ = 56—and a *ritardando* brings the section to an eventual stop. In this moment, the clarinet improvisation acts as a mournful lament upon the first stanza of "Dulce," reinforcing the weariness of the men. Moreover, the angularity of the improvised melody—influenced by my performance direction to create phrases using leaps—aligned with Owen's description of exhausted and clumsy soldiers seeking respite from the shelling.

My next use of improvisation occurred at bar 132 of the second section, "during the gas-attack." Here, a trumpet solo divides in half the second stanza of "Dulce," acting as a juncture between the text describing the initial panic of the gas attack, and that outlining the desperate and fumbled attempts of a solitary soldier trying to secure his gasmask. Unlike the previous clarinet improvisation, the performance indications for the trumpet solo are more open-ended; I did not specify which pitches to use, and indicated only that I wanted the soloist to *use mainly leaps…* [and] *some growled notes*,

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[105] Van Emden, *The Road to Passchendaele*, 61. Soldiers regularly used recycled battlefield materials for makeshift accommodation.
[106] Van Emden, *The Road to Passchendaele*, 73, 234–35. The second example describes a quickly devised plan to attack Bullecourt in mid-1917. The attack was unsuccessful.

and to gradually get louder. The guitar, piano, bass and drums support the soloist by maintaining a repetitive pulse throughout the improvisation, built on a single chord. This harmonic stasis creates a brief state of hypnosis, reinforced by the insistence of the drummer's quasi-heartbeat rhythms. At this point, I wanted to create the impression that a pulsating sonic landscape has trapped the soloist and suspended them in time. Moreover, capturing them in this moment of stasis puts the soloist into a position of responsibility, forcing them into an unenviable position of commenting on the plight of the dying soldier in Owen's poem, left "flound'ring like a man in fire or lime." ("Dulce" 12).

My last use of improvisation in *Gassed* emerges out of the final words of the second stanza of "Dulce": "guttering, choking, drowning" ("Dulce" 16). The dramatic imagery suggested by these words, describing the sounds of a dying soldier struggling to breathe, serves as a contextual guide for an improvisation that begins with the voice, violin and drums and gradually builds to include most of the ensemble.

Figure 2-22. *Gassed*, Harrison, bar 161, vocal motive

[Listen]

As the improvisation begins, a fixed sense of pulse is suspended, and the music becomes *senza misura.* By removing metric constraints, I wanted to precipitate a shift in the music's fluidity, thereby allowing performative gestures and interaction between the musicians to become the focal point. Structurally, the improvisation divides into seven subsections, each cued by the conductor. There are no time limitations upon the length of each subsection, giving the conductor freedom to determine the overall shape of the improvisation based upon personal preference and individual interpretation.

As mentioned, I chose "guttering, choking, drowning" as the improvisatory text to link the musicians with the terrible descriptions of a gas attack in the second stanza of "Dulce," and, as such, my grandfather's experiences at Passchendaele. At bar 158, the

singer presents these words as a melodic motive that closes out the "gas attack" section. Using rhythmic and intervallic expansion for its structural basis, the "guttering" motive becomes the primary material for the improvisation. At bar 161, the singer quietly presents the motive in the improvisation's first subsection. The violin accompanies her, playing freely from a seven-note pitch collection whilst the drums extemporise on the rhythm of the singer's motive. In subsection two, the violin begins to improvise to the "guttering" motive; at the same time, I directed the singer to freely alter her vocal timbre to facilitate a gradual dissolution of the motive, and increase the dramatic intensity of the words.

The third subsection is the most intense for the singer. Further situating her within the drama of the gas attack, I directed her to *introduce 'choking' sounds*…[and] *change timbre frequently.* A sense of helplessness becomes increasingly evident, with the singer—apparently fighting for breath—creating a soundscape emphasising panic and vulnerability. Simultaneously, the violin and drums continue improvising, with the first B♭ trumpet joining them using the notes of the "guttering" motive. However, these other instruments appear detached from the singer. She seems abandoned, and left fending for herself.

The singer exits the improvisation in its fourth subsection, following my performance directive that her sound becomes *breathy and strained*. My choice to remove the text here took its cue from the moment in Owen's poem where the affected soldier disappears out of the "helpless sight" of the narrator. ("Dulce" 15). Once out of vision, we are left to ponder the soldier's fate. Thus, while the other instruments continue building momentum throughout the improvisation, the singer subsequently retreats to *mezzo piano* as if she is running out of breath. It is worth noting that Dimity Shepherd, who sang on the studio recording of *Gassed*, continued improvising beyond subsection four, although she kept to the overall dramatic trajectory I set out in the score.[107]

With the singer no longer a focus, the last three subsections of the improvisation continue building in terms of textural density, timbre and volume. Other instruments enter, filling the void left by the voice, and reiterating the chaos of the gas attack. In subsection five the B♭ clarinet and second tenor sax join the fray, again playing the

[107] Andrew Harrison, *Gassed Shell (Severe)*, *Histories* (Jazzhead Records and Monash University, 2016), CD, Head227.

“guttering” motive, whilst the double bass entry uses another seven-note pitch collection. The bass clarinet and trombone enter on the motive at subsection six; finally, in subsection seven, the alto saxophone, baritone saxophone and piano are the last instruments to join in. A very loud chord, cued by the conductor, concludes the improvisation at bar 168. Residual resonating notes of the chord, heard in the vibraphone, piano, violin and guitar, abruptly usher in an eerie silence across the musical landscape.

The original impetus for *Gassed Shell (Severe)* was the opportunity to pay homage to my grandfather’s war legacy, and to acknowledge the influence he had within my family. Although my initial motivation for the piece never diminished, as I developed a deeper understanding of the history surrounding Maddocks’s war involvement, my compositional methods and approach to reflecting and representing these events changed. Indeed, the scope of my creative practice simultaneously broadened and crystallised when I observed how my research-informed compositional language supported and enlightened the piece’s historical narrative. As such, *Gassed Shell (Severe)* allowed me to explore fresh artistic approaches to connecting music and text, and enabled me to push into new areas exploring the relationship between history and composition.

Chapter 3
Sounds from the Motor City: American composers and Detroit

> And here, at Ford Auditorium, the royal court of the automobile empire and related industry barons were gathering for a gala invitational concert featuring the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. Detroit wanted to think of itself as a city of national and international stature, the center of the modern industrial world.
>
> —David Maraniss, *Once In A Great City: A Detroit Story*

The city of Detroit has a long and distinguished history of making music. Indeed, alongside cars, arguably Detroit's other great exports have been musicians. Since the 1960s, Detroit has produced a multitude of musical icons that have shaped popular culture around the globe. These include Aretha Franklin, who grew up singing in her father's church in Detroit, Berry Gordy, the founder of Motown Records, and Stevie Wonder, discovered by Gordy when Wonder was eleven years old. Diana Ross, who spent her teenage years in Detroit's Brewster-Douglass housing projects; Smokey Robinson, Martha Reeves, the Four Tops, they all called the city home.[1] In the suburbs, the MC5, Iggy Pop and the Stooges, and Alice Cooper channelled the grit of Detroit life into the nihilism of suburban rock, and in Cooper's ground-breaking theatrical performances of fictional characters from horror movies.[2]

In the early 1980s, three Motor City musicians, collectively known as the Belleville Three, introduced Detroit techno to the world. This new style of electronic dance music influenced other Detroit DJs like Jeff Mills, who, like the Belleville Three, went on to establish an international career.[3] The mid-eighties saw the rise of pop icon Madonna, who grew up in the Detroit where her father worked as an engineer for Chrysler.[4] More recently, Detroit-raised rapper Eminem, reportedly the best-selling artist of the 2000s,

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[1] Smith, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit*. Smith provides a comprehensive examination of role of Motown within the broader cultural life of Detroit in the 1960s.
[2] David A. Carson, *Grit, Noise, and Revolution: The Birth of Detroit Rock 'N' Roll*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), PDF e-book. Carson's book is an excellent overview of the rise of Detroit's rock music scene.
[3] C. Vecchiola, "Submerge in Detroit: Techno's Creative Response to Urban Crisis," *Journal of American Studies*, 45, no. 1 (February 2011): 100–2. The Belleville Three also worked under the name Deep Space Soundworks.
[4] *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Madonna [Ciccone, Madonna Louise Veronica]," by Susan McClary, accessed 9 July 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.46456.

contributed to the international awareness of the city through his solo albums, his association with rap collective D-12, and his lead role in the 2002 feature film, *8 Mile.*[5] At the same time, Jack White and The White Stripes fused the rawness of sixties Detroit rock with the blues to create their own brand of powerful, unpretentious garage rock and roll.[6]

Furthermore, many artists—whether from Detroit or not—have paid homage to the Motor City. These tributes have taken a variety of forms. From a musical perspective, numerous songs have been written referencing Detroit; "Dancing In The Street,"[7] "The Motor City Is Burning,"[8] "Panic In Detroit,"[9] "The Horizontal Bop,"[10] and "Lose Yourself"[11] are some of the famous ones. In a more nuanced—but no less important—commercial manner, Berry Gordy drew heavily upon his experiences as a Lincoln-Mercury assembly line worker when setting up his business structure for Motown Records. As Suzanne E. Smith notes, Gordy was able to access and establish an enormous audience for his hit-making black enterprise by "using the technologies of automobile manufacturing and production to produce and market [his] music, and [by] applying industrial methods to record production."[12] Thus, some of the best elements of Detroit's narrative—its music and its technological expertise—shaped and guided the proliferation of popular culture throughout the Western world.

In the early 1960s, while Berry Gordy and his Motown artists were successfully capitalising on the Motor City's story to garner a worldwide audience, Detroit's classical music community was also beginning to consider the city's historical narrative as a source of creative inspiration. Its flagship classical music ensemble, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra—generally called the DSO—had reasserted itself as a musical organisation of national significance during the ten-year reign of its previous conductor,

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[5] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Eminem," by Joseph R. Matson, accessed 20 September 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2219005.
[6] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "White Stripes, The," by Garrett Thorson, accessed 9 July 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2289717.
[7] Marvin Gaye, William 'Mickey' Stevenson and Ivy Jo Hunter wrote "Dancing In the Street". Martha and the Vandellas recorded it for Gordy Records in 1964.
[8] Al Smith wrote "The Motor City Is Burning". John Lee Hooker recorded it in 1967, and the MC5 recorded it the following year.
[9] David Bowie wrote "Panic In Detroit" for his 1973 album *Aladdin Sane.*
[10] Detroit-native Bob Seeger composed "The Horizontal Bop". It was released on his 1980 album *Against The Wind.*
[11] "Lose Yourself" was written and recorded by Eminem in 2002 for the soundtrack for *8 Mile*. It won the 2002 Academy Award for Best Original Song for a Film.
[12] Smith, *Dancing in the Street: Motown and the Cultural Politics of Detroit*, 116.

Paul Paray. This success owed much to the broader economic fortunes of the city. Indeed, Detroit saw itself as an example of power and progress, supported by the dual foundations of a robust industrial economy and a strong cultural self-image.[13]

Historically, the economic and artistic fortunes of the DSO closely aligned with the financial health of Detroit's elite industrial and automotive families. The orchestra established a national reputation in the twenties under the baton of maestro Ossip Galbrilovich, however the Great Depression and its aftermath hit the ensemble hard.[14] The DSO subsequently folded twice during the 1940s, before Detroit industrialist John B. Ford Jr—whose family founded the Wyandette Chemical Corporation, and were unrelated to Henry Ford— rescued it in 1951 and devised a new 'Detroit Plan' for fundraising for the ensemble.[15] John Ford Jr's plan worked, and soon the financially viable Detroit Symphony Orchestra announced their 1951-52 concert season. A year later, management appointed Paul Paray as permanent conductor; he subsequently led the organisation through a decade of unrivalled success. With his departure at the end of the 1961-62 season, the orchestra was playing at a standard achieved only during Gabrilovich's tenure. Moreover, Paray had connected with the community like no other conductor, leaving the ensemble with strong public support, a healthy bank balance and players eager to work with the incoming artistic director.[16]

However, major social and political upheavals had already started to impact upon Detroit's urban landscape. The city's slow decline, which started in the 1950s, gradually played itself out across seven decades, arguably finishing with its notable declaration of bankruptcy in 2013.[17] These changes saw alterations to the city's narrative, as it shifted from being a highly industrialised metropolis to a post-industrial corporate failure. Across this period, a number of American classical composers wrote music inspired by Detroit and its history. By briefly looking at their works, I will offer insight into how the narrative of the city shaped the creativity of these composers. Furthermore, by

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[13] Laurie Lanzen with Paul Ganson Harris, *The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit and Glory* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016), 138.
[14] Harris, *The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit and Glory*, 36–70.
[15] "John Ford Jr., Revived Detroit Symphony in '51 (Obituary)," *New York Times*, May 27 1981, A22. Ford's plan shifted the burden of support away from wealthy individuals, to "principal sponsors, such as the major auto makers, manufacturing and banking concerns [who] pledged annual support of $10,000 each."
[16] Harris, *The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit and Glory*, 106–38.
[17] Scott Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2012). Martelle's book provides excellent insight into the economic demise of Detroit across these seven decades.

analysing the influence of Detroit's narrative upon these works, I will also consider how these musical reflections themselves played a partial role in defining the city's story. Importantly, I will suggest that, as Detroit morphed from a thriving economic epicentre into a deindustrialising social problem, composers began interpreting the narrative of the city differently. As such, each Detroit-inspired composition provides a unique musical backdrop to its evolution.

Initial reflections: Harold Laudenslager and Gene Gutchë

Throughout the first half of the 1960s, Detroit was a city of multiple, often conflicting narratives. The Big Three[18] automotive manufacturers were thriving; between 1960 and 1966, they accounted for over eighty per cent of domestic car sales.[19] Moreover, Detroit's working and middle classes were sharing in this success. Walter Reuther, the powerful and charismatic leader of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union, insisted it was completely right that working families received a portion of the surging profits going to the executives of automotive companies.[20] On the surface, Detroit's apparent class unity created an impression that the Motor City was a place of innovation and influence. This perception brought the city national attention, as America championed its industrial metropolis. In September 1963, President Kennedy endorsed Detroit as the country's bidding city for the 1968 Olympic Games.[21] A year later, President Lyndon Johnson reinforced values of hope and equality—virtues ascribed to Detroit—in his speech to commencing students at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Speaking optimistically, Johnson challenged them to aspire to moving, "upward to a Great Society…not just a rich…and powerful society," throughout the course of their lives.[22]

Yet, despite Johnson's stirring words, all was not as it seemed in Detroit. One barely needed to scratch the surface to uncover serious social divisions. Fundamental

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[18] The Big Three are the Ford Motor Company, General Motors and Chrysler.
[19] Joel Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Dan Brooks, and Martin Mulloy, "The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S. Auto Industry," (Washington D.C., USA: Economic Policy Institute, 2015), 11. The graph at Figure B, "Percent of total U.S. auto industry market share, by automaker, 1961–2014," illustrates this point.
[20] David Maraniss, *Once in a Great City: A Detroit Story* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 321.
[21] Detroit topped Los Angeles as the country's nomination for the 1968 Olympic bid. Mexico City subsequently beat Detroit to host the games.
[22] Lyndon Baines Johnson, "Remarks at the University of Michigan ('The Great Society')," (commencement address, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 22 May 1964), edited by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, University of California, Santa Barbara, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed 20 September 2019, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/239689.

inequalities within the city centred on race. Decades of housing segregation relegated Detroit's black community to second-class citizenship. This had become further entrenched after 1950, when the recently elected mayor, Albert Cobo, dismantled existing public housing projects, and proceeded to reject any federal funding to build more into the future.[23] At the same time, newly constructed highways encouraged city dwellers to look further afield to Detroit's growing suburbs. White Detroiters began moving away in large numbers, hollowing out the city and leaving behind poor, black residents.[24] As whites moved beyond Eight Mile Road, vital municipal tax dollars left with them. Moreover, Detroit's population size began to contract, creating a city of struggling residents scrambling for support from an ever-diminishing tax base.[25] Here, Detroit's social and economic crisis started to take form.

Nonetheless, in 1963, when Swedish conductor Sixten Ehrling arrived to take up his new post with the DSO, much of Detroit was riding high. The city savoured its image of a place that was, in the words of its mayor, Jerome Cavanagh, "dedicated to progress; social, spiritual, cultural and material."[26] This sense of optimism reflected in the DSO's daring appointment of a demanding and innovative figure like Ehrling.[27] Noted for his formidable technique and remarkable memory, Ehrling had also forged a reputation as a champion of new music.[28] In fact, soon after arriving in Detroit, Ehrling made clear his intentions to bring previously unknown music to the city, declaring, "you can't frighten them (the listening public), but I'm not going to give them the safe stuff."[29] Subsequently, Ehrling premiered numerous hitherto unheard compositions in his opening season with the DSO, almost on a weekly basis.[30] A few years later, Ehrling took the idea of introducing Detroit to unknown music to another level, when the DSO performed new compositions inspired by the city's narrative.

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[23] Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 171–75.
[24] Sidney Fine, *Violence in the Model City: The Cavanagh Administration, Race Relations and the Detroit Riot of 1967*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), PDF e-book, 3.
[25] Thomas Ford Hoult, "About Detroit–We Told You So," *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races*, 74, no. 8 (October 1967): 408.
[26] City of Detroit, "Detroit: City on the Move," 1965, Jam Handy Pictures, online video (original format: 16mm film), 18 mins, 29 secs, accessed 4 June 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-C8DwL2ovQ&t=23s.
[27] Harris, *The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit and Glory*, 140.
[28] David Nice, "Sixten Ehrling: Swedish Conductor Famed for Technique and Timing (Obituary)," *Guardian Online*, 22 April 2005, accessed 20 September 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2005/apr/22/guardianobituaries.artsobituaries.
[29] Harris, *The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit and Glory*, 142.
[30] Harris, *The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit and Glory*, 142.

In 1966, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra premiered *The Strait,*[31] a concert overture, written in 1963 by Michigan-born composer Harold Laudenslager.[32] Laudenslager was a well-respected local musician, acknowledged publicly for his rapidly developing musical voice.[33] Following studies with Paul Hindemith at Yale University, he joined the DSO's second violin section in 1951 whilst simultaneously forging a career as a composer. *The Strait* is Laudenslager's musical depiction of Detroit, in which he hoped to capture "the vitality…exuberance…and charm" of the city."[34] Collins George—the *Detroit Free Press*'s classical music critic—had previously declared that Laudenslager's musical language, "at first, seems difficult to the ear."[35] However, the composer's exploration of new harmonic sonorities matched Detroit's modernist narrative of advancement and growth. Throughout *The Strait*, Laudenslager creates and develops angular melodic gestures by employing a non-serial chromatic language. An example of this can be found early in the piece; at bar 16, the flutes and first violins introduce a brief four-bar motive built using intervals of a major third, perfect fourth, perfect fifth and major seventh.

Figure 3-1. *The Strait*, Harold Laudenslager, bars 16–19, flute and first violins

Later, the motive becomes the basis of other melodic ideas throughout the work. These statements often emphasise major seventh leaps, as evident in the bassoon, bass clarinet, lower brass and cello between bars 244 and 247.

[31] Harold Laudenslager, *The Strait*, (New York: Carl Fischer Music, 1966).
[32] *The Strait* is the English translation of the French word *Détroit*. Detroit gets its name from its river, which the original French settlers called *le détroit du Lac Éríe* ('the strait of Lake Erie').
[33] Collins George, "Detroit Compositions, Appealingly Played," *Detroit Free Press*, 25 January 1966, 26.
[34] Harold Laudenslager, "*The Strait* Premiere Concert Program," (Detroit: The Detroit Symphony Orchestra, 1966), 69, program notes.
[35] Collins George, "Detroiters' Works Are Performed," *Detroit Free Press*, 9 April 1964, 52.

Figure 3-2. ***The Strait*****, Laudenslager, bars 244–47, bass clarinet, bassoon, trombone, tuba and cello**

Underpinned by what Collins George called a "propulsive, complex but steady"[36] pulse, *The Strait* has several metric shifts throughout the piece. Moreover, although the tempo remains constantly *vivace* throughout, Laudenslager often employs shifts in rhythmic subdivision to create contrast within the orchestral texture, and to emphasise the energy of the piece.

The Strait captured media attention for its premiere performance, however the piece left George with mixed feelings. He observed that, although *The Strait* had an abundance of gusto and verve suggesting the spirit of Detroit's productivity, "there were some few quiet passages but not enough to picture that other aspect of Detroit, the city with its open spaces and its moments of serenity."[37] George's comment implies that, in his view, Detroit was not a one-dimensional town solely defined by industry. Indeed, he appears to value its natural environment equally as important as the city's manufacturing might. This point reminds us that, ultimately, the experiences and perspectives of every individual shape and influence our interpretation of a narrative. As such, Collins George felt *The Strait* prioritised the energy of Detroit's dominant industrial trope to the detriment of its natural aspects. He perceived there was more to Detroit than commerce, and thought this needed to be apparent within art inspired by the city.

[36] Collins George, "A Musical Portrait of Detroit," *Detroit Free Press*, 8 October 1966, 8.
[37] George, "A Musical Portrait of Detroit."

Meanwhile, as *The Strait* celebrated the vibrant energy of Detroit's narrative of productivity at its premiere in 1966, the city's black residents continued to face discrimination in employment, housing and education.[38] Indeed, across the country, African-American communities were struggling with the same issues, and people were forcibly taking their frustrations onto the street. Between 1964 and 1966, cities such as New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Cleveland experienced summer race riots. Furthermore, for five days in August 1965, the suburb of Watts in Los Angeles erupted, requiring the deployment of the National Guard to quell the unrest. The early months of 1967 saw tensions spill over again, with uprisings in cities including Omaha, Nashville, Cincinnati and Newark.[39] However, it was Detroit, long simmering with decades-old racial tensions, which had the misfortune of incubating the most ferocious insurrection of them all. On 23 July 1967, a police raid on an unlicensed drinking establishment on Twelfth Street sparked tensions with local black residents. After initially venting their frustrations at law enforcement officers, black Detroiters began looting and burning cars, and a full-scale riot ensued. Over the next five days, forty-three people died and more than one thousand people were injured during the insurgence. Police made over seven thousand arrests, and one thousand buildings burned down. The rioting only stopped when Governor George Romney sent in the Michigan Guard, followed soon after by federal troops ordered by President Johnson.[40] What would become known as the Great Rebellion[41] proved to be one of the most costly and violent examples of urban disorder in American history.[42]

Although similar in some ways to an earlier uprising in Detroit in 1943,[43] the 1967 insurrection moved beyond being simply a race riot to what Martelle calls, "a violent

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[38] Joe T. Darden and Richard W. Thomas, *Detroit: Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 3.
[39] Malcolm McLaughlin, "Introduction: Long Hot Summers," in *The Long, Hot Summer of 1967, Urban Rebellion in America* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2014, e-publication), 1–20. McLaughlin's introduction gives a detailed overview of the racial tensions that arose across the United States each summer during the early and mid-1960s.
[40] Fine, *Violence in the Model City: The Cavanagh Administration, Race Relations and the Detroit Riot of 1967*, 171, 213; Darden and Thomas, *Detroit: Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide*, 1–3.
[41] McLaughlin, "Introduction: Long Hot Summers," 6.
[42] Darden and Thomas, *Detroit: Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide*, 1.
[43] Fine, *Violence in the Model City: The Cavanagh Administration, Race Relations and the Detroit Riot of 1967*, 1. Sidney Fine states the 1943 riot was "an ugly climax to an increasingly

expression of frustration and rage by black Detroiters directed at anything within reach."[44] The impact and implications of the 1967 riot lasted long into the future. Indeed, Darden and Thomas note, "this event, more than any other…left an indelible imprint on both that generation [of Detroiters] and the generations that followed."[45] White flight to the Metro Detroit suburbs hastened, and the chasm along racial and class lines widened further. Significantly, the 1967 riot permanently ruined Detroit's image of being the "herald of hope in America," to use President Johnson's description of the city.[46] In effect, it exposed as a fallacy the Detroit narrative that the city's ongoing industrial dominance provided a good life for all its residents.

It was this realisation that partially inspired Gene Gutchë's composition *Epimetheus USA.*[47] The Detroit Symphony Orchestra commissioned the work in 1968; Ehrling premiered it in November the following year. *Epimetheus USA* reflects upon the Greek legend of Epimetheus. Epimetheus was a Titan, the naïve and foolish brother of Prometheus and Atlas, and Pandora's husband. (Pandora opened the box containing all the evils in it, thereby unleashing great tragedy on the world). As a mythological metaphor, Epimetheus functions as a reminder of the fragile relationship between power and might, and the wrongs that could occur if these forces are not contained, monitored and addressed.[48] Acknowledging the Greek legend, the score's program notes state Gutchë has composed, "a modern allegory suggesting through the symbols of music that modern industrial might is similarly a terrifying force capable of great good and unthinking destruction."[49] In this way, Detroit's position as an industrial powerhouse within the Western world is observed within the program notes, as is the city's capacity

bitter racial conflict between whites and blacks…over jobs and housing and clashes between the races in the schools, the parks and on the city buses."

[44] Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 193.

[45] Darden and Thomas, *Detroit: Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide*, 1.

[46] Lyndon Baines Johnson, "Remarks Upon Arrival at Metropolitan Airport in Detroit," (informal speech, Detroit, Michigan, 22 May 1964), edited by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, University of California, Santa Barbara, *The American Presidency Project*, accessed 20 September 2019, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/239677.

[47] Gene Gutchë, *Epimetheus USA,* Op. 46, (New York: Highgate Press, 1969).

[48] David Leeming, "Epimetheus," in *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[49] Gene Gutchë, *Epimetheus USA*, program notes in score.

to have both a positive and deleterious impact upon wider society through its manufacturing dominance.[50]

Gutchë does not use a specific motive or set of pitches to his programmatic reflections on Detroit; rather he constructs his musical narrative through formal design, rhythmic intensity and a broad dynamic spectrum. After a brief introduction by the brass, the principal theme of the exposition section is introduced by the violas at bar 43. Contrapuntal variations on the melody are then presented by the alto saxophone at bar 45, the second violins at bar 47 and the first violins at bar 49.[51]

[50] Thirty-seven years earlier, the Mexican painter Diego Rivera dealt with the same theme—the conflicting impact of industry upon the world—in his famous *Detroit Industry* murals on the walls of the Detroit Institute of Art. Rivera painted the murals between 1932 and 1933.
[51] In figure 3-3, the alto saxophone sounds a major sixth lower than written.

Figure 3-3. ***Epimetheus USA,*** **Gene Gutchë, bars 43–55, violas, first and second violins, alto saxophone**

This melody progressively develops through various iterations, climaxing at bar 116, before giving way to a new theme heard in the E♭ clarinet starting at bar 136.[52]

[52] In figure 3-4, the E♭ clarinet sounds a major third higher than written.

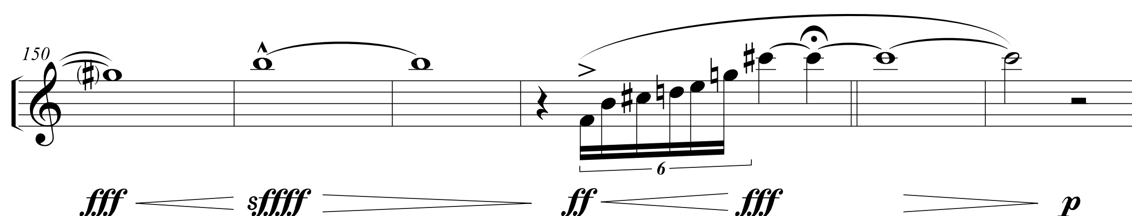

Figure 3-4. ***Epimetheus USA,*** **Gutchë, bars 136–55, E♭ clarinet solo**

Gutchë then subjects this new theme to a series of variations, before embarking on a faster *scherzo* that again references the initial viola melody. The *scherzo* builds in intensity and volume, arriving at the final variation at bar 379. The final variation, marked at a slower tempo, features the orchestra playing *fff*, with the upper strings and upper winds all playing unison across a pulsating minim *ostinato* carried by the lower winds, brass and strings. The piece ends with a *subito* chord, beginning *piano* and moving quickly to *ffff.* The final five bars feature repeated notes in the upper winds that are rapidly subjected to rhythmic diminution.

Collins George, again reviewing for the *Detroit Free Press*, was not overly impressed with *Epimetheus USA*, noting, "it generates a feeling of pleasure though not great excitement in the listener."[53] Furthermore, he opined about Gutchë's apparent lack of engagement with Detroit's history, an issue particularly pertinent to this research. George wrote, "one hardly gets the feeling that the composer has made a deep study of our 'highly industrialised society.'"[54] In other words, he felt that Gutchë had not spent adequate time considering how to creatively connect with Detroit's history. We can only speculate as to how much research Gutchë undertook before writing *Epimetheus USA*. Perhaps he thought he had a good understanding of Detroit's historical narrative before he started writing, and therefore did little. Perhaps, conversely, he delved into Detroit's history for some time before his creative work began. Irrespective of this, Collins George's observation, whilst highly subjective, infers that there should be a directly audible link between a composer connecting creatively with historical narrative and an audience's ability to detect this.

Other reviews of *Epimetheus USA* were more favourable towards Gutchë's creative intentions. Reviewing for the *Courier-Journal*, Nelson Keyes stated, "the composer

[53] Collins George, "Argentinian Pianist Guests with Symphony," *Detroit Free Press*, 15 November 1969, 5.
[54] George, "Argentinian Pianist Guests with Symphony."

explains that Epimetheus reflects our industrial society, particularly Detroit, and the music shows this very plainly."[55] Furthermore, Gail Stockholm's reception of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's performance of the work a few years later was most positive. In her review for the *Cincinnati Observer,* Stockholm wrote, "Gutchë's industry-inspired music [is] first rate," declaring "this piece strikes me as the best contemporary music…the CSO have performed since I came to town four years ago."[56] Additionally, Stockholm was impressed with the composer's piece regardless of its programmatic overtones. She stated, "Gutchë's music stands up with or without these [industry-inspired] ideas attached to it…the composer handles the orchestra with a dramatic instinct and is a superb orchestrator."[57] These wide-ranging reviews further reveal the issues composers face when creating a work that attempts to engage with extra-musical sources. Ultimately, composers can only speak to their own personal experiences when composing a work that engages with extra-musical stimuli. Moreover, the individual viewpoint and opinions of the composer shape and influence how listeners interpret the work.

These two Detroit-inspired pieces, composed in the sixties, employ a compositional language associated with musical modernism. This musical sense of innovation and moving forward aligned the works with the broader contemporaneous narrative of the Motor City. Tragically, the 1967 riot did much to destroy this image of Detroit; furthermore, across the coming decades the city sank to even further depths of despair.

Michael Daugherty, the DSO and the Detroit of yesteryear

After the 1969 performance of *Epimetheus USA*, twenty-five years elapsed before the next premiere of a Detroit-inspired concert work. During that time, the social and economic conditions of Detroit had declined dramatically. The OPEC oil crisis of 1973 had a major impact on the city, as 'stagflation'[58] took hold of Western economies. Strong competition from Japanese imports forced the Detroit automotive industry to

[55] Nelson Keyes, "Detroit Symphony Concert Exciting," *Courier-Journal (Louisville)*, 21 March 1970, 8, Indiana Edition.
[56] Gail Stockholm, "Gutche's Industry-Inspired Music First Rate," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 19 February 1975, 35.
[57] Stockholm, "Gutche's Industry-Inspired Music First Rate."
[58] "Stagflation," ed. Jonathan Law, 5th ed., *A Dictionary of Finance and Banking* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014). 'Stagflation' is "a combination of slow economic growth and rising prices."

progressively shed jobs, as demand for American cars slumped.[59] In 1973, Democratic candidate Coleman Young became the city's first black mayor, promising downtown economic development and better government representation and protection for black Detroiters.[60] During his five terms in office, Young brought numerous major construction projects to the city but he was unable to stem the growing racial divide between communities of the white-dominated suburbs and the largely black city, which increased rapidly in the years after the 1967 riot.[61] White flight across Eight Mile Road continued unabated as drugs, poverty and crime took over downtown; as Scott Martelle notes, by "the 1970s and 1980s, [Detroit] was the Murder City, and it was a title well earned."[62] The implications of the city's urban failure were catastrophic. In 1994, when composer Michael Daugherty received his first commission to compose a Detroit-inspired work, the city's population had fallen to one million residents. This was almost half of its peak population of 1.85 million people in 1950.[63]

For much of his career, Daugherty's music has centred on American popular culture. His large catalogue of compositions includes works inspired by national icons like Elvis Presley, Abraham Lincoln, Superman, Desi Arnez, Route 66, Jackie Kennedy-Onassis and Liberace. Iconography drives Daugherty's creative process, and he constantly refers to it for extra-musical stimuli. To this point, he observes, "Before I can write a note, I have to have a visual image."[64] Similar to my own creative methodology, Daugherty needs to understand his subject matter before he begins to write. In fact, he compares himself to an actor, stating, "I like to research my 'role' before I compose."[65] Daugherty engages directly with history, aiming to insert his own voice into the interpretation of a narrative. His creative process is visceral and personal; indeed, Daugherty says of his music that, "I can only write music about an experience I have lived myself."[66] By limiting his compositional process to subjects that he can inhabit himself, Daugherty

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[59]Cutcher-Gershenfeld, Brooks, and Mulloy, "The Decline and Resurgence of the U.S Auto Industry," 9–10. This competition continued throughout the seventies, and in the early 1980s, Japan briefly overtook America as the world's largest producer of cars and trucks.
[60] Coleman Young and Lonnie Wheeler, *Hard Stuff: The Autobiography of Coleman Young* (New York: Viking, Penguin Group, 1994), 328–29.
[61] Darden and Thomas, *Detroit: Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide*, 96.
[62] Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 226.
[63] Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 231. The decline of the city's population has not stopped. The 2016 census data listed the city with 672,795 residents.
[64] McCutchan, *The Muse That Sings*, 330.
[65] McCutchan, *The Muse That Sings*, 330.
[66] McCutchan, *The Muse That Sings*, 330.

builds a strong sense of authenticity into his creative output. His attention to historical research also means that his music brings a fundamental element of legitimacy—knowledge and understanding of a subject—whilst still acknowledging that it is ultimately only one perspective.

Although Daugherty has become a successful composer on the international stage, his compositional method has its share of detractors. One critic, Raymond Tuttle, found his music superficial, noting it was "about as nutritious as American fast food."[67] Writing for The *Guardian*, Andrew Clements described his works as consisting of "a rather queasy musical mix, with unashamed moments of kitsch,"[68] whilst Mark Stryker of the *Detroit Free Press* described Daugherty's work as "sometimes fall[ing] into pastiche or triteness."[69] Undeniably, on occasion, Daugherty's approach risks failure; indeed, Stryker observes that Daugherty runs the risk of "fall[ing] into the postmodern trap of…irony run amok."[70] Yet, regardless of this possibility, Daugherty's music reflects American society—in all its banality and depth—back to its citizens. Moreover, his self-reflexive musical critique allows for multiple layers and meanings to occur simultaneously within a piece.[71] Conceivably, this aspect of Daugherty's music could make some listeners feel uncomfortable when confronted with the broad, sometimes tacky, spectrum of American popular culture on the concert stage. Nonetheless, his informed and personal compositional process means Daugherty's best works provide deep insights into American culture. Whilst I am not enamoured with all of Daugherty's music, his commitment to his philosophical intentions, his well-grounded compositional methodology, and his substantial creative output make him a significant contemporary American composer.

Michael Daugherty has been a lecturer at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, since 1991, and with hindsight, the city of Detroit might consider his appointment a small victory. With the city in major decline during that time, the notion of new composer

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[67] Raymond Tuttle, "Michael Daugherty: American Icons," *www.classical.net*, 1999, CD review, accessed 15 July 2017, http://www.classical.net/music/recs/reviews/a/arg58145a.php.
[68] Andrew Clements, "*Fire and Blood* - Concert Review," *The Guardian*, 21 April 2011, accessed 20 September 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2011/apr/20/fire-and-blood-review.
[69] Mark Stryker, "Detroit Symphony: Daugherty, *Fire and Blood* (Premiere)," *American Record Guide*, 66, no. 4 (July/August 2003): 41.
[70] Mark Stryker, "It's Groovy Music, Baby!: Detroit Resident Composer Draws on Pop Culture," *Detroit Free Press*, 12 September 1999, 48 & 51.
[71] Stryker, "It's Groovy Music, Baby!: Detroit Resident Composer Draws on Pop Culture."

moving into the city and creatively reflecting upon what the city had become, rather than what it had been, might have been too painful for Detroit. However, Daugherty's subsequent interest in the Motor City of yesteryear, in the mythology of the city's golden age, has proven to be a positive cultural force for Detroit. The timing of Daugherty's arrival was fortuitous; he was just the composer that Detroit needed.

In 1994, the Detroit Chamber Winds and Summit Brass commissioned him to write a new piece. Searching for a point of reference, Daugherty looked beyond the city's contemporaneous economic situation, turning instead to what he described as the "sounds and rhythms of industrial Detroit: city of automobile clamour and sixties Motown sound."[72] Although the industrial ambience of factories engaged in mass production was fast disappearing at the time, Daugherty's desire for the nostalgia of a former version of the city resulted in the composition *Motown Metal,*[73] described by Raymond Tuttle as "exciting as a day at the Indianapolis 500."[74] Written for brass and percussion, *Motown Metal* engages with Detroit's industrial narrative by only using instruments constructed of metal. The dominant compositional element is rhythm, with the brass providing what Phyllis Rosenbloom labelled "hearty blasts, swoops and guffaws, while percussionists pound…away on a sonic assembly line."[75] *Motown Metal* is a flashy concert piece that provides the first insight into Daugherty's use of Detroit as a source of creativity.

Five years later, Daugherty became Composer in Residence with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. This affiliation lasted from 1999 until 2003. During this period he composed three more works inspired by aspects of Detroit's narrative; *MotorCity Triptych* (2000),[76] *Fire and Blood* (2003),[77] and *Raise the Roof* (2003).[78] Released in 2009 on a single compact disc by Naxos,[79] these pieces have become an informal benchmark for

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[72] Michael Daugherty, "*Motown Metal* (1994): Program Notes," personal website, works page for *Motown Metal*, accessed 31 August 2019, https://michaeldaugherty.net/works/large-brass-ensemble/motown-metal/.
[73] Michael Daugherty, *Motown Metal*, (New York: Faber Music, 1994).
[74] Tuttle, "Michael Daugherty: American Icons," *www.classical.net*.
[75] Phyllis Rosenbloom, "Opening with a Bang!: Cabrillo Music Festival Provides Delightful Weekend," *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, 14 August 1998, 42.
[76] Michael Daugherty, *MotorCity Triptych*, (New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 2000).
[77] Michael Daugherty, *Fire and Blood*, (New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 2003).
[78] Michael Daugherty, *Raise the Roof* (New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 2003).
[79] Michael Daugherty, *Fire and Blood, MotorCity Triptych, Raise the Roof*, (Naxos, 2009), CD, 8.559372.

Detroit-inspired concert music.[80] For my research purposes, I have focussed on *MotorCity Triptych.*[81]

MotorCity Triptych received its premiere in 2001 under the baton of chief conductor Neeme Järvi. *MotorCity Triptych* is made up of three movements; *Motown Mondays*, *Pedal-to-the-Metal,* and *Rosa Parks Boulevard,* which can be played together or as standalone pieces. Daugherty describes the piece as "a car trip through the sounds and rhythms of the streets and boulevards of Detroit, Michigan."[82] At nearly thirty minutes in length, it is a substantial work, and a detailed analysis of the piece is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nonetheless, a brief discussion of the third movement, *Rosa Parks Boulevard,* will offer an understanding of Daugherty's immersive approach to narrative and the way that it shapes his creativity.

A main street in downtown Detroit honouring Rosa Parks gives the work's third movement its title and programmatic focus.[83] As is well known, Rosa Parks was fundamental to the American civil rights movement through her refusal to sit in the back of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955, sparking the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Two years after this famous incident, Parks moved to Detroit, where she lived until her death in 2005. When undertaking preliminary research for the work, Daugherty joined Parks for a service at her local church. During the service, the composer sang gospel songs and listened to inspired oratory from the preacher. Later, Daugherty learnt from Parks that her favourite piece of music was the gospel song *Oh Freedom*; he subsequently decided to feature aspects of the spiritual within the movement.[84]

Daugherty states, "for me, Rosa Parks stands for the willingness to cross over boundaries and to challenge them."[85] Hence, this metaphor transfers into the broader narrative of Detroit's need to reassess its own social boundaries, and the creative boundaries between popular culture and art music that Daugherty looks to break down.

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[80] The Detroit Symphony Orchestra commissioned *Raise the Roof* for the opening of the Max M Fisher Music Center in Midtown, Detroit. They also commissioned and premiered *Motor City Dance Mix*, composed by Jonathan Bailey Holland, for the same occasion. *Fire and Blood*, a concerto for violin and orchestra, received its Detroit premiere on 3 May 2003 under the baton of Neeme Järvi. Ida Kavafian played the solo violin part.

[81] I have used Daugherty's spelling for his piece—*MotorCity*—throughout the thesis.

[82] Michael Daugherty, *MotorCity Triptych*, composer's notes, accessed 20 September 2019, http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Michael-Daugherty-Motor-City-Triptych/51151

[83] Originally called 12th Street, it was renamed Rosa L. Parks Boulevard in 1976.

[84] Daugherty, *MotorCity Triptych*, composer's notes.

[85] Daugherty, *MotorCity Triptych*, composer's notes.

As such, *Rosa Parks Boulevard* draws upon three main compositional ideas, all linked to Parks and her narrative. Daugherty states the first idea "echo[es] the voices of many generations of African-American preachers in Detroit."[86] The trombone section of the orchestra takes on these voices, outlining fragments of the melody from *Oh Freedom* throughout the movement. The spiritual first enters at bar 24 as the featured melodic element played by the tenor trombone.

Figure 3-5. *MotorCity Triptych: Rosa Parks Boulevard*, Michael Daugherty, bars 24–30, trombone

The second idea is a musical motive that Daugherty associates with Rosa Parks. A short lyrical figure, it consists in the first instance of three ascending perfect fifths, each a perfect fourth apart, moving as a series of quavers. The motive first enters at bar 16 in the vibraphone and bass trombone; the vibraphone begins first, and the bass trombone enters a beat later.

[86] Daugherty, *MotorCity Triptych*, composer's notes.

Figure 3-6. ***Rosa Parks Boulevard,*** **Daugherty, bars 16–23, bass trombone and vibraphone**

The introduction of the Rosa Parks motive in canonic style—with the two instruments playing out of sync with each other—creates an ethereal, floating effect. Moreover, emphasising the perfect fourth and perfect fifth intervals allows the motive to avoid links to a particular key centre. Rather, the openness of its intervallic structure implies a modal ambiguity that resists any pull to a root note. This harmonic understatement creates a sense of calm and transcendence alluding to the personal qualities of Parks, described by E. W. Shipp as a "shy…soft spoken…[and] very private woman…[who became] a reluctant symbol…in the quest for racial equality."[87]

The movement's third compositional idea revolves around various interjectory sections inferring, in Daugherty's words, "a turbulent bus ride, evoked by atonal polyrhythms in the trumpets, horns and percussion instruments."[88] These passages, which punctuate the piece a number of times, often feature numerous changes of time signature, and fast moving sequences of semiquavers. Daugherty also employs syncopation in these moments to create rhythmic instability and to interrupt the flow of the first two compositional concepts.

Financial crisis and renewal: recent works about Detroit

Despite Daugherty's approachable references to the narrative of the Motor City's golden age,[89] Detroit's reality of misfortune continued unabated as the first decade of the 21st century progressed. The population of the city kept shrinking, particularly around the period of the 2008 recession.[90] This ongoing exodus of residents left the city with over 100,000 vacant housing units, creating problems of vandalism and arson for

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87 E. W. Shipp, "Rosa Parks, 92, Intrepid Pioneer of Civil Rights Movement, Is Dead (Obituary)," *New York Times*, 25 October 2005, A1.
88 Daugherty, *MotorCity Triptych*, composer notes.
89 Stryker, "Detroit Symphony: Daugherty, *Fire and Blood* (Premiere)." Stryker noted Daugherty's "audience-friendly style…[and] pop-culture references."
90 Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 232. The city population had dropped by nearly 250,000 by the end of the first decade of the 2000s.

the city council. The average price of a house in Detroit fell by $85,000[91] within a decade, as the city became what John Gallagher called a "poster child of urban decay."[92] Furthermore, Kwame Kilpatrick, the mayor of Detroit, did nothing to help this image of chaos and dysfunction.[93] Elected in 2002 on his promise to help residents "rise up and begin our future, right here, right now,"[94] six years later he faced charges of perjury and obstruction of justice, and later went to prison.[95]

Inevitably, the city's economic woes affected its cultural institutions. The Detroit Symphony Orchestra began its 2008 season invigorated by the appointment of Leonard Slatkin as its new music director, however the recession saw the orchestra's endowment lose over $38 million in one year.[96] Two years later, after negotiations over pay and conditions broke down between management and the orchestral players, the most prolonged and fractious strike of the orchestra's history began.[97] The dispute led to the cancellation of concerts during the 2010-11 season and received national media coverage. An end to the strike finally came in April 2011, although, as the *New York Times* noted, its lingering "corrosive" effects felt like "a near-death experience"[98] for many who lived through it.

With the city and its residents preoccupied with survival, Detroit-inspired art music became scarce throughout this time. In 2012 contemporary music ensemble New Music Detroit[99] commissioned *Detroit Per Se*[100] from producer/composer Virgil Moorefield; it was premiered at the new music festival *Strange Beautiful Music V*. Written for

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[91] Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 233.
[92] John Gallagher, *Reimagining Detroit: Opportunities for Redefining an American City*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), PDF e-book, 26.
[93] In 2013, Kilpatrick went to prison for 28 years, for a racketeering conspiracy that included mail fraud, bribery and extortion. He had previously completed two shorter stints in prison for perjury, obstruction of justice and parole violation.
[94] Channel 7 ABC WXYZ-TV Detroit, "Kwame Kilpatrick: The Rise and Fall (Investigative Documentary)," 2013, *Kilpatrick Corruption Case*, E. W. Scripps Company, online video, 25 mins, 48 secs, accessed 10 June 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MwAioSrD_MQ.
[95] Mark Binelli, *The Last Days of Detroit: Motor Cars, Motown and the Collapse of an Industrial Giant* (London: Vintage Books, 2014), 229.
[96] Harris, *The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit and Glory*, 232.
[97] Harris, *The Detroit Symphony Orchestra: Grace, Grit and Glory*, 237.
[98] Daniel J. Wakin, "Detroit Symphony Returns to a Giddy Reception," *New York Times*, 10 April 2011, C1.
[99] New Music Detroit is Detroit's leading contemporary classical music ensemble. In 2017, the group commissioned New York-based composer Annie Gosfield to write a work inspired by Diego Rivera's murals about Detroit's industrial heritage. Entitled *Detroit Industry*, New Music Detroit premiered the composition at the Detroit Institute for the Arts on 25 May 2018.
[100] Virgil Moorefield, *Detroit Per Se*, unpublished score, 2012. A recording of *Detroit Per Se* can be found on Virgil Moorefield, *No Business As Usual*, (Hinterzimmer, 2013), CD, HINT17.

amplified sextet, the piece employs industrial rhythms, powered by *ostinato* and repetition, to create a dynamic and ecstatic snapshot of the city's propulsive energy.[101]

The intensity of Moorefield's composition seemed an appropriate precursor for the next dramatic development in Detroit's narrative. In April 2012, the city council allowed the Michigan state government greater influence over Detroit's finances; ten months later Michigan governor Rick Snyder announced the government was assuming full control of its budget. On 18 July 2013 Kevyn Orr, the city's emergency manager appointed by the state government, filed for federal protection from bankruptcy. It was the largest municipal bankruptcy in United States history, with the city citing irreconcilable debts of US$18 billion.[102]

Given the financial climate of the time, the next Detroit-centric work commissioned by the DSO seemed a bold decision to counter the negativity the city was confronting. In 2013, composer, inventor and MIT professor Tod Machover received a commission to create a "city symphony" for Detroit.[103] The *Symphony In D*[104] project was subsequently launched in November 2014, financially supported by the DSO and the Knight Foundation.[105] Using a mobile phone app created by Machover's team at the MIT Media Lab, the composer invited the public "to record…share [and submit their] favourite, most indelible sounds of Detroit."[106] Following an inundation of submissions—Machover described the amount of entries as "simply overwhelming"[107]—he began composing. He used the collected audio material, as well as his own experiences in the Motor City, as his creative sources. Like Michael Daugherty, Machover's process of discovering about the city was immersive. He explored different neighbourhoods and areas of Detroit, listening and capturing location

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[101] An excellent performance of the work can also be found in a video online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMF0XBChh3o&t=315s. The performers are not from New Music Detroit.

[102] Monica Davey and Mary Williams Walsh, "Billions in Debt, Detroit Tumbles into Insolvency," *New York Times*, 19 July 2013, A1, Late Edition.

[103] Machover had previously written 'city symphonies' for Toronto, Edinburgh, Perth (Western Australia) and Lucerne in Switzerland. Machover's compositional process these previous works involved establishing a dialogue with residents of a city with the aim of bringing people together and, through a collective approach, understanding how a city 'sounded.'

[104] Tod Machover, *Symphony in D*, (New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 2015).

[105] The title *Symphony in D* came from a common nickname for Detroit; "the 'D."

[106]Tod Machover, "Detroit's Sonic Portrait: Thoughts on *Symphony in D*," *Performance: the magazine of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra*, Fall 2015, 12.

[107] Machover, "Detroit's Sonic Portrait: Thoughts on *Symphony in D*."

sounds, which he later re-experienced in his studio.[108] This level of personal investment in the work reinforced Machover's awareness of the significance of the *Symphony In D* project; in fact, he believed the piece could, "express this particular, special moment in Detroit's history when anything seems possible although the stakes are very high indeed."[109]

Scored for large orchestra and electronics, *Symphony in D* is a through-composed piece consisting of five sections. Each section refers to an aspect of Detroit's historic and geographic narrative: *Rhythms and Bolts*, *Black Bottom Bass*, *Belle Isle Interlude*, *Memories and Dreams* and *Together in D*. The fourth section, *Memories and Dreams*, is broken down into four smaller parts featuring various individuals speaking about the city. Like *Rosa Parks Boulevard, Symphony in D* is an extended work with a playing time of 30-plus minutes, so an in-depth analysis is beyond the remit of this thesis. Nonetheless, a brief description of Machover's harmonic treatment will provide a partial insight into his methodology for creating what Sarah Rose Sharp called an "original sound portrait of the Motor City."[110]

Much of the piece's harmonic language centres on the note D, which functions like a quasi-modal ground bass that underpins each section. Music critic Mark Stryker notes how Machover "built the work from the bottom up, a reflection on how important the bass has been in Detroit's black music traditions."[111] Superimposed upon the D pedal are melodic flourishes in the orchestra, often reminiscent of jazz, chromatically circling around and away from the central tonality, before returning to its inevitable magnetism. This technique shares a commonality with the creative process of Harrison Birtwistle's *Melencolia I,* where the composer uses the note D as what Jonathan Cross calls a "focal centre…[that has] an unusually clear gravitational point towards which the music is pulled at key moments."[112] Lastly, Machover punctuates the orchestral fabric with numerous electronic found sounds collected for the project. These aural artefacts

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[108] Machover, "Detroit's Sonic Portrait: Thoughts on *Symphony in D*."
[109] Machover, "Detroit's Sonic Portrait: Thoughts on *Symphony in D*."
[110] Sarah Rose Sharp, "Composing the Sounds of Detroit into a Symphony," *Hyperallergic*, Hyperallergic Media, Inc., 24 November 2015, online blog/magazine, accessed 3 March 2017, http://hyperallergic.com/256578/composing-the-sounds-of-detroit-into-a-symphony/.
[111] Mark Stryker, "'Symphony in D' World Premiere Is Uplifting but Uneven," *Detroit Free Press*, 20 November 2015, C1.
[112] Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music*, 209.

generally provide contrast and density to the musical texture without contributing to the harmonic structure.

Symphony In D premiered in Detroit on 20 November 2015. Response to the work was mixed; Stryker described as "less a purely musical work than a sprawling, ceremonial communion," that, as a work of art, was "uneven."[113] The composer, however, shared his satisfaction, stating "to me, it feels as if Detroit was the place I had in mind—without knowing it at the time—when I first imagined these City Symphonies."[114]

Two years later, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra commissioned a new work from Terence Blanchard[115] to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 riot. *Detroit '67* was written as part of the "Detroit 67: Looking Back to Move Forward" initiative, a collaborative project between numerous cultural and civic organisations including the Detroit Historical Society and the DSO.[116] Blanchard's piece was lauded for its role as a creative conduit for reflecting upon a national tragedy, and its ability to engage listeners in multiple ways. For example, Marlowe Stoudamire[117] noted how the piece "demonstrates the role that music can play in making history relevant and bringing art to life."[118] Moreover, Alice McAllister Tillman[119] described how the work empowered the Detroit community to evaluate and learn from the riots, stating, "this music will help people appreciate what has taken place, and where we can go from here."[120]

The composer's preparation for writing reinforced this intersection between history and creativity. Similar to Michael Daugherty and Tod Machover, Terence Blanchard

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[113] Stryker, "'Symphony in D' World Premiere Is Uplifting but Uneven."
[114] Machover, "Detroit's Sonic Portrait: Thoughts on *Symphony in D*."
[115] Born and raised in New Orleans, Terence Blanchard is a jazz trumpeter and a film composer who has collaborated with Spike Lee on many of his films, including *Malcolm X, Jungle Fever* and *BlacKkKlansman.* He is also the Fred A. and Barbara M. Erb creative chair at the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.
[116] Terence Blanchard, *Detroit 67*, unpublished score, 2016.
[117] Marlowe Stoudamire was the project director for "Detroit 67."
[118] Cassandra Spratling, "A Key Change in Two Movements," *TBD*, TBD Media, March 2017, online magazine, accessed 15 June 2018, https://www.tbdmag.com/a-key-change-in-two-movements/.
[119] Alice McAllister Tillman is the artistic director of the Brazeal Dennard Chorale. Formed in 1972, the choir has collaborated with the DSO on numerous occasions through its "Classical Roots" concert series, including the premiere of Blanchard's *Detroit 67*.
[120] Martin Bandyke, "Jazz Trumpeter Blanchard to Unveil 'Detroit 67' on Friday," *Detroit Free Press*, 2 March 2017, D5.

observed his first step for writing the piece was “to compile information.”[121] Although he was aware of the riot, Blanchard noted he needed to conduct some research to better understand its significance.[122] Hence, he spoke with historians and Detroit residents to get what he described as “a flavor of the event from those who experienced it, who are knowledgeable about it.”[123] This process of discovery provided Blanchard with the necessary tools to inform his compositional process. Furthermore, it allowed him to compose from a position of authenticity and legitimacy; Blanchard noted, “the most challenging thing for me was to…get it right...and not do something that was disrespectful, or didn’t fully represent what had happened.”[124]

Written for choir and orchestra, *Detroit 67* is comprised of two movements, *Aftermath* and *Moving Forward*. Blanchard’s film composition background is evident in the sweeping melodies that permeate much of the piece. It begins softly with sustained chords in the strings and low brass reflecting what the composer calls, “the silence that comes in the aftermath of something like this, when the dust settles.”[125] At bar 12, the horn and bass clarinet introduce a short ascending motive that becomes the basis for melodic material throughout the first movement. The motive’s initial intervallic structure is a series of alternating leaps and steps, taking the pattern: perfect fifth→semitone→perfect fourth→tone. At bar 17, the motive returns in the same instruments, this time transposed down a semitone.[126]

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[121] Terence Blanchard, “Jazz Great Captures Rage, Silence and Hope of Detroit Uprising in New DSO Piece,” interviewed by Stateside Staff, *Stateside*, NPR, Michigan Radio, 9 March 2017, accessed 20 September 2019, https://www.michiganradio.org/post/jazz-great-captures-rage-silence-and-hope-detroit-uprising-new-dso-piece.
[122] Bandyke, “Jazz Trumpeter Blanchard to Unveil ‘Detroit 67’ on Friday.”
[123] Blanchard, “Jazz Great Captures Rage, Silence and Hope of Detroit Uprising in New DSO Piece.”
[124] Terence Blanchard, “Interview with Terence Blanchard,” interviewed by Cynthia Canty, *Stateside*, NPR, Michigan Radio, 9 March 2017, accessed 20 September 2019, https://cpa.ds.npr.org/michigan/audio/2017/03/20170309_SS_DSO_Blanchard.mp3.
[125] Blanchard, “Interview with Terence Blanchard.”
[126] In figure 3-7, the bass clarinet sounds a major ninth lower than written, and the horn sounds a perfect fifth lower than written.

Figure 3-7. *Detroit 67*, Terence Blanchard, movement I, bars 12–13 and 17–18, horn and bass clarinet

As the movement progresses, Blanchard expands the figure's intervallic structure to heighten the solemnity and darkness of the section. An example of this development occurs between bar 64 and 71, where the soprano part gradually expands and incorporates the tritone, major sixth and major seventh into its melodic shape for dramatic effect.

Figure 3-8. *Detroit 67*, Blanchard, movement I, bars 64–71, soprano

The second movement continues to highlight the importance of melodic material as a structural device. The movement unfolds around two main motives. The choir introduces the first motive in the opening bars. This short gesture, built upon a rhythmic pattern of two semiquavers followed by a longer note, represents hope and optimism; Blanchard describes it as, "that moment in church when you understand there are better days ahead."[127]

Figure 3-9. *Detroit 67*, Blanchard, movement II, bars 1–6, choir

[127] Blanchard, "Interview with Terence Blanchard."

At bar 14, the sopranos introduce the second melodic figure. This motive emphasises an ascending major sixth interval, moving downwards in a stepwise motion.

Figure 3-10. *Detroit 67*, Blanchard, movement II, bars 14–21, soprano

After briefly appearing in counterpoint from bars 22 to 24, the melodies take turns as the featured material within the movement. The final bars of *Detroit 67* consolidate around the ascending major sixth interval—heard in the upper woodwinds, upper strings, and sopranos—signifying Blanchard's idea of "looking forward and being uplifting."[128]

As I have shown, the evolving and frequently turbulent history of Detroit from the latter half of the twentieth century presented composers with rich material for extra-musical stimuli and inspiration. Fortunately, in recent times Detroit's future has seemed a little brighter. An increase in residents moving into the city and an influx of corporate investment has seen the city slowly emerging from this long period of economic and social difficulty.[129] These factors have created a wary optimism for what lies ahead for city. Indeed, this perception of guarded hope played an important role in my own creative reflection on the Motor City's ongoing narrative, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

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[128] Bandyke, "Jazz Trumpeter Blanchard to Unveil 'Detroit 67' on Friday."

[129] Daphne Hughes, "Homeownership Key to Detroit's Resurgence," *Michigan Chronicle*, 13 July 2016, A1; Laura Kusisto, "Detroit's Resurgence Brings New Housing Concerns," *Wall Street Journal*, 20 March 2017, accessed 20 September 2019, https://www.wsj.com/articles/detroits-resurgence-brings-new-housing-concerns-1489982402.

NOTE:

Before reading Chapter 4, please listen to the recording of *Hum* in its entirety, preferably whilst reading the score.

Here is a link to the recording (.wav).
Hum recording

NB. The file can be downloaded, or streamed online by clicking on the music notes icon that looks:

Here is a link to the score (.pdf).
Hum score

NB. The file can be downloaded or viewed online.

Chapter 4
"Detroit vs. Everybody": *Hum* and the evolving narrative of a city

> So, that kind of openness…and freely improvised spirit is how I see Detroit, especially in its recent history.
>
> —Ian Ding, Artistic Director of New Music Detroit

My musical engagement with Detroit came about through a creative collaboration with Detroit-based poet Jamaal May. This partnership took me on an artistic journey that ultimately resulted in my composition *Hum.* Commissioned by New Music Detroit in 2016, *Hum* featured as part of Detroit's annual new music marathon, *Strange Beautiful Music IX.* It was the outcome of my long artistic relationship with May, dating back nine years before the premiere of the piece. During this time, our collaborative partnership went through numerous iterations, before finally settling on a framework allowing me to compose a work for New Music Detroit. Ultimately, the consolidation of my creative relationship with May in this way was prescient. It not only fitted well with the timing of my PhD candidature, but also the core theme I had chosen to explore. It seemed to be an ideal bookend to *Gassed Shell (Severe).*

Like many composers who work with text, my main compositional intention for *Hum* was to write a piece that successfully engaged with, and responded to, May's poetry. As I prepared to compose the piece, it became clear I could not entirely fulfil this aim without first examining Detroit's painful socio-economic trauma of the past fifty years; as such, the previous chapter highlights my findings. Furthermore, I needed to consider how the city of Detroit had shaped May's work, and how my composition would reflect and interpret this. Recognising these challenges helped me balance the intimate views of Detroit within May's work with the wider, more apocalyptic portrayal of the city I encountered elsewhere. In particular, it encouraged me to linger upon and enjoy some of the city's recent cultural successes.

These perspectives fed and directed my creative practice throughout my time working on *Hum*. *Hum* received its premiere in Detroit at Wasserman Projects on 17 September 2016. The performers were New Music Detroit, poet Jamaal May, and conductor Michelle Merrill. Like *Gassed Shell (Severe)*, *Hum* began as an opportunity to creatively engage with poetry of exceptional beauty and depth written by an artist I

admired; ultimately, the piece also became a means for exploring and promulgating new and alternative perceptions about the Motor City's future.

"Having it both ways": a biography of Jamaal May[1]

Jamaal May was born in Detroit, Michigan on 17 April 1982. Save for a couple of periods in the 2000s and 2010s, May has lived in Detroit all his life. May's upbringing was typical of many Detroiters, with both his parents earning a steady wage by working on the assembly line at General Motors. His childhood was happy and filled with love; nevertheless, May remembers being "a sceptical kid" who "look[ed] sideways a lot" whilst growing up.[2] A shy and anxious youth, he has described how he became increasingly aware of being alone during his younger years. These complex thoughts were difficult for May to articulate during that time; however, he has recently reflected these feelings are something he has carried and wrestled with his entire life.

May did not display a strong interest in poetry as a child, however he often created comic books, writing and illustrating his own storyboards. In hindsight, May recognises that storytelling was always an important aspect of family interactions, although not necessarily at a conscious level. His father, Claude, was a religious person who later became a Baptist minister. Claude's Bible-teaching method followed what May described as a "griot-type approach."[3] Claude's sermons often couched their core themes within a broader narrative; he was expert at using stories to convey a message.

After finishing high school, in 2001 May moved to Orlando, Florida to study sound engineering. Returning to Detroit in 2004, May—then going under the moniker 'Versiz'— began to work as a freelance audio engineer. He produced tracks for hip-hop artists such as M1 from Dead Prez and Umar Bin Hassan from The Last Poets, and collaborated with Professor Griff from Public Enemy. He also recorded his debut hip-hop album entitled *Binary Soul*.[4] The album received some critical acclaim; Kahn

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[1] The information for Jamaal May's biography comes largely from three interviews I conducted with him. The first two interviews occurred whilst I was in Detroit in October 2015, whilst the third—an extended Skype interview—happened in March 2017.
[2] Jamaal May, "Interview with Author," 2 October 2015, Detroit, Michigan, recording held by author.
[3] May, "Interview with Author." A griot is a West African poet, musician and storyteller responsible for the oral history of their tribe or village.
[4] Released independently, I believe the album is now out of print.

Davison described May as "a rather persuasive lyricist…[who had] exploded on Detroit's hip-hop scene like an M-80 in a henhouse."[5]

May's first serious move towards writing poetry also occurred that year. His focus began to shift away from audio production and hip-hop, and he became active in the city's burgeoning 'poetry slam' scene.[6] His timing was fortuitous; previous walls between the city's literary poets and the new so-called 'performance poets' were beginning to break down.[7] Indeed, Detroit poets on both sides of the literary divide had sensed the value in working together, and, as a result, were creating new opportunities for both traditional page poets and new spoken word artists. As part of this process, slam poetry—once seen as a threat to the established literary and academic poetry traditions—was recognised for its ability to reach out to a new and divergent audience.[8]

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[5] Kahn Davison, "City Slang: Binary Soul," *Detroit Metro Times*, 14 August 2004, accessed 20 September 2019, http://www.metrotimes.com/city-slang/archives/2004/08/14/binary-soul.

[6] A poetry slam is a competitive public poetry event that uses elimination rounds to determine a winner.

[7] "Performance Poetry," in *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, ed. Dinah Birch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, 7th edition). Performance poetry is "poetry specifically written to be performed out loud. The work may sometimes transfer successfully to the printed page, but it's true power usually lies in the moment of public performance."

[8] Jonathan Cunningham, "Detroit's Poet Society," *Model D*, Issue Media Group, 21 March 2006, online magazine, accessed 13 March 2017, http://www.modeldmedia.com/features/poetry37.aspx.

Figure 4-1. Jamaal May. Photo supplied by Jamaal May.

Inspired by this newly discovered scene, Jamaal May threw himself into his work: "I was writing new stuff every week…it was like boot camp."[9] He attended up to four weekly slams, doing spots all over Detroit. Seven weeks after he moved away from hip-hop, May became the Motor City's slam poetry champion. May and his manager, Khalid El-Hakim, immediately started booking local and out-of-town gigs, capitalising on his recent success. Soon after, May was living as a full-time artist. This change of life was unexpected for May. He states, "it was kind of surreal, because I hadn't planned for it…I would just follow where passion and challenge drew me."[10] May would often spend long periods on the road, driving between cities. It was a cottage-

[9] May, "Interview with Author."
[10] May, "Interview with Author."

style existence; performing a many as seventy live readings a year at slam poetry venues and colleges, and selling CDs at shows. Notwithstanding the financial uncertainty, this kind of lifestyle provided him with enough income to survive.

However, despite the constant touring and the positive reception of his work, May still felt he was a novice when it came to writing and performing poetry. When reflecting upon this period, he states, "I didn't know anything at all…it was almost like I checked out of my body, and then came back to it [after each performance]."[11] Determined to improve his skills, he sought professional guidance. Fortunately, in early 2006, May secured the tutelage of Vievee Francis, an influential Detroit poet now based at Dartmouth College. Francis facilitated creative workshops for Motor City poets, and suggested he come along. Subsequently, after sensing May's talent and commitment, Francis mentored May comprehensively within this environment. Francis's role in shaping May's career cannot be underestimated; he says of her influence, "Vievee gave me everything."[12]

She guided his writing and craftsmanship, as well as more practical skills such as promotion. Later, once May had better developed his creative technique, she encouraged him to submit his work to various American poetry periodicals; as a result, over the coming years a number of poetry and literary journals accepted his work for publication.[13] She encouraged him to start teaching poetry in the Detroit public school system. Lastly, with Francis's assistance, Warren Wilson College in Vermont accepted May into a Masters of Fine Arts, despite his lack of an undergraduate degree in English.

May's time at Warren Wilson College between 2009 and 2011 was productive, sparking the genesis of what would later become *Hum*, his first book of poetry. He composed some of its early poems during this period; he also settled on the book's title after his tutor Matthew Olzmann suggested it to him.[14] However, in the first instance, the idea of

[11] May, "Interview with Author."
[12] Katrina Vandenburg and Taylor (Doc) Burkard, "An Interview with Jamaal May," *Water-Stone Review*, 18 (2015): 110.
[13] Jamaal May, "Granada," *Callaloo*, 33, no. 4 (Spring 2010): 1008–9; Jamaal May, "I Do Have a Seam," *Muzzle Magazine*, no. 4 (Spring 2011), accessed 21 July 2019, https://www.muzzlemagazine.com/jamaal-may-1.html; Jamaal May, "Neat," *Muzzle Magazine*, no. 4 (Spring 2011), accessed 21 July 2019, https://www.muzzlemagazine.com/jamaal-may-2.html; Jamaal May, "The Man Who Paints Helicopters and Mountains," *Minnesota Review*, 79 (1 November 2012): 6–7.
[14] A fellow poet, Matthew Olzmann is also Vievee Francis's husband.

consciously writing poetry about Detroit had no appeal for May. Indeed, as Detroit hurtled towards America's largest recorded municipal bankruptcy in 2011, May initially saw nothing of relevance within his city to write about. He believed memorialising former cultural institutions like Motown and the abandoned Michigan Railway Station was trite and artificial. Furthermore, he did not perceive other poets were writing exciting Detroit-inspired verses; he later reflected, "Everything coming out about Detroit was really lazy and superficial."[15]

Rejecting the idea of writing about Detroit, May looked elsewhere for inspiration. He decided to focus his creative attention on what he has subsequently described as, "the thing that's shaky, that's scary, that's dangerous."[16] In May's case, these things were interpersonal relationships, and what he calls "interiority;" exploring the deeper intricacies of people's innermost lives.[17] This decision proved to be a pivotal point for his future creative output. After a period of writing from this perspective, it dawned on May that he <u>was</u> writing about Detroit and its narrative, but from a different viewpoint than that portrayed in the media at the time. He observes:

> …We [we]re talking about what's abandoned [in Detroit], what used to be here, what might be here tomorrow…[however] I was thinking but what about us, we're just <u>here</u>...being present in the moment.[18]

Following this moment of realisation, Detroit became the focal point of May's draft manuscript for *Hum*. Indeed, he made subsequent editorial adjustments to change a title or the shape of a poem, to align the text more closely with his newly discovered interpretation of Detroit. In 2013, *Hum*'s publication attracted critical acclaim, winning a Beatrice Hawley Award and an American Library Association Notable Book Award. May also received a nomination for an NAACP Image Award and was a finalist for the Tufts Discovery Prize.

Following *Hum*'s success, May was in constant demand. His already busy schedule became more hectic, as he received bookings to give workshops and lectures at

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[15] Vandenburg and Burkard, "An Interview with Jamaal May," 114.
[16] Vandenburg and Burkard, "An Interview with Jamaal May," 107.
[17] Jamaal May, *Hum* (Farmington, ME: Alice James Books, 2013), dedication page. May dedicates *Hum* to "the interior lives of Detroiters."
[18] May, "Interview with Author."

universities, colleges and schools throughout the United States. In 2014, May received the Kenyon Review Fellowship, requiring him to reside at Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. During his three-year tenure, he taught and conducted creative research. Moreover, a fulltime stipend provided the poet with financial security and stability, allowing him to publish his next book of poetry, *The Big Book of Exit Strategies*, in 2016.[19]

May has been the recipient of numerous awards throughout his relatively short career. These include a Spirit of Detroit Award, an Indiana Review Poetry Prize, and fellowships from Cave Canem, Bread Loaf, The Frost Place, the Lannan Foundation and the Stadler Center for Poetry at Bucknell University. He was also a recipient of the 2015 Civitella Ranieri Fellowship and the 2017 Benjamin H. Danks Award. In addition to Kenyon College, he has also taught in the English faculties of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and Wayne State University, Detroit.

May's approach to creating poetry is both visceral and cerebral. He constantly seeks to challenge himself, and in turn, his audience. He observes, "Art for me is a participatory event. To do that, you have to leave some work for the readers to do."[20] May searches for what is beneath the ostensible, seeking to trace ideas back to his childhood and to explore his sense of loneliness. He allows his intuition to follow ideas to places that sometimes seem personally uncomfortable, noting,

> I don't always go into a poem wanting to address a specific issue…I'm usually led by language and discover what's nagging me through the process of arguing with a draft.[21]

May sees a personal connection to the narrative role of bards of previous generations and makes no distinction between poetry written on the page and poetry that is internalised and performed from memory. He identifies strongly with the storytelling element attached to his work, describing his creative process as "old school." Furthermore, he believes, "All poetry comes from the epic…it always comes from the

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[19] Jamaal May, *The Big Book of Exit Strategies* (Farmington, ME: Alice James Books, 2016).
[20] Vandenburg and Burkard, "An Interview with Jamaal May," 112.
[21] Michelle Aldredge, "The Sunday Poem: Jamaal May's *Hum*," *Gwarlingo*, 5 April 2014, online blog/magazine, accessed 13 April 2017, https://www.gwarlingo.com/2014/the-sunday-poem-jamaal-mays-hum/.

drum circle."[22] In other words, May's work is deeply rooted in observation and knowledge passed on from previous generations; the links back to his childhood, particularly his father's sermons, are apparent.

Irony also plays an important part in May's work. He notes that he is often fighting the meaning of words and that his poems are always shifting against him. He revels in the challenge of setting up ideas, and then immediately negating them in the next line. This blurring of distinctions and use of ephemerality allows May to move fluidly around a narrative, often never fully attaching himself to any fixed definition or perspective. (Henry Louis Gates defines this approach to writing as "signifying," and argues that it is a common historical thread amongst much African-American literature).[23]

Jamaal May is interested in layers, and allowing readers to make up their own minds. He sees himself as an incubator of ideas, rather than a teller of truths. He says of his art, "A poem is a place where I try to have it both ways, that's why I love it as a medium."[24]

The origins of *Hum* as a musical work

My composition *Hum* traces its roots back to 2004 and my first experience of slam poetry in Detroit.[25] What I heard excited me; whilst the energy and attitude had a familiar hip-hop sensibility, I had not previously witnessed the passionate and visceral sophistication of live slam poetry. I felt the rhymes were more refined, and that traditional literary devices, such as metaphor and irony, played a more substantial role that what I had observed in hip-hop and rap.

Two years later, Khalid El-Hakim told me the Detroit Symphony Orchestra was contemplating the commission of a new piece combining slam poetry with classical

[22] Jamaal May, "Interview with Jamaal May," interviewed by Stephen Henderson, *Detroit Today with Stephen Henderson*, NPR, WDET 101.9FM, 7 April 2016, accessed 20 September 2019, https://www.mixcloud.com/detroittodaywithstephenhenders/40716-daniel-okrent-jamaal-may-and-a-book-on-the-civil-war/.
[23] Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), xix–xxviii.
[24] May, "Interview with Author."
[25] I was in Detroit to interview Umar Bin Hassan from The Last Poets. It was during this trip that I developed a friendship with Khalid El-Hakim, who graciously allowed me to stay at his house whilst I conducted my research. Although El-Hakim was managing Jamaal May at the time, I did not meet him during my stay.

music; the orchestra particularly wanted to work with May (known then as 'Versiz').[26] Although at the time I did not know May or his work, El-Hakim—who was familiar with my music—sensed this could be an opportunity for 'Versiz' and I to collaborate on a project. He suggested I speak with May to discuss some ideas.

I established direct contact with May in early 2007, and over the next six years, we exchanged ideas for our collaboration. The early stages of working together were challenging. It was often hard to maintain momentum and keep exploring new concepts when separated by a long distance.[27] However, I observed that when we spoke, our mutual enthusiasm to work together was palpable, and this motivated me to continue pursuing the creative partnership.[28]

Moreover, as May shared new poems with me between 2007 and 2013, the continual maturation of his style and concepts within his creative practice impressed me. Tropes such as war and power, which were central to early poems like *Liberian Sun,* faded somewhat after May started focussing on human interactions. This change of thematic focus became further evident when May described how he had discovered a serendipitous literary connection to his hometown of Detroit that would guide and shape the direction of his first published poetry collection. Indeed, whilst following the success of his book *Hum* from a distance, I sensed Detroit would play a role in the development of our collaboration.

After some time away to compose *Gassed Shell (Severe)*, I returned to what I had informally labelled the 'Detroit' project at the beginning of 2015. I re-established contact with May; in the interim his star had continued to rise. His 2014 poem "There Are Birds Here"—published after the release of *Hum*—further solidified his reputation in the United States as a serious writer; Dennis Parker described him as a Detroit poet

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[26] "Proof, a Rapper, Is Killed at Detroit Club," *New York Times*, 12 April 2006, E2. El-Hakim told me about the DSO commission personally when he was in Australia as the tour manager for D-12 rapper Proof. Tragically, within weeks of returning to the United States, Proof died in a gunfight at a bar in Detroit.

[27] Indeed, there were long stretches where May and I did not speak for months at a time, particularly when May was studying. During these periods, I sometimes wondered whether we would be back in touch with each other.

[28] By the end of 2007, it was clear the DSO were not going to proceed with commissioning a new composition. Nevertheless, May and I both felt we had established a good working relationship, so we agreed to continue developing material and present the project to another ensemble sometime into the future.

drawn to “the importance of home and place.”[29] May had also met with New Music Detroit, the city’s leading contemporary classical ensemble, and they had formally commissioned a new piece, although the premiere date was undecided. (The group had also indicated their desire for a new work to me via email). At this point, New Music Detroit’s involvement sharpened the focus of our collaboration, yet numerous aspects of the project needed to be resolved. Indeed, the project had no official title, May continued to write and put forward new poems, and I had not settled upon creative elements such compositional structure and the work’s overarching narrative. In short, I was unsure what I wanted to communicate with the piece.

Re-reading May’s book *Hum*, I recalled how the narrative of Detroit had imbedded itself into his writing. The poet’s love for his hometown and its ongoing future—which I noted when I first read the draft manuscript in 2013—were now clear and unambiguous. As such, the title of our collaborative work became obvious; *Hum*. I suggested this to May, and he enthusiastically agreed.

As I set to work on *Hum*, May gave me freedom to decide upon the texts for the composition.[30] I quickly realised the choice of poems—and the order of their presentation—was crucial to the broad arc of the work’s narrative. What’s more, my role in the collaboration involved more than just my compositional skills. I was laying out my own interpretation of Detroit’s history through May’s poetry and fulfilling, as it were, a role of the composer as historian. Some complications immediately arose. What authority did I have to creatively reflect upon the history of Detroit? Should I prioritise a quest for authenticity—telling the ‘truth’ about Detroit—in the work, or was it acceptable to employ artistic licence in my compositional storytelling? How should I reconcile my own understanding of Detroit’s history with Jamaal May’s poetic interpretation? Could I only see Detroit through his eyes—as an insider—or would my sense of the city as an outsider transform May into a source rather than a collaborator?

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[29] Dennis Parker, “The Promise and Hope of Detroit,” *Black History Month Blogs*, American Civil Liberties Union, 21 February 2014, online blog, accessed 7 June 2017, https://www.aclu.org/blog/promise-and-hope-detroit.

[30] With that said, I always sought May’s agreement regarding the choice and order of the poems. Interestingly, he never objected to any of my decisions, and the only time he sought to influence the choice of poems was when he suggested adding *To Detroiters I Too Might Have Called By The Wrong Names* to the piece.

I began to address these questions as I prepared my preliminary compositional materials. From the outset, I was cognisant that May's poetry brought a particular kind of legitimacy to our project. The positive reception and critical acclaim given to his work validated his perspective on Detroit's history. From my viewpoint, however, I was an Australian composer engaging with poetry inspired by a city that I had only visited once. I needed to further my own understanding about Detroit. Thus, in 2015, I undertook a fieldwork trip to the city to see and hear firsthand what its history felt like on the ground, and in the moment. Whilst "foot stepping"[31] around Detroit's streets, I sensed I was watching and listening to the implications of the city's recent social and political upheavals as they unfolded in front of me. The downtown area was in a state of reconstruction due to the installation of a new streetcar system, and ironically, the sounds that I heard—large machines doing heavy work—alluded to Detroit's automotive power from a previous time. However, these mechanical sounds served a very different purpose. Rather than making cars, this industrial machinery was resurrecting and rejuvenating the urban landscape of the city in order to save it. Emily Robinson notes the value of such sensory experiences, stating, "an encounter with *the actual place* where something happened can produce intellectual insights, allowing us to join up the dots and make connections which may not have been possible in the abstract."[32] By visiting Detroit, I gained some perspective on what it might feel like to live there. At the very least, I had a much clearer sense of the aural and visual cityscape that influenced Jamaal May's creativity.

After returning from my fieldwork trip, I prepared a shortlist of poems for *Hum*. These were, in order, "There Are Birds Here," "Pomegranate Means Grenade," "The Sky, Now Black With Birds," "The Hum of Zug Island" and "Ask What I've Been." ("Ask

[31] Richard Holmes, *Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985), 67, 136. Foot stepping is an approach to historical research that involves travelling to a location to experience it much in the same way as the subject or person under examination. Foot stepping takes its name from the book *Footsteps*, written by the biographer Richard Holmes. Whilst constructing biographies about some well-known Romantic writers, Holmes realised he had to resist the influence of previous scholarly interpretations; he needed to formulate his opinions based upon his own detailed research. Hence, to get as close to his subjects as possible, Holmes attempted to travel in their footsteps as much as possible. On page 67, Holmes describes this as, "attempting to re-create the pathway, the journey, of someone else's life through the physical past." Later, on page 136, he elaborates further, stating, "My urge was to go directly to the original materials—and most especially to the *places*—for myself, and risk the numerous details that I might consequently (and did on occasions) get wrong. I journeyed, in every sense, alone."

[32] Emily Robinson, "Touching the Void: Affective History and the Impossible," *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, 14, no. 4 (2010): 506. https://doi.org/10.1080/13642529.2010.515806.

What I've Been" was later replaced with "To Detroiters I Too May Have Called By The Wrong Names").[33] As I considered this set of poems as a whole, a sense of the universal experience of metropolitan life became apparent. For me, May touched upon a collective understanding that binds urban people from different cities together. He noted that those who wrote well about cities often gave, "these looks at *their* city that reverberate in a way that makes you think about something in *your* city."[34] The idea of pursuing an authentic Detroit story within the piece thus became less of a hindrance by recognising what my lived experience brought to the piece. My own sense of place would inevitably inform the work; in fact, I needed to embrace this. Hence, I decided my compositional role was not necessarily to get the story of Detroit right. Rather, by creatively reflecting upon Detroit and Detroiters, my task was to enable a listener to reflect upon the way they lived within their own locality. In a similar way, Kate Bowan has highlighted the unintended consequences arising from historically informed performers being very close to their subject matter. In her chapter on authenticity and history, she argues that these musicians—in their attempts to recreate veridical musical experiences of the past on period instruments—often inadvertently, "have the...effect of making [the past] seem further away."[35] Conversely, in my case, giving my voice a place within the storytelling element of *Hum* did not deflect the lens away from Detroit, but rather brought the Motor City into a closer, sharper focus. In fact, by combining my own creative experiences with those of Jamaal May, I believe the work gained more authenticity.

[33] On occasion with the chapter, I have abbreviated the title of "To Detroiters I Too May Have Called By The Wrong Names" to "To Detroiters" for the sake of brevity.
[34] May, "Interview with Author."
[35] Bowan, "R. G. Collingwood, Historical Reenactment and the Early Music Revival," 151.

Figure 4-2. "Detroit vs. Everybody," a t-shirt mounted outside a house being renovated in Woodbridge, Detroit, September 2016. Photo supplied by author

"The third thing": *Hum*, a musical work

From the outset, there were a few considerations informing and shaping my compositional process for *Hum*. Some of these arose because *Hum* was a collaborative work, whilst my personal compositional aesthetic determined others.

Firstly, I had a manifest goal to support Jamaal's poems, and to remain true to the overall narrative created by the combination of poems used in the piece. As with *Gassed Shell (Severe)*, I decided that the text, and *ergo* the speaker of the text, should not be perceived as subservient to the music. My previous experience as a theatre and film composer again reinforced the importance of being able to hear dialogue over any

accompanying music. Moreover, any concerns about the audience being able to ascertain the meaning of May's text would diminish my compositional intentions.

On the other hand, I was also committed to allowing the musicians to feature within the work. Thus, whilst the text was the most important element during the spoken sections, I remained conscious of integrating the ensemble as a single unit when they functioned in an accompanying capacity. Furthermore, by employing rhythmic complexity within these accompaniment sections, I intended the ensemble to bring a dialogical component to the broader texture of the music. Even when playing a backing role, I wanted to create the perception that the music and dialogue were involved in a discourse. Elsewhere, I composed the instrumental sections between each poem to highlight the virtuosity of the players, to contrast with the spoken sections of *Hum*, and to build drama between each poem.

Finally, I planned to incorporate some form of improvisation into the work. As I discussed in relation to *Gassed Shell (Severe),* the nexus between musical notation and improvisation has been a feature of my compositional philosophy and practice for some time. In the case of *Hum*, Detroit's historical narrative—and May's poetry—seemed a natural fit for a creative approach prioritising flexibility, a multiplicity of outcomes, and a performative environment where music could change 'in the moment' without intervention from the composer.

My creative work on *Hum* began in mid-2015, and intensified during my fieldwork trip to Detroit in September of that year. My compositional process began with a rhythmic transcription of Jamaal May's reading of "There Are Birds Here." This initial act of analysing May's spoken performance allowed me to identify musical elements that would subsequently become fundamental to the overall design of the piece. It also triggered my examination of three literary concepts embedded within the poem; birds, the tension between Detroit's built and natural environment, and hope and resilience. These tropes became important to the overall formal design of *Hum*. In fact, they functioned as activating points of creative departure for my compositional process, and served as conduits for the broader themes I intended to reflect upon within the piece.

Literary themes

"There are Birds Here"—the opening poem of *Hum*—is May's first poem speaking directly to Detroit.[36] Birds also feature in "The Sky, Now Black With Birds" and "To Detroiters I Too May Have Called By The Wrong Names." As such, birds are a central literary trope in a number of the poems used in *Hum*, functioning as a recurring and unifying motive across the piece. May's literary focus on birds unintentionally emerged within his writing. Furthermore, their symbolism is something that changes between poems. He notes, "I was…unpacking the birds, and I noticed they appeared in these different ways...they became a moving target."[37] Highlighting this further, May deliberately shifts the implied meaning of birds within the opening stanza of "There Are Birds Here." They begin as

> metaphors
> for what is trapped
> between fences
> and buildings.
> ("There Are Birds Here," 4–7)

In this context, birds appear to represent survival. May clarifies this, stating

> [t]he birds are here
> to root around for bread
> the girl's hands tear
> and toss like confetti.
> ("There Are Birds Here," 8–11)

However, later in the poem the birds transform into symbols of hope when May describes a boy's local neighbourhood as being

> tattered and feathered,
> as anything else,
> as shadow pierced by sun
> and light parted

[36] Vandenburg and Burkard, "An Interview with Jamaal May," 113.
[37] May, "Interview with Author."

> by shadow-dance as anything else.
> ("There Are Birds Here," 23–27)

This transition of the bird trope from being a metaphor for subsistence to that of optimism is an example of May's strategic wrestling with textual meanings and symbolism within his work. He says of this process,

> You're battling the words as you're using them, because the words are trying to lock things down…but I'm trying to use words to say nothing that's static; everything's moving.[38]

The bird trope was the first concept I tackled when starting my compositional process. I believed that birds could serve as an excellent compositional metaphor for Detroit's oft-neglected "moments of serenity,"[39] to recall Collins George's phrase quoted in the previous chapter. They could become the musical embodiment of Detroit's resilience, and the city's desire to continue, to keep on embracing life.

When exploring ways to incorporate the concept of birds into *Hum*, I was mindful of the central role of birds within the music of Oliver Messiaen; I did not want to write a piece that sounded like a poor imitation of one of his compositions.[40] Moreover, I was cognisant that birds feature in the work of Australian composers such as Peter Sculthorpe and Ross Edwards, who have found inspiration in the country's landscape.[41] As such, the musical settings of Australian birdsong have often been within the context of beauty and tranquillity. In the case of *Hum*, although I did not intend to use birdsong in an overtly clunky or twee fashion, I considered May's concept of birds to be more unpredictable and ephemeral, and this sense of instability needed embodiment within the compositional material.

[38] May, "Interview with Author."
[39] George, "A Musical Portrait of Detroit."
[40] Works such as *Oiseaux Exotiques* and *Catalogue d'Oiseaux* utilise birdcalls Messiaen transcribed in France, Asia and the Americas as important creative building blocks.
[41] Peter Sculthorpe's works featuring birdsong include *Mangrove* and *Kakadu*; Ross Edwards's bird-inspired compositions include *Bright Birds and Sparrows*, *Bird Spirit Dreaming* and *Sacred Kingfisher Psalms.* Other Australian composers including David Lumsdaine and Nigel Westlake have also composed pieces incorporating birdsong.

The type of birds that May might have been referencing in his poems also intrigued me. Which particular birds could he hear outside his window? This desire for authenticity led me to undertake some research about birds of the American Midwest, so I could reference and incorporate their songs into the piece in some way. I ultimately chose the American robin, as it is the official state bird of Michigan and a bird readily found in Detroit.[42] However, after listening to a number of recordings of American robin birdcalls, I discovered they have a wide variety of songs. As a result, I needed to define, (and refine), my parameters in terms of integrating and grafting the American robin's song with other creative aspects of the work. I had already decided the concept of repetition—whether repetitive rhythms or the reiteration of pitches—would be an important musical element within *Hum*. With this in mind, I settled upon a short American robin birdcall that emphasised repetition through its use of two discrete recurring pitches. Furthermore, through its freely measured interpretation of the repeated notes, this specific birdsong passage also fitted with my broader compositional intentions regarding pulse and rhythmic stability within *Hum*. (I will provide an in-depth discussion of my musical treatment of birdsong later in the chapter).

Another important theme I observed in "There Are Birds Here," as well as *Hum*'s other poems, was the apparent tension between Detroit's natural environment and built environment. By the time I began closely researching Detroit's recent social history in 2013, the Motor City's so-called "urban prairie"[43] phenomenon had already made the city into an international news story.[44] With the metropolitan population of Detroit in steady decline, numerous residential areas had hollowed out, leaving houses within these neighbourhoods abandoned. Many of these former dwellings had subsequently fallen into disrepair; on occasion, overzealous Detroiters had taken things a step further and burned them down. Either way, the burden of removing these crumbling structures had fallen to the city council.[45] Afterwards, the vacant land left behind became fertile ground for weeds and wildflowers, which started to overrun these once-occupied parts

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[42] "Learn: State Symbols," *SeekingMichigan.org*, Michigan Historical Center, 2012, accessed 21 April 2019, http://seekingmichigan.org/learn/state-symbols/nerd-room.
[43] Gallagher, *Reimagining Detroit*, 21.
[44] Nate Millington, "Post-Industrial Imaginaries: Nature, Representation and Ruin in Detroit, Michigan," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37, no. 1 (2013): 279–96. In his abstract, Millington notes that "Detroit, Michigan is increasingly understood as a particularly hybrid metropolis that complicates conceptual divisions between city and nature."
[45] Charlie LeDuff, *Detroit: An American Autopsy* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2013), 46–57; Martelle, *Detroit: A Biography*, 257–58.

of the Motor City. As such, these areas of apparent ruralism within a city made Detroit unique when compared to other American cities.[46]

Although I was aware of this problem before visiting Detroit, experiencing it first-hand during my 2015 fieldwork trip to the city highlighted the extent of the issue. From an outsider's perspective, the large tracks of overgrown areas encroaching upon the metropolis suggested the size of the city was becoming unmanageable and needed addressing. Mark Binelli has summarised this problem succinctly; "there was no getting around it: Detroit had too much space."[47]

In the early stages of planning the formal design of *Hum*, I realised New Music Detroit's line-up inferred the concept of the clash between Detroit's built and natural environment through the construction materials of the ensemble's various instruments. Subsequently, I chose to sort the musicians into two groups, which I labelled 'built environment' and 'natural environment' instruments (see table 2 below).[48] These categorical definitions were fluid and subjective to the extent that I allowed my artistic sensibilities to pragmatically influence my decisions when required. Thus, as much as the traditional orchestral family of each instrument, and their fabrication components—such as wood and metal—influenced their final location, I also considered which timbral combinations would best support and highlight the narrative at different points in the work. From a structural viewpoint, categorising the instruments in this way gave me options for musically engaging with the environmental clash concept.

[46] Gallagher, *Reimagining Detroit*, 22.
[47] Binelli, *The Last Days of Detroit*, 87.
[48] I do acknowledge that these categories have an element of ambiguity and were informed by my personal interpretation and artistic needs. For example, both the tenor and soprano saxophone are made of brass, however they conventionally classified as members of the woodwind family within an orchestral context. When it came to organising my categories for *Hum*, I decided to include the saxophones in the natural environment category, as I wanted them to be able to present the bird motive on occasion, particularly the soprano saxophone. Hence, I decided the constructive material of the instruments were less important than the role they would play within the piece. I also made similar decisions for the piano, violin and cello, which all have wooden bodies and metal strings.

'Built environment' instruments	'Natural environment' instruments
1. Tuned percussion (vibraphone, marimba, glockenspiel)	1. B flat and bass clarinet
2. Auxiliary percussion	2. Soprano and tenor saxophone
3. Drum kit	3. Violin
4. Pianoforte	4. Cello

Table 2. The makeup of *Hum*'s 'built environment' and 'natural environment' instrumental categories

The final literary theme I explored in *Hum* was hope and the prospect of a positive future for Detroit. Jamaal May infuses his poetry with hope and optimism, albeit often cautious. Although May does not shy away from the daily realities of life in Detroit—the city's urban decay and crime, and the despair and anxiety of a population uncertain about their future—he nonetheless manages to emerge with his faith in the city, and humanity, generally intact. Moreover, numerous poems published in his 2013 book *Hum* served as a thoughtful counter-narrative to the dominant contemporaneous perspective proclaiming Detroit as an urban disaster with a bleak outlook. May's attitude also resonated with others at the time. Corinna Bain described *Hum* as "a book of contrasts between innocence and experience, and a book of place, intimately and proudly about Detroit."[49] David Winter, acknowledging that May's literary path was indeed that of "a spiritual voice in dialogue with a post-industrial landscape," saw how May's vulnerability within his work conveyed a sense of resilience to the reader. Winter perceived the outcome of this positivity, sensing that "it is May's human touch that fills these poems with the irreducible combination of feeling and music."[50] Furthermore, Mark Eleveld recognised that May was not afraid to tackle big themes, including, "an

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[49] Corrina Bain, "*Hum* by Jamaal May (review)," *Muzzle Magazine*, Summer/Spring 2014, online magazine, accessed 9 June 2017, http://www.muzzlemagazine.com/jamaal-may-review.html.

[50] David Winter, "Review of *Hum* by Jamaal May," *The Journal: a literary magazine*, The Department of English, Ohio State University, 5 September 2014, accessed 9 June 2017, http://thejournalmag.org/archives/9160.

exploration of love and fear, power and fear, drugs and death."[51] He also noted the poet's interest in sound and storytelling.

In contrast, Joelle Biele interpreted *Hum* from a different perspective, arguing that May's poetry did not attempt to sentimentalise Detroit's plight. Biele commented that the poet's version of Detroit was "littered with broken glass, shattered vials, and discarded syringes,"[52] and suggested that May's urban-realistic commentary on Detroit was a priority across the collection of poems. She maintained, furthermore, "aside from a few scattered crows, there is not a bird in sight."[53] For me, this final comment seems misinformed, or at the very least, fails to fully comprehend the significance of May's poetic resistance and the psychological mountain that he and his fellow Detroiters were seeking to climb. Moreover, May had already addressed Biele's "not a bird in sight" critique in his work, effectively rendering the observation redundant before the publication of her review of *Hum*. His poem "There Are Birds Here," published by the Poetry Foundation in February 2014,[54] locates birds as a central element in May's Detroit; the poem's title alone clearly spells out May's thoughts on the subject. In direct contrast, the importance of the metaphorical visibility of Detroit's birds was not lost on Dennis Parker, the Director of the ACLU's Racial Justice Program. He believed that "There Are Birds Here" reminded the citizens of the Motor City that "Detroit is no wasteland, but a place where children live, play and dream."[55]

I generally agreed with these assertions about May's optimistic view of Detroit's future. As a result, capturing May's sense of hope and resilience became a significant compositional goal for me; I saw how the idea of survival underpinned and linked each of *Hum*'s five poems. Nonetheless, I believed it was important to be sensitive and measured with May's positivism; I did not want it to become to a cliché or sentimental platitude of superficial value. May's poetry is not didactic; he never seeks to lecture or provide answers to what he observes. In fact, as Marty Cain points out, the poet is willing, "to expose his own vulnerabilities, but…he isn't paralysed by his personal

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[51] Mark Eleveld, "*Hum* (review)," *The Booklist*, 15 November 2013, 9.
[52] Joelle Biele, "Microreview: Jamaal May, *Hum*," *Boston Review*, 26 June 2014, online literary forum, accessed 10 June 2017, http://bostonreview.net/poetry-microreview/joelle-biele-microreview-jamaal-may-hum.
[53] Biele, "Microreview: Jamaal May, *Hum*."
[54] May composed "There Are Birds Here" after submitting the manuscript of *Hum* for publication. The poem was included in May's 2016 publication *The Big Book of Exit Strategies.*
[55] Parker, "The Promise and Hope of Detroit."

perspective."[56] More often than not, May wants readers to make up their own minds. In short, he is optimistic, but he makes no guarantees. With May's perspective in mind, whilst organising and compiling my pre-compositional concepts, I decided to treat the idea of hope as what I described as a 'push-pull'[57] concept, due to the challenges it faces within May's text. An inherently unstable trope, I embedded hope into the composition using musical devices built around tension and resolution.

Formal design

As a starting point, the compositional structure of *Hum* draws upon the *concerto grosso* form of the Baroque period. In the traditional context of this form, an ensemble (known as the *ripieno*) alternates with a smaller group of featured instrumentalists, called the *concertino.* I imitated this concept in *Hum* by allocating the entire ensemble to play under the five poems, functioning as the *concertino*. This musical scenario offered the broadest palette in terms of dynamics and intensity, as well as a wide spectrum of instrumental timbre. It also ensured I could properly support the drama of the text. The form of *Hum* is, thus:

1. Introduction (ensemble only)	2. *There Are Birds Here*	3. Episode One	4. *Pomegranate Means Grenade*
5. Episode Two	6. *The Sky, Now Black With Birds*	7. Episode Three	8. *The Hum of Zug Island*
9. Episode Four	10. *To Detroiters I Too May Have Called By The Wrong Names*		

Table 3. Formal design of *Hum*

The *concertino* sections in between each of the poems, which I called episodes, are a series of duets played by the instrumentalists. The structure for the four episodes is:

[56] Marty Cain, "*Hum* by Jamaal May (review)," *HtmlGiant*, 20 December 2013, online literary magazine/blog, accessed 12 June 2017, http://htmlgiant.com/reviews/hum-by-jamaal-may/.

[57] A 'push-pull' concept is my own term I used to summarise a musical gesture or passage within *Hum* that felt impeded or hindered in some manner. As such, it is not a technical term, but something visceral that sparked my creativity in particular ways. I did not discuss the concept with May, but, rather, identified it as a creative idea during the early stages of preparing to compose.

Episode	Instrumentation
Episode One:	cello (*natural*) and tuned percussion (*built*)
Episode Two:	B flat clarinet (*natural*) and piano (*built*)
Episode Three:	soprano saxophone (*natural*) and drumkit (*built*)
Episode Four:	violin and bass clarinet (both *natural*)

Table 4. Instrumentation of each episode in *Hum*

I founded my creative intentions for episodes 1 to 3 upon the idea of integrating two notionally opposite forces—the city's natural and built environment—to create a successful and positive union; specifically, the episodes are designed to function as a musical dialogue. Drawing on this optimistic perspective, such an approach allowed me to creatively allude to a hypothetical Detroit of tomorrow, where change has brought a welcome outcome for the city.

My musical characterisation of the integration concept manifests in several different ways throughout *Hum*. In episode 1, the cello (from the natural environment category) and tuned percussion (from the built environment) come together in *rubato* rhythmic unison, playing dynamically shifting phrases that unfold languidly upon cues from the conductor.

Figure 4-3. Hum, Andrew Harrison, Episode 1, bars 111–13, percussion 1 (vibraphone) and cello

[Listen]

Episode 2 emphasises integration between the clarinet and piano through a melody and accompaniment scenario, giving the episode a homophonic texture.

Figure 4-4. *Hum,* Harrison, Episode 2, bars 171–73, B♭ clarinet and piano

[Listen]

Although the clarinet and piano do not lock together in rhythmic unison like the cello and tuned percussion in episode 1, a level of collaboration between the instruments is nonetheless apparent in the second episode. Indeed, the piano's unfolding harmonic gestures provide both foundational support and dialogical interplay to the clarinet's melodic flourishes throughout the section.

The third episode of *Hum* contrasts sharply with episodes 1 and 2. In this case, I wanted the pairing of soprano saxophone and drums to represent the challenges Detroit faces in negotiating and managing its urban landscape. Thus, at certain moments throughout the episode the saxophone (of the natural environment category) and drums (from the built environment) appear to work together, whilst at other times they seem to be detached from each other. For example, in the first half of section 5, the drums improvise around a three-note motive that is rhythmically independent of the phrase played simultaneously by the saxophone. This changes in the section's second half when the instruments move towards closer rhythmic alignment by imitating each other using a repeating semiquaver triplet figure. (Improvisation is at the structural core of episode 3; I will discuss its importance to the work's narrative shortly).

Figure 4-5. *Hum,* Harrison, Episode 3, section 5, bar 221, soprano saxophone and percussion 2 (drums)

[Listen]

For the fourth episode of *Hum*, I chose to use instruments from the natural environment category only, in this case the bass clarinet and violin. I wanted this last instrumental section to act as a precursor for May's unabashed declaration of love for his hometown in the final poem of *Hum;* "To Detroiters I Too Might Have Called By The Wrong Names." In it, he infers that people, including himself, may have judged Detroit

incorrectly, and been too hasty to predict its demise. The poem opens with a personal apology from the poet.

> Sorry. When I called you a graveyard,
> I meant your round, stone teeth
> always make me laugh.
> ("To Detroiters" 1–3)

He then goes on to embrace the city's expanding natural environment,

> I called you a tangle of vines because
> you didn't let me fall
> out of love with your hair.
> ("To Detroiters" 6–8)

Later, he recalls the bird trope to reinforce the Motor City's survival, and signals Detroit as a place of potential excitement, energy and legend by suggesting it also houses dragons,

> that they may know there are birds here,
> yes, but also, here
> there be dragons—mad dragons, son.
> ("To Detroiters" 54–56)

Preceding *Hum*'s final poem, episode 4's bass clarinet and violin establish the context for the positive themes of "To Detroiters" by presenting an image of unison force during a series of driving fast-paced semiquaver phrases. These passages alternate with brief moments of reflective repose also reinforcing the idea of instrumental collaboration, with the bass clarinet's long notes providing support to the violin's melodic gestures. An example of this occurs between bars 277 and 283.

Figure 4-6. *Hum*, Harrison, Episode 4, bars 277–83, bass clarinet and violin

[Listen]

Pitch, harmony and thematic elements

I derived *Hum*'s pitch and thematic elements from a variety of methods, drawing upon directly upon extra-musical sources, and employing a process of experimentation and trial and error. At their core, these materials support the literary concepts found within the text, and contribute to the drama of the piece.

The aforementioned American robin birdsong provided me with material I transformed into important melodic elements for *Hum*. It also contributed to the formation of the intervallic collection I used for some of my harmonic ideas. The process of transcribing the original birdcall revealed two main pitches roughly a fourth apart, as well as numerous microtonal inflections that slid into these central notes.

All pitches are approximate.
The arrows indicate sliding freely between pitches.

First phrase

Second phrase

Figure 4-7. ***Hum,*** **Harrison, approximate transcription of American robin birdsong**

Some structural aspects of the original birdcall required no editing to suit my creative intentions for *Hum,* whilst others needed some adjustment. For instance, the birdsong's combination of more stable intervals—the perfect fourth[58] between the main notes—and less stable intervals—the minor seconds surrounding each main note—fitted well with my philosophical approach to tension and resolution. Conversely, whilst I found the microscopic detail of the original birdcall fascinating, I simplified the microtonal inflections within the bird motive I created for *Hum*, turning them into grace notes.[59] (I believed this minor change would not detract from my portrayal of birdsong within the piece).

The beginning of *Hum* highlight birds as an integral compositional element of the work. The first musical reference to birds occurs at bar 3 in the B♭ clarinet. The approach to the first note of the opening melodic fragment is reminiscent of the original American robin call. Two grace notes—G, a semitone below and A♮, a semitone above—precede the main melodic note, A♭. However, the melody then descends by an unstable tritone interval to D, rather than a perfect fourth heard in the original.

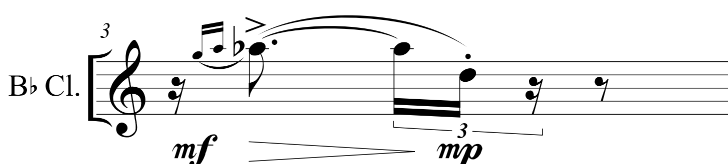

Figure 4-8. *Hum,* Harrison, bar 3, beats 1 and 2, opening gesture of bird melody presented by the B♭ clarinet

[Listen]

The melody then continues on the third beat of bar 3. Starting on E♭, the phrase moves up by an augmented fifth to B♮, then a perfect fourth to E♮. It then descends a tone to D before ascending again by a minor third, arriving briefly on F at the top of the stave, a major ninth above the starting note of the gesture. Swiftly, the phrase changes direction

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58 *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Fourth." Up to the 1900s, musicians generally considered perfect fourths (or just fourths) as consonant intervals only when viewed as an inversion of a perfect fifth. This changed in the twentieth century, when composers such as Igor Stravinsky and Béla Bartók used fourths as foundational elements of harmonic resolution. The extensive use of fourths within quartal harmonic structures in jazz also reinforced the stability of the interval.

59 The use of microtones, particularly for woodwind and string instruments, is not a new concept, of course. I could have spent more time working on the rhythmic and microtonal accuracy of the birdcall transcription. I was also confident the musicians of New Music Detroit would have been able to play any such ideas. However, the accuracy of the birdsong transcription was not overly important to the work, as I intended to subject it to a variety of compositional techniques that would alter it from the original version.

again, descending a major second from F to E♭, followed by a tritone to A before moving down a minor third to rest on F♯. The final flourish of this clarinet passage imitates the opening melodic fragment. Two grace notes—G and A—ascend by step to a B♭ before descending a relatively unstable minor sixth, closing the melody on D below the stave.

Figure 4-9. *Hum,* Harrison, bar 3, beat 3 to bar 8, remainder of bird melody presented by the B♭ clarinet

[Listen]

Like the opening guitar melody of *Gassed*, I wanted the trajectory of the clarinet phrase to feel slightly encumbered and awkward due to its angularity. This sense of melodic unpredictability not only tied in with May's shifting definition of birds, it also connected with the push-pull concept I ascribed to his cautious optimism.

The clarinet continues to present versions of the bird motive throughout the piece, underscoring the importance of the trope within the work's narrative. For example, in bars 78 and 79, a variation of the original motive responds to the textual description of birds as "metaphors for what is trapped between fences and buildings." ("There Are Birds Here" 4–7).

Figure 4-10. ***Hum,*** **Harrison, bars 76–79, B♭ clarinet and speaker**

[Listen]

Similarly, the bird motive also influences the clarinet's melodic material within episode 2.

Figure 4-11. ***Hum*****, Harrison, Episode 2, bars 168–70, B♭ clarinet**

[Listen]

Later, in the final bars of the piece, the clarinet plays a short phrase partly derived from the original bird motive.

Figure 4-12. ***Hum*****, Harrison, bars 397–403, B♭ clarinet**

[Listen]

This last musical reference to birds comes at the end of “To Detroiters,” directly after a moment where May proudly professes his love for Detroit, and declares the city will survive despite attempts on its existence.

> And when they come to defang you, Beast,
> Brother, Love, Sister, Art, City,
> may they find the streets jagged
> with the previous conquerors’ teeth.
> (“To Detroiters” 64–67)

In this context, I wanted the clarinet’s bird melody to reinforce and reflect May’s overall positivity about his city’s future. As such, this final statement functions as a bookend to the work’s opening bird motive, suggesting that the tumult and pain described at various stages throughout the piece has not managed to decimate Detroit; in the end, life goes on.

As demonstrated by the bird reference just described, linear melodic links to May’s optimism emerge throughout *Hum*. However, I also used the concept of tension and resolution inherent to harmony to capture the complexity and subtlety of the overarching message of tempered hope implied by the text’s broader narrative arc. Recalling the poet’s idea of “hav[ing] it both ways,”[60] at times I wanted the harmonic language of the work to reflect May’s belief in Detroit whilst simultaneously inferring the tragedy of the city’s story and the uncertainty of its future.

One example of my efforts to represent this is a sequence of three chords, which I labelled the ‘hope chords.’ This short harmonic series embodies the concept of a fragile conclusion through its implication of an F tonal or focal centre[61]—often suggested by the framing synchronous movement between the outermost voices— that is simultaneously tested by the intervallic structure of its inner voices. The hope chord sequence appears in *Hum* on three occasions, each time underscoring a significant

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[60] May, “Interview with Author.”

[61] Cross, *Harrison Birtwistle: Man, Mind, Music*, 209. I have borrowed the term ‘focal centre’ from Jonathan Cross, who uses it to highlight Harrison Birtwistle’s emphasis on the note D in *Melencolia I*. Describing Birtwistle’s compositional approach, Cross notes, “[o]ne significant point of contact is the note D, the work’s focal centre–I hesitate to describe it as a ‘tonal centre’ but it is an unusually clear gravitational point towards which the music is pulled at key moments during the course of the work.”

textual moment encapsulating a positive message that remains coloured by an element of uncertainty.

In its first fragmentary incarnation, an arpeggiated piano chord in bar 3 hints at the philosophical basis of the hope chord sequence. This fleeting gesture outlines a stable compound major sixth between the first note of the chord, F below the bass stave, and the final note, D♮ above the treble stave. However, the intervallic structure between the inner notes of the chord suggests a less stable harmony. An unstable major seventh interval occurs between the first bass clef F and the next note, E. A stable major sixth between E and middle C then offsets this, before unstable consecutive minor ninths—middle C to D♭ and D♭ to D♮—complete the chord.

Figure 4-13. *Hum*, Harrison, bars 3–4, piano

[Listen]

Following piano chords created for similarly ambiguous harmonic effect at bars 18, 31 and 70, the first full statement of the hope chord sequence occurs at bar 72 for the beginning of "There Are Birds Here." Six ensemble members perform the sequence in rhythmic unison; the soprano saxophone, the only instrument not playing the series, plays an interlocking rising motive. Two three-note figures, presented simultaneously in the outermost voices, frame the chordal sequence. The top voice—a falling semitone figure moving D→D♭→C—is played by the violin, the right hand of the piano and the right hand of the marimba.[62] At the same time, the cello, left hand of the piano and left hand of the marimba outline the notes of the bottom-most voice, F→E→F♯.

[62] On its own, the descending semitone movement of the top voice encapsulates the principle of tension and release when viewed as the basis of a chord pattern from the jazz tradition. Indeed, the harmonic progression ii-♭II7-I, where ♭II7 becomes a tritone substitute for V7, resolves to

There are birds here

E (♩ = 56)

Top voice: marimba (RH), piano (RH) and violin

Bottom voice: marimba (LH), piano (LH) and cello

Figure 4-14. ***Hum*, Harrison, bars 72–74, outer voices**

[Listen]

The first presentation of the hope chords infers an F focal centre that remains, at once, ambiguous. As such, I intended for this lack of clarity to underscore the difficulties that May outlines in “There Are Birds Here,” as he attempts to propel a narrative about Detroit that runs counter to the prevailing perception. A brief analysis of the piano part demonstrates how I established a connection between the music and the text.

The opening piano entry of the first hope chord sequence comes at bar 72, as part of the ensemble’s staccato response to the first line of the poem; “There are birds here” (“There Are Birds Here” 1). The notes within the piano chord are, in ascending order, F, E, C, A♭ and D. Although not a stable chord, this structure suggests an Fmi(ma7) chord with an added 13th, and functions as the starting point from which the chord sequence builds.

The second piano chord enters in bar 73 after the poem’s second line, which is an emphatic reiteration of the first; “There are so many birds here” (“There Are Birds Here” 2). Signalling May’s vexation through its harmonic ambivalence, I constructed the second entry to emphasise the unstable major seventh interval heard between both E and D♯, and D♯ and D♮, as well as framed between the bottom and top notes of the right hand, D♮ and D♭ (spelt as C♯). Given this vertical structure, the second chord is best understood from an intervallic perspective, rather than harmonic function. Nonetheless, I also wanted it to appear to push away from the first chord, activated in part by the

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the tonic chord, I. Thus, the harmonic implication of the top voice could be Dmi7-D♭7-C, with C being the tonic.

similar motion movement between its top and bottom voices.[63] The last piano chord of the sequence comes in bar 74 accompanying the poem's third line, "is what I was trying to say" ("There Are Birds Here" 3). The notes of this chord—in ascending order, F♯, E, B♭, F♮ and C—underpin May's attempts to make his perspective on Detroit heard with a moment of insecure stasis. With B♭ respelled as A♯, the quality of the third chord can be considered an F♯7(♭5) with an added major seventh (F♮). In this context, I intended the third chord to challenge the F focal centre, suspended a semitone above it in an unresolved manner. As such, my purpose for this third entry was for it to lie equivocally between the first and second chords.

Figure 4-15. *Hum*, Harrison, bars 72–74, first hope chord sequence, piano and speaker

[Listen]

The second hope chord sequence appears midway through "The Sky, Now Black With Birds," again played by the full ensemble. On this occasion, the tonality centres around F, however I purposefully kept the quality of the harmony unresolved. I wanted this harmonic ambiguity to reflect the tension implicit within the text; "Forgive. Forgive. I swear the word has feathers" ("The Sky, Now Black With Birds" 30–32). In this moment, May's idea of forgiveness relates to Ross Bird, an African-American man who publicly forgave Lawrence Brewer, a white supremacist who murdered his son. Earlier in the poem, the poet outlines his struggle with the concept of forgiving Brewer,

I wanted Brewer dead.

So dead, my tongue swelled fat with hexes, so fat

[63] A more distant (and chromatic) interpretation of the second chord is that it is a rootless C6/9 chord, with both the ♭9 and ♯9 alterations added.

> I wonder how *forgive* could ever fit inside my mouth.
> (“The Sky, Now Black With Birds” 23–25)

Indeed, May’s desire to forgive, to hope for something positive to come out of such a heinous crime, is convoluted and tenuous; to this end, the musical accompaniment I employed between bars 201–2 was designed to reflect his caution. Reiterating the top notes of the first hope chord sequence, I again used the violin to outline the descending semitone pattern—D, D♭ and C—whilst employing the lowest voice, a low F pedal sustained by the piano, to ground the F tonality. Simultaneously, I engaged the chromatic inner voices to create a thick harmonic texture that renders the sequence as neither clearly major nor minor in quality, musically mirroring the uncertainty of May’s text. For example, in bar 201, the piano plays an E and A♭ in its chord; at the same time, the violin plays an A♮ and vibraphone an A♮ and E♭.

Figure 4-16. ***Hum*****, Harrison, bars 201–2, second hope chord sequence, bass clarinet, soprano saxophone, piano, speaker, violin and cello**

[Listen]

The third hope chord sequence appears in the last two bars of *Hum*, supporting May's closing heartfelt tribute to his city: "Detroit…you *are* dreaming. Keep making me up." ("To Detroiters" 43–44).[64] In his final remarks, May encapsulates his optimism about Detroit's future, and his belief in the city's ability to continue shaping his own identity. I felt that these observations ultimately reveal May's sense of hope—as already mentioned, "To Detroiters" is ostensibly the poet's love letter to his city—nonetheless, I felt it would be artistically negligible to gloss over the tension and fragility found in

[64] During the premiere performance of *Hum*, May extemporised and slightly altered the words of the final bars of the piece. This had no noticeable impact upon my musical intentions for the section.

May's narrative throughout much of the piece. Therefore, as with my intentions for the second hope chord sequence, in bars 404 and 405 I created a harmonic accompaniment founded upon an F tonal centre that remains harmonically ambiguous. The musical material unfolds in a similar manner to bars 201–2; the piano again pedals a low F whilst the violin outlines the descending semitone pattern, D→D♭→C. (The right hand of the piano also plays this). Once again, the chromaticism of the inner voices prevents any final harmonic resolution occurring. Thus, the quality of *Hum*'s final chord remains ambiguous, due to the presence of an A♮ in the violin, vibraphone and right hand of the piano, and an A♭ in the cello and left hand of the piano. Reiterating the concept of May's tempered optimism, I intended the conclusion of the work to leave the listener to contemplate the journey of the Motor City thus far, and the possibilities that lie ahead.

Improvisation and free jazz

When I began exploring ways to incorporate improvisation into the formal structure of *Hum*, I looked for moments in the narrative where the process of transferring elements of creative control to the musicians could, in turn, reflect and represent the dynamic and, at times, fraught themes within May's text. As such, I determined the intensely emotive language of "The Sky, Now Black With Birds" was well-suited to a compositional approach emphasising flexibility. Moreover, I decided that episode 3, which immediately succeeds "The Sky, Now Black With Birds," would be a structured improvisation that functioned as a musical response to the poem. Thus, I utilised a compositional method built upon adaptability and spontaneity within each section, with the objective of highlighting the visceral drama of May's text by giving the musicians freedom to extemporise upon and shape pre-composed material.

"The Sky, Now Black With Birds" is a meditation upon a racial hate crime and the power of forgiveness.[65] In it, May reflects upon the futile grief of people protesting against the execution of Troy Davis, whilst also outlining his internal struggle with his contradictory feelings for the white supremacist Lawrence Brewer. Given this literary focus, I felt that allowing the speaker and the musicians to direct the overall

[65] The poem refers to two convicted murderers who both died by a state-sanctioned lethal injection on 22 September 2011. The first, Troy Davis, was an African-American executed in Georgia for the killing of an off-duty police officer. The other, Lawrence Brewer, was a notorious White supremacist convicted of the appalling racially motivated murder of James Byrd. Brewer died first, with Davis killed five hours later. For a description of events, see Gregory Kane, "A Tale of Two Executions," *The Examiner (Washington, D.C.),* 26 September 2011, 27.

performative flow and pacing of the poem would best serve the unpredictability and fragility of May’s opposing emotions. Although I did not completely surrender my creative control—I still provided pitch material and general performance instructions—the flexibility I built into the structure of the section allowed the performers to engage deeply with the poem’s dark themes. From a creative perspective, I believed that incorporating the artistic input of the musicians into “The Sky, Now Black With Birds” would result in a more authentic musical experience, thereby reiterating and reinforcing the dramatic aspects of the poem’s narrative.

I firstly divided each stanza into small units of text. I then identified a number of key words within each unit to serve as triggers for the musicians; the individual part of each musician (and the speaker) has the trigger words underlined. As the speaker articulates the trigger words whilst performing the poem, the musicians react accordingly, playing a variety of musical gestures and phrases. Some responses use fixed material, like the piano and percussion 1 chords in section 1.1.

Figure 4-17. *Hum*, Harrison, “The Sky, Now Black With Birds,” section 1.1, bar 185, bass clarinet, percussion 1 (vibraphone), percussion 2 (drums), piano and speaker

[Listen]

At other times, the musicians have a short motive that requires them to determine the length and dynamic outcome of the phrase.

Figure 4-18. *Hum*, Harrison, “The Sky, Now Black With Birds,” section 1.3 and 1.4, bars 187–88, bass clarinet

[Listen]

Reinforcing the importance of spontaneity to the interpretation of *Hum*'s narrative, episode 3, which follows "The Sky, Now Black With Birds," is a structured improvisation featuring the soprano saxophone and drum kit. Building upon the performative energy of the poem it succeeds, this episode creates a dialogical space for the saxophone and drums to have a musical conversation. The episode consists of six segments, each with a suggested time length of ten seconds.[66] Within each segment, the musicians have varying amounts of freedom to extemporise upon the source material. At certain points, the structured improvisation unfolds in a manner similar to "The Sky, Now Black With Birds"; in these moments, the musicians are given scope to manipulate musical elements such as duration and dynamics. At other times, they assume almost complete control of a segment's trajectory. Using a flexible approach to performative control across the six segments allowed me to create a broad dramatic arc for the episode whilst also ensuring it had a strong degree of unpredictability and mutability. What's more, by using previous musical ideas as the basis for the episode's improvisatory source material—in this case, variations and reinventions of the bird motive—I was able to render new iterations of *Hum*'s fundamental thematic elements as interpreted by the musicians, further solidifying their connection to the narrative of the text.

Segments 1 to 3 of the episode illustrate my compositional approach. In segments 1 and 2, the saxophone plays a sequence of phrases that trace their melodic origin to the bird motive. The saxophonist determines the overall duration of each phrase, guided by stemless noteheads indicating short notes and long notes of unspecified value. The drums support each saxophone gesture with rolls on the hi-hats using mallets, opening and closing the hats at will. At the end of each phrase, the saxophonist cues the drummer to finish, ensuring the integrity of each discrete melodic unit. In the first two segments, giving the instrumentalists limited control of aspects of the music enabled me to bring a sense of spontaneity to the episode whilst still steering the overall musical trajectory.

[66] During the work's premiere in 2016, the musicians liberally extended the length of each section. This worked very well, and has led me to consider being less specific about the time constraints for each segment for future performances.

Figure 4-19. ***Hum*****, Harrison, Episode 3, segments 1 and 2, bars 217–18, soprano saxophone and percussion 2 (drums)**

[Listen]

Segment 3 prescribes more performative authority to the musicians, and, as such, stands in contrast to segments 1 and 2. Nevertheless, I wanted this segment to use the momentum established by the first two segments as a means of generating its own path; in this way, I intended for segment 3 to be the logical successor of segments 1 and 2. The saxophone initially repeats the opening four pitches of segment 1 before moving to a box containing eight pitches of indeterminate length. After playing through the pitches in order once, the saxophonist then freely interprets these notes—varying the register, rhythmic value and order—to generate a musical gesture that gradually builds in volume and intensity. At the same time, the drums improvising freely around the kit, beginning on the cymbals and shifting to the toms as the phrase unfolds. However, unlike the previous two segments, at this point I decided it would not be necessary for the drums to follow the phrasing of the saxophone. Indeed, I planned that segment 3 would task the musicians to engage in a dialogue, feeding off each other’s ideas to

shape the direction of the music together.[67] Moreover, my decision to structure the segment within this mutually reciprocal framework enables the instrumentalists to continue building up dramatic intensity with gusto, only tempering this energy when the saxophone cues an end to the passage partway into segment 4, following a series of repeated high Ds.

Figure 4-20. *Hum*, Harrison, Episode 3, segments 3 and 4, bars 219–20, soprano saxophone and percussion 2 (drums)

[Listen]

The use of improvisation as a creative tool within *Hum* not only satisfied my compositional aesthetic and *modus operandi*, it also provided me with alternative ways to explore the drama of the work's narrative beyond strictly notated music conventions. Moreover, the connections I made between the improvisational elements of *Hum* and the narrative of Detroit resonated with Ian Ding, New Music Detroit's Artistic Director. When I interviewed him after the work's premiere, he described how he heard "a lot of

[67] During the premiere, the musicians significantly lengthened segment 3, moving well beyond its suggested length of ten seconds.

free jazz in [*Hum*'s] composed music…free-form melodic lines…and even how things lined up rhythmically...I did feel that connected a lot [with Detroit]."[68] Ding observed there was a long history of free jazz in the Motor City, and made connections between the willingness to explore the unknown within experimental music-making, and the current direction of the city: "that kind of openness…and freely improvised spirit is how I see Detroit, especially in its recent history."[69]

Rhythm and pattern

As mentioned, some earlier works inspired by Detroit have prioritised rhythm as an important element of compositional design. The premise of this creative connection generally linked to the perception and interpretation of Detroit's automotive and industrial past. Compositional devices such as repetitive rhythmic patterns and structures were used to symbolise what music reviewer Peter Burgwasser called the "relentless energy and momentum"[70] associated with the city's factories and manufacturing history.

As I sorted through my ideas for *Hum*, I was cognisant of the metaphorical connection between rhythm and Detroit's narrative. As such, I did not want to consciously shun this trope—it was an obvious link to the city's past—yet, I was also mindful of resorting to clichés. Primarily, I felt that May's poetry did not speak to a Detroit driven by incessant rhythmic activity, but rather, a city that was labouring under the strain of its search for a new "groove".[71] I therefore decided to construct my approach to *Hum*'s rhythmic foundations equally upon the contrasting concepts of repetition and irregularity.

The first application of this rhythmic approach occurs at bar 19, when the drums, marimba, piano and tenor saxophone outline a short passage— the first contrasting material to the lyrical birds-inspired opening—that evinces an inherently unstable and

[68] Ian Ding, "Interview with Author," 26 November 2016, recording held by author.
[69] Ding, "Interview with Author."
[70] Peter Burwasser, "Daugherty: *Fire and Blood*, *MotorCity Triptych*, *Raise The Roof* (CD review)," *Fanfare*, January/February 2010, 140.
[71] "Groove," in *From the Horse's Mouth: The Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms*, ed. John Ayto (Oxford University Press, 2009; reprint, 3rd); Geoffrey Whittall, "Groove," in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, ed. Charles Hiroshi Garrett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). *The Oxford Dictionary of English Idioms* offers one definition of groove as "performing well or confidently, especially in an established pattern." I have chosen to use the term to reflect this idea, and for its rhetorical connotations within jazz and other African-American music.

fragmented rhythmic structure.[72] The passage centres upon a four bar phrase presented as a series of percussive, hocketing-style[73] stabs between the pianist's right and left hands, and rhythmically reinforced by the drum kit. Simultaneously, the tenor saxophone and marimba intersect the piano's material with a similarly jagged counter-phrase emphasising pitch repetition and rhythmic variation.

[72] I deliberately chose the drums, marimba and piano as members of the built environment category.

[73] *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, s.v. "Hocket," by Ernest H. Sanders, accessed 3 October 2019, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.13115. Hocketing is defined as "[t]he medieval term for a contrapuntal technique of manipulating silence as precise mensural value…It occurs…most commonly, in two or more voices, which display the dovetailing of sounds and silences by means of the staggered arrangement of rests; a 'mutual stop-and-go device.'"

Figure 4-21. ***Hum*****, Harrison, bars 19–22, tenor saxophone, percussion 1 (marimba), percussion 2 (drums) and piano**

[Listen]

This short example microscopically embodies the idea of using rhythmic unpredictability to create the impression of hampered musical momentum. Indeed, as the phrase progresses, the variable length of silence in between each entry prevents the establishment of a consistent pattern, thus giving the sense of the music stumbling in its quest to move forward.

A brief examination of the internal rhythmic design of the piano part from bars 19 and 22 shows this. The duration of silence between the first five piano entries unfolds thus; silence for the length of four semiquavers, followed by three semiquavers, then five semiquavers, and lastly three semiquavers. However, after the treble D♮ heard on the second half of beat five in bar 20, the next right-hand entry occurs after a rest of just one semiquaver, closely followed by a bass note after a silence of three semiquaver beats. The lack of rhythmic consistency for these last two entries destabilises any temporary momentum created by the first five piano entries.

Figure 4-22. ***Hum*****, Harrison, bars 19–22, piano**

[Listen]

This fleeting musical passage encapsulates the primary rhythmic principles I used to underscore the thematic fragility and dramatic uncertainty found throughout *Hum*'s narrative. Although May ultimately offers a positive outlook for the city's future, he does not shy away from the reality of its past or its present. As a result, the fundamental tension of this scenario manifests in the work through a rhythmic application that manipulates and undermines expectations and stability.

Afterword

When I interviewed Jamaal May about *Hum* in March 2017, six months after its premiere, I asked him how he felt about our work. He noted his previous experience of combining music and poetry had, at best, produced mixed results and, more often, a work that undervalued both the text and music. Moreover, he mentioned in previous situations, the music overpowered the poetry, due to the inherent bias of volume that a group of (often amplified) instruments have over a single voice speaking into a microphone. Conversely, he also recounted performance situations where the music functioned solely as a bed underneath the poetry, without aiming to create any sense of artistic dialogue. In both these environments, May found there was little engagement between the music and the poetry, and often the concept of collaboration was minimal. As a result, he felt that in these cases, the combined presence of each artistic

component—sound and text—hampered a satisfactory creative outcome; working in an unencumbered and independent manner offered a better choice for each element.

May did not have the same feelings about *Hum*. He described a post-show discussion he had fellow poet Tommye Blount, who attended the premiere. They both noted how closely integrated the music and poetry were; how the music was braided with the poetry. May elaborated further: "the music is woven into the piece, [and] because of that synergy, [*Hum*] really did become the third thing."[74] How close was this "third thing" to describing my intention to synthesise or, at least, create and explore tension between text and music, historian and composer? A "third space?"

The process of composing *Hum* allowed me to delve into, and creatively engage with an historical narrative that was initially foreign to me. Becoming better acquainted with the history of Detroit, both through Jamaal May's poetry and my own research, helped me further comprehend the sophistication that music can bring to a narrative when deeply integrated and intertwined with text like May's. The breadth of his emotional spectrum, and the attention to detail contained with his ascribed to his tropes challenged me to find new ways of creatively reflecting a narrative that contains conflicting messages and galvanising themes. Ultimately, *Hum* further consolidated and developed my vision for writing music that engages with extra-musical content, particularly that relating to events of the past and present.

[74]Jamaal May, "Interview with Author," 12 March 2017, recording held by author.

Conclusion

> It is somehow assumed that music has little to teach us about the critical issues of our time.
> —George E. Lewis, Foreword to Jann Pasler's *Writing Through Music*[1]

What are the implications for writing music about history? At the beginning of this thesis, I discussed considerations about authenticity, legitimacy and individuality that informed and shaped my creative practice as I set out to compose *Gassed Shell (Severe)* and *Hum*. I also emphasised the importance of text to my doctoral pieces, highlighting the connection between my creative decisions and the texts, which outlined the historical events that form the basis of both works. Chapters 2 and 4 examined these text-musical relationships within my compositions in detail.

The factors just described segue aptly into a discussion to address the two research questions I raised in the introduction. Firstly, when I engaged with primary and secondary historical sources before and during my compositional phase, how did this inform my creative process? Before commencing my study, I considered myself well informed about the historical events featured in each of my doctoral compositions. However, as I expected, undertaking research into these narratives shed new light upon them, sometimes dispelling misconceptions and uncovering new information I subsequently integrated into my work. For example, during my fieldwork trip to Detroit in 2015, I saw evidence of residents converting the city's expanding natural environment into market gardens, thus creating positive community spaces within their neighbourhoods. This observation contrasted with Detroit's reputation as a decaying city overrun by nature. It altered my perception of the city; I felt that Detroiters were not only surviving, but aspiring to a future. This experience ultimately reinforced the message of hope I found within Jamaal May's poetry.

Other times my research provided a fresh perspective on aspects of the historical events I was reflecting upon. Before commencing *Gassed Shell (Severe)*, I did not fully appreciate the fear that poison gas caused with some soldiers when compared to other

[1] Jann Pasler, *Writing through Music: Essays on Music, Culture and Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7. George E. Lewis wrote the foreword to the book.

forms of enemy attack.[2] Moreover, whilst I was aware of the long-term effects of poison gas due to my grandfather's ongoing lung issues throughout his life, I had never dwelled upon the trauma associated with experiencing a gas attack. (Stock photos of soldiers wearing gas masks had given me an unrealistic impression that gas attacks were quite manageable with the right protective equipment). The horrific imagery of Wilfred Owen's "Dulce Et Decorum Est," combined with first-hand accounts from nurses and soldiers,[3] gave me detailed information about the panic that often overcame soldiers during a gas attack. Reading these descriptions helped me decide which elements of my grandfather's narrative to musically emphasise within *Gassed Shell (Severe).*

Conducting research also helped me gather pertinent historical information that shaped and influenced my compositional intentions, and, therefore, the musical elements of each work. The application of different tempos within *Gassed Shell (Severe)*, for instance, was determined by the narrative arc of Andrew Maddocks's experiences at the Battle of Passchendaele. Thus, the slow tempo of the work's first section suggests the overwhelming challenges confronting soldiers in the appalling muddy conditions at Ypres, whilst the faster tempo of the second section infers the racing heartbeat of soldiers fighting for survival in the face of a gas attack. Similarly, in *Hum*, the tension between Detroit's built infrastructure and the city's encroaching natural environment, intimated in May's poetry, was the dominant concept determining my pairing of instruments in the musical episodes (duets) that alternate with each poem throughout the piece.

In summary, historical research provided me with the tools to write well-considered and informed music. Engaging with primary and secondary sources shaped and consolidated my creative process, providing a deep contextual background that allowed me to interpret the texts used in each of my works from a knowledgeable position. Furthermore, the research process allowed me to bring an interdisciplinary perspective to my compositional practice. Reading about current historiographical debates, particularly in relation to historical reenactment, strengthened and validated my initial instincts about how to artistically tackle the historical narrative of each work. Moreover,

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[2] Jones, "Terror Weapons," 1. Jones notes the observations of British soldier Private John Hall of the Machine Gun Corps, who stated, "I was more frightened with gas that I was with shell fire."

[3] Macdonald, *They Called It Passchendaele*, 90–1; Jones, "Terror Weapons," 2. MacDonald notes the recollections of two nurses who treated gas victims, whilst Jones describes the gas attack experiences of German troops at the Battle of Loos.

these cross-disciplinary discussions provided confidence and support to my belief that musical works reflecting upon the narratives and experiences of individual stories, such as those of Andrew Maddocks and Jamaal May, are legitimate forms of expressing history.

Reinforcing the centrality of historical enquiry to my creative process leads to the second research question proposed in this thesis: can a composer contribute to our understanding of the past, particularly in terms of creating a meaningful relationship between historical texts incorporated into a composition, and their musical accompaniment? Searching for answers to this proposition requires considering perspectives from the disciplines of music and history. On the one hand, there is an argument that a composer (or any artist) takes considerable—perhaps foolhardy—risk when they step outside their discipline and do the work of an historian without the relevant formal training in methodology and theory. Importantly, artists have the option to use artistic licence within their work; in fact, it is an essential part of their training. In other words, they have the right to interpret their subject matter as liberally and creatively as they see fit; they can make things up.[4] This is something that historians cannot do by virtue of their disciplinary limitations; as Inga Clendinnen states, historians "enjoy the advantage, and the burden, of dealing with the real…[they] are concerned with what men and women have actually done."[5]

What a composer can do, though, is attempt to capture and enhance the sentiments and feelings in an historical text. In terms of my doctoral pieces, it is reasonable to assume a listener would have different reactions to Jamaal May's poetry, or an extract from Andrew Maddocks's unit diaries, if hearing these texts presented in different forums; without musical accompaniment and with it. In the latter instance, setting the written

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[4] Peter Carey, "Mirror of the World: Imagining Ned Kelly, Interview with Peter Carey," *A Diverse State*, Culture Victoria, 2016, accessed 25 May 2019, https://cv.vic.gov.au/stories/a-diverse-state/ned-kelly/imagining-ned-kelly-interview-with-peter-carey/. Australia writer Peter Carey reinforced this point in an interview about his novel *True History of the Kelly Gang*, based upon the life of iconic Australian bushranger Ned Kelly. He noted, "the thing that really most engaged me with the problems of writing Ned Kelly is that, you know, we have these bits of the story that we know so well, almost like the stations of the cross in a way…But we really have no idea what happened between this bit and that bit. And so there's a huge pleasure in inventing a whole world that's consistent with what is known, but is unlike anything anybody ever imagined about the Kelly story before…in fact, it's the most invented, made up book I've ever written."

[5] Inga Clendinnen, "The History Question: Who Owns the Past?," *The Quarterly Essay*, 23 (September 2006): 30–31.

descriptions of May and Maddocks's experiences to music gave me an opportunity to heighten the drama of each narrative and highlight aspects of the text through my compositional skills and training, in a way that respected the integrity of the text itself. Music enabled me to create a deeper level of engagement with the historical subject matter of each text, revealing an additional layer of human experience to the historical events that underpinned each work.

As demonstrated, I have prioritised methodical historical research as part of my artistic practice. When considering this approach, I believe it is possible to infer parallels between my creative process and the methods of those who write history. Much like an historian, I began my creative process by building a corpus of evidence about the Battle of Passchendaele and Detroit's recent past from a variety of primary and secondary historical sources. I conducted a fieldwork trip to Detroit to experience the city first-hand, and spent hours in the National Library of Australia uncovering information about the First World War and its cultural legacy within Australia. I then interpreted and elucidated my evidence through my lived experience. However, unlike an historian who might produce a monograph as the result of their reflection upon the evidence, I composed two musical works. In this way, I treated my evidence largely in the same manner as an historian. Although I built an element of flexibility into my compositional practice to fill in some of the gaps within narratives—such as incorporating "Dulce Et Decorum Est" into *Gassed Shell (Severe)* to provide a sense of what it felt like to experience a gas attack—I remained committed to being faithful to the experiences of Andrew Maddocks and Jamaal May. Moreover, my compositional training, and understanding of dramatic tension and musical structure, guided these decisions as much as the narrative of the text. Ultimately, and notwithstanding an ethical commitment to better understand what actually happened and the experience of those who lived it, historians are also engaged in a creative process. They 'compose' their narrative too.

What does this mean, though, in terms of a composer shedding light on the past? Through the affective capacity of music, a composer has the power to convey a sense of time and place and to draw a listener into a historical moment recounted in a text.[6]

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[6] Francis Ford Coppola, "The Godfather," (Hollywood: Paramount Pictures Corporation, 1972). An example of this would be Nino Rota's score for Francis Ford Coppola's 1972 film *The Godfather*. Rota suggests southern Italian life at the turn of the twentieth century by using

Furthermore, music can contribute to a listener's experience of this text (and thus, the historical moment) through its capacity to contribute to a "thick description" of the text, (to borrow a phrase from anthropologist Clifford Geertz). When writing about his own professional area of ethnography, Geertz asserted, "ethnography is thick description…[and] doing ethnography is like to trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of") a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations and tendentious commentaries."[7] Geertz's idea of thick description provides a methodological approach for the interpretation of cultural texts; moreover, it acknowledges the fundamental complexities and nuanced insight required to ascertain or extract meaning from a simple act or gesture.[8]

In adapting Geertz's concept, I contend that composers are able to describe thickly past and present through their capacity to engage deeply with specific elements and tropes within a narrative. These connections are not only the pre-compositional insights that a composer might gain through historical research; they also manifest themselves within a creative work through compositional devices, such as repetition and variation of motives and themes. Such engagement is evident in my doctoral compositions. As noted, the subtle and asynchronous rhythmic shifts between instruments within the musical accompaniment for the first sung stanza in *Gassed Shell (Severe)* infer the quagmire terrain that soldiers were travelling across in Wilfred Owen's text. Similarly, variations of the melodic motive connected with *Hum*'s bird trope provide nuanced perspectives on May's message of hope for Detroit through a process of subtle iteration.

When applying the lens of thick description to my creative engagement with Andrew Maddocks's narrative at the Battle of Passchendaele and Jamaal May's poetic perspective on the recent history of Detroit, it is therefore possible to conclude that a composer can contribute to the narration of the past and thus our understanding of it. Others can learn from my artistic engagement with these historical events, and, of course, they can reinterpret and criticise my perspectives. I stand by my narration.

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instruments such as the mandolin, guitar, and accordion within his orchestra, and employing musical forms closely associated with Italian culture like the tarantella and waltz.

[7] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 6.

[8] Jeff Todd Titon, "Textual Analysis or Thick Description?," in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, and Richard Middleton (New York: Routledge, 2012), 78.

Writing and producing history in the twenty-first century has become a multimodal enterprise; advances in computer technology have made it possible to replicate historical events to a point where it is difficult to distinguish between a reconstruction and something real from the archive.[9] As historians have turned to different mediums to convey the past, music and sound have become an important part of telling history. I am not suggesting that an artist can take the place of an historian. In her novel *The Secret River*, Australian novelist Kate Grenville created controversy when she claimed she could stand outside the conventional limitations imposed upon those who write history—including the arduous process of testing historical evidence[10]—and propose a different way of interpreting historical events by imaginatively getting inside the mindset of her characters.[11] I reject this view, however by sounding out the past, I believe a composer can take history off the page.

[9] Pickering and McCalman, "From Realism to the Affective Turn: An Agenda," 2.

[10] Kate Grenville, "Interview About *The Secret River*," interviewed by Ramona Koval, *Books and Writing,* ABC Radio National*,* 16 July 2005, accessed 20 September 2019, https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/booksandwriting/kate-grenville/3629894#transcript. ABC Radio interviewer Ramona Koval asked Grenville to consider her book *The Secret River* in relation to the vigorous contemporaneous debates amongst historians about the treatment of indigenous Australians during the country's early years of British colonialism; the so-called 'history wars'. Grenville replied, "A novelist can stand up on a ladder and look down at [these debates], outside the fray, and say there is another way to understand it…the historians are doing their thing, but let me as a novelist come to it in a different way, which is the way of empathising and imaginative understanding of those difficult events."

[11] Clendinnen, "The History Question: Who Owns the Past?," 17. Historian Inga Clendinnen stated that Grenville saw her novel as "a work of history sailing triumphantly beyond the constrictions of the formal discipline of history writing."

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