

Essays on Traditional and Avant-Garde Composers

Essays on Traditional and Avant-Garde Composers:

*Shifting Paradigms and
Multifaceted Identities*

Edited by

George Holloway

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INTRODUCTION

“SHIFTING PARADIGMS AND MULTIFACETED IDENTITIES”: PROCEEDINGS OF A SYMPOSIUM

GEORGE HOLLOWAY

This collection of essays and musical scores, touching upon diverse aspects of compositional identity, represents the Proceedings of the Second International Symposium of Contemporary Music Research (2022), supported by the Office of Research and Development and the Department of Ethnomusicology at Nanhua University 南華大學, and includes both the selected conference papers and musical works from the conference, as well as Peter Wiegold's keynote address. Michael Finnissy's keynote address from the 2021 session is also included.

The seven essays, five musical scores, and Wiegold's keynote, in their unique ways respond to the conference theme of “new cultural and technological paradigms”. The collection includes contributions from mainland Chinese, Taiwanese, Spanish and Japanese composers, performers and scholars on diverse topics.

Three distinctive composers write about the aesthetic and *poietic* background to individual compositions of theirs, the scores of which are also included in the collection. USA-based Taiwanese composer Chen-Hui Jen discusses the role of synaesthesia, memory and imagination in her compositions, with particular reference to her composition *...into silence, and falling* for 'cello and piano. German-based Taiwanese composer Po-Chien Liu sketches out the place of timbre in twentieth century composers' compositional concerns, and introduces his systematic conceptualisation of musical timbre in his piano trio *joined*. Japanese composer Yuko Ohara discusses

her virtuosic work for solo violin *Birefringence*, in the context of her research into the violin techniques used by Salvatore Sciarrino and Rebecca Saunders. The reader has the advantage of having access to the full score of each piece, allowing a greater appreciation of the points discussed by each of the three composers in their essays.

Six writers offer different musicological/analytical perspectives. UK-based Spanish composer Isabel Benito Gutierrez discusses the tradition of graphic scores and her own innovative applications of the same in her recent compositions. Taiwanese researcher Li Yu-Hsien discusses composer Unsuk Chin's use of the traditional Turkish and Balkan “Aksak rhythm” in the third of her Piano Etudes. Chinese musicologist Guo Xiang-Wei discusses the transmission and adaptation of the Chinese musical repertoire in Taiwan in the 1950s and 1960s. Two separate essays by musicians Chihchen Sophia Lee and I-Hsuan Olivia Tsai discuss from different perspectives the place of contemporary composers in a world of diverse ideologies, and take the music of the first author's sister, Chihchun Chih-sun Lee 李志純 (1970-), as a striking example of a composer adapting to the times and reflecting societal changes in her music.

In addition to the scores of Chen-Hui Jen, Po-Chien Liu and Yuko Ohara, two other musical scores are included, namely the Piano Trio by Chihchun Chi-sun Lee and Xiao Hu's *Lyrical* for 'cello and piano. These two compositions were also selected by the committee to be featured in the symposium.

Finally, composer Peter Wiegold's keynote address is an important document describing his own approach to collaborative music-making, and his vision of the “turning-point” at which we find ourselves. The collection also includes Michael Finnissy's powerfully talismanic keynote address from the 2021 session, included here because of its eloquence and wisdom.

This theme of the turning-point at which we find ourselves in the status of art music across the globe—having undergone a drastic transvaluation in the wake of the overwhelming influence of commercial culture—runs through many of the chapters. Olivia Tsai takes a sympathetic stance towards the goals of D.E.I. (diversity, equity and inclusion), for instance, and their potential value in helping classical music to remain “relevant to

society”. Chihchen Sophia Lee, on the other hand, acknowledges that the notion that classical music is not already “relevant” is a misconception, although this does not solve the problem of how to help an underinformed public to learn to appreciate the art music traditions of the past hundred-plus years. Numerous other authors, on the other hand, share their thoughts on exclusively musical-technical matters (Po-Chien Liu on timbre, Isabel Benito Gutierrez on non-traditional approaches to notation and the composer-performer-audience interaction, Chen-Hui Jen on the personal significance of certain musical motifs that recur throughout her oeuvre). These two contrasting approaches, the one looking outward and the other looking inward, are both valuable. Musical art and scholarship need them both.

The title of this book reflects both sides of this duality. While the *paradigms* by which composers exist—and subsist—have in recent decades been shifting across the globe, there is simultaneously a considerable diversification in the compositional voices and *identities* by which composers define themselves and their art. Philosophers still debate whether it is society that primarily “constitutes” its artists, or to what extent artists conversely shape their societies (this debate could be extended to intellectuals in general), but it is evident from the chapters collected herein that composers across the globe are still thinking profoundly about music, and seeking strategies to share the fruits of their reflections with audiences, be that audience broad or narrow.

My role in assembling this collection went far beyond that of mere assemblage, typesetting and proof-reading. Many of the papers required a large amount of work standardising the language usage, spelling, layout, referencing style and numbering of figures, examples and tables, but this was not the main extent of the editorial intervention that was required. Three of the papers required translation from Mandarin Chinese, and another two papers required considerable thought to clarify the intent of the author’s original English—intellectual exercises that were both stimulating and challenging. Three of the papers required a not insignificant amount of reworking in order to elucidate the logical structure. The two Keynote Addresses of Peter Wiegold and Michael Finnissy remained almost entirely untouched. If the editorial hand has been heavy at times, it has unwaveringly been in the service of the original research and profound thought contained herein, which

deserved the clearest presentation possible.

A Note on Romanisation of Mandarin Proper Nouns and the Inclusion of Original Chinese Characters

Owing to the lack of a standard convention for romanisation in Taiwan, the editor has adopted the policy of respecting individuals' own transliteration of their names, where this is known. Where it is unknown, the author has employed the transliterations available at the Online Database of Taiwanese Musicians 台灣音樂群像資料庫 (<https://musiciantw.ncfta.gov.tw/>), or, failing that, has adopted the convention of Hanyu Pinyin 漢語拼音 employed in China, as this is the approach most commonly encountered in the West. When a proper noun first appears, the editor has given the transliteration, the Chinese characters and their birth and death dates where known; thereafter only the transliteration is given.

George Holloway
Assistant Professor,
Department of Ethnomusicology, Nanhua University
April 30th 2025

CHAPTER ONE

IN MY END IS MY BEGINNING¹

PETER WIEGOLD

“In my end is my beginning.”

This quote is from *Little Gidding*, the fourth of T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*, his extraordinary, ecstatic and paradoxical poem.

Might it be argued that we are at an end, and a beginning, now?

I was very happy to be invited to contribute to this timely conference, and to address the question as to whether we are indeed at a transitional point in cultural history. To ask whether this could be the moment to look for new paradigms, given the fast-changing contexts of today, notably technological, but also profoundly social, cultural and environmental.

In preparing for the conference, the chair George Holloway proposed that a moment of “reconsidering” is crucial. My first thought was, well, reconsidering has been a key factor in Western art music throughout its history.

It is extraordinary how fast the change has been in Western music from the 16th century until now, from Monteverdi and the Renaissance—including his transition from *prima pratica* to *seconda pratica*—through to Karlheinz Stockhausen (1928-2007), John Cage (1912-1992), minimalism, and beyond, to the multiplicities of today.

¹ The original keynote address was delivered to the Symposium on 21st May 2022. The paper presented here was subsequently reworked and expanded by the author.

I would argue that the change since the 16th century has partly been driven by the progressive establishment of equal temperament, that rather Newtonian concept of a closed clockwork universe, in which all the parts seamlessly lock together—so joyously celebrated in Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), yet also a kind of powder keg, as the music progresses by increasingly pushing at the bounds of that closed system. Harmonic resolution might be found within a minute in Bach, but might take five hours in Wagner, and then you are not quite sure if it has resolved! Constant reconsidering and expansion have therefore been the very motivating force within Western music.

In the 20th century, that clockwork universe explodes, notably in science with Einstein's Theory of Relativity. How absolutely extraordinary that Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)'s *Petrushka* (1910-11) and *The Rite of Spring* (1911-1913) were written within a few years of the Theory of Relativity. The so-called 'Petrushka chord', the superimposition of the chords of C major and F sharp major, puts together the furthest points of that clockwork system, blowing open the whole notion of progression through it towards resolution. The chord is just there!

The quantum world of 20th century relativity thus begins, and in music, this means the liberation of sound, the liberation of form, the extraordinary achievements of Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), Stravinsky, Cage, Stockhausen, Luciano Berio (1925-2003), Steve Reich (1936-) and beyond.

It is also important to note that, within these 500 years of extraordinary change, there was also an increasingly stable notion of what an artwork is, and its function in society, towards the idea that the artwork might stand absolute, outside society even—'Art for art's sake', the composer as self-expressing, self-defining artist rather than as part of a community.

Perhaps that particular journey is coming to an end. One can see significant signs of 'endness' in the late 20th century. Pieces that were silent, pieces that were infinitely long, pieces consisting of just one repeated chord.

In particular, it has always seemed to me that Berio is one of the composers who carried the spirit of the times. Even as a student, I had a feeling that he was expressing the end of history. When someone names a piece *Recital* or

Opera, as Berio did, that itself suggests a kind of self-consciousness that could signify the end of something.

His *Sinfonia* (1968-9) includes an extraordinary movement with music from across classical history, woven around a movement from Gustav Mahler (1860-1911)'s Fourth Symphony (1899-1900), along with a spoken text from Samuel Beckett:

...and he is still talking incessantly, any old thing, repetition after repetition, talking unceasingly, in yourself, outside yourself.

It's late now, he shall never hear again the lowing cattle, the rush of the stream. In a chamber, dimensions unknown, I do not move and never shall again on long road or short. (Beckett 2009, 350-351)

Berio described Mahler as carrying the whole weight of history on his back, as 20th century relativity exploded out of the more absolute values of earlier centuries. In the final movement of *Das Lied von der Erde* (1908-9), "Der Abschied" ("The Farewell"), Mahler seems no longer able to find resolution, despite the repetitions of powerful low Cs.

It is now almost fifty years since Berio's *Sinfonia* was written, and, whether or not a critical period has ended, I have felt for some time that there is a need to search for new orientations, new starting points.

Firstly, as teachers and artists, we must be sure to engage with other histories as well as that of Western classical music. To hear and understand Miles Davis (1926-1991), the Beatles, the great court music of Korea, the gamelan of Java and Bali, the ancestral aboriginal songs of Australia.

These musics must be in the everyday discourse of our relationship with sound and history. But, as we do so, it is vital to understand that they do not represent merely different instruments, different sonic patterns. They represent entirely different cultural sensibilities and patterns of human and social relationships.

Music should never be considered as just notes on a page, but understood as a living contextual practice embodying the people engaged in it as practitioners, and as receivers.

This includes, for example, being aware of where the music is being experienced. There has been an obsession with the creation of the perfect concert hall in order to have the perfect musical experience, perhaps another example of ‘art for art’s sake’.

But space and its relation to community must be reconsidered when taking a broad look at new cultural paradigms, the social, spiritual and environmental contexts that music must engage with now.

Grand Junction

I'd like to start the presentation of my own work today with an event just two weeks ago, and then gradually look back. On 5th May 2022 my new orchestra, The Third Orchestra, was reborn at a venue called Grand Junction in West London, which is emerging as an innovative and inclusive new venue. The show was entitled “Between two waves of the sea”, again after T.S. Eliot’s *Little Gidding*.

The orchestra debuted in a residency at the Barbican Centre, London in February 2019, but had not performed since then, so, for me, this was a very important moment.

I created the orchestra in 2019 along with the late John Cumming (1948-2020), who was, for twenty-five years, director of production house Serious and the EFG London Jazz Festival. Respecting the great orchestral traditions of the past, we wanted to create a new orchestra based in multicultural London, reaching to the world, an orchestra without boundaries. Sir Nicholas Kenyon, MD of the Barbican Centre, kindly invited us to be in residence in The Pit at the Barbican for a week.

In terms of its make up, it was conceived as 360°—musicians from North, South, East and West all welcome. It was inclusive, with a gender balance, 50% black, Asian and ethnically diverse, with members aged from 20 to 70. The artists are from many different lineages, traditional, classical, jazz, folk, world, and contemporary. Most can read notation, but not all, and this is not a requirement. All are involved in the co-creation and improvisation, and are the highest quality instrumentalists/singers.

These were the musicians at Grand Junction:

Alice Zawadzki (vocals, violin): Alice moves from jazz to soul to Sephardic song.

Rouhangeze (vocals): enchanting singer from Mauritius.

Max Baillie (violin/viola): his work goes from leading classical orchestras to working with African and folk musicians.

Cheng Yu (pipa 琵琶, guqin 古琴), Wang Xiao (erhu 二胡): two of London's leading Chinese musicians.

Rihab Azar (oud): a soulful player and composer from Syria.

Alina Bzhezhska (harp): a jazz and classical player.

Colin Alexander (cello): a fine classical and improvising 'cellist and composer.

Byron Wallen (trumpet): leading Afro-Caribbean London jazz trumpeter and composer.

Fiona Troon (bassoon/contra bassoon), a classical/jazz player bringing a gritty sound to the orchestra.

Matthew Bourne (piano/Moog): powerful free jazz pianist.

Shri Sriram (bass, flute): he has played with Talvin Singh and Nitin Sawhney, and in the great drum'n'bass duo Badmarsh and Shri.

Anoushka Nanguy: jazz trombone, recently the winner, at the age of 20, of the Rising Star Award at the Scottish Jazz Awards.

Sören Birke: blues harmonica + electronics from Berlin.

Bernhard Schimpelsberger: a versatile Viennese percussionist schooled in South Indian Karnatic rhythm, and more recently the music of the Candomblé ceremonies in Salvador, Brazil.

They are an extraordinary group of musicians, most of whom live in the UK, but hailing from many countries. Anushka is from Scotland, but is half West-African. Bernard is from Vienna but studied in India. I will speak a little about Sören from Berlin later. I could talk for a long time about each of them, but I would like to make two key points.

First of all, to me, Max is as much “Max” as “violin”. A different violinist would bring a different voice to the music. He is present as a creative artist, not just as an “executant”, that rather strange classical music term.

Secondly, there’s much talk in contemporary classical music of exploring “extended instrumental techniques”, but each of these musicians have extended techniques built into their DNA! Consider a single note in a traditional Korean piece played on a taegŭm flute.² Every note is different with a different vibrato, tuning, attack. In fact, traditional Korean musicians talk of their music being made through a succession of independent single notes. Consider the percussive slap of a funky Indian bass player. Consider the tunings, but also their expressive nature, heard on an Arabic oud.

“Between two waves of the sea” premiered on the 5th of May 2022, and was inspired by two poets from very different backgrounds, T.S. Eliot and Ursula Rucker. Ursula is a spoken-word artist from Philadelphia, and the show began with one of her specially commissioned haiku:

*For Babylon to truly fall, we must once
again carry fire on our heads,
speak in holy tongues³*

The two poets meet through the “crowned knot of fire” from section V of *Little Gidding*, and Ursula’s images of carrying “fire on our heads”, and of speaking in “holy tongues”.

What was especially significant for me was that this meeting represents a potent symbol of the work of The Third Orchestra. Here you have a fiery, contemporary US black woman, and a distinguished upper middle-class

² [The taegŭm (or daegeum) is a “large, transverse bamboo flute, widely used in Korean music” (Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia 2012).]

³ Used with permission of The Third Orchestra.

Englishman from 80 years ago, and they meet in the image of a holy fire. They bring the same spirit. I felt at the time that the audience were almost shocked to see them presented together.

The show opened and closed with solos from Wang Xiao, our amazing Chinese erhu player.⁴

The liminal space

The orchestra's work naturally challenges boundaries. Between genres and cultures, between composition and improvisation, leadership and collaboration, between different forms of practice.

This might be on a continuum, as I suggested when taking a holistic approach to an instrument, but there is also the importance of contradiction, the “spark across the gap”.

I like to describe this space as “liminal”, an unpredictable vibration, of being caught or suspended between. For the music this facilitates the expression of difference and individuality—in relation to a whole.

The title of the first Barbican shows was, “The space between”. I constantly seek this liminal space. It is not easy to describe, it necessarily has qualities of paradox, ambivalence, mystery, alchemy, and part of my role is to continually temper the work so it retains that unknown, provocative quality.

But, to put it simply, in such a liminal space, it is possible to pivot, to choose to go, as it were, left or right of a centre, which generates a provocative choice. Such a provocation can change the whole progress of the music. You might also stay ‘between’, a quality of sustained vibration that brings a wonderful lifted quality.

It can be an interesting exercise to think about earlier music that has this quality. Purcell perhaps, with his false relations! Stravinsky, of course.

⁴ [At this point in the address, the author played an extract from the Third Orchestra's 2022 performance at Grand Junction:
<https://youtu.be/yTTzgACc8Fw?si=cBqk7CPRx1weTDcI&t=665>]

The creative and performance practice

In the work I always seek the best of three things:

What is pre-prepared.

What is devised and set in rehearsal.

What is left to be improvised in performance.

1. Preparation: Pieces usually begin with a meeting with individuals or groups of members where, in real time, key materials are generated. This is captured and recorded, and then notated in some form.

Two particular forms are a ‘backbone’ and ‘one-page’ score. Interestingly, the notion of ‘backbone’ you find across world traditions. For example, the central melody, the *balungan*, in Gamelan music, the *clave* in Latin American music, the *cantus firmus* in Renaissance polyphony.

Vietnamese musicians literally use the term backbone and *long ban* means ‘the guts of the piece’, the centre around which everything is spun.

The “one-page” score is a delightful concept I borrowed from Nova Scotian free-jazz band Upstream. The writer is challenged to get all the key ideas onto one page, ready to provoke the musicians’ realisation.

One of the key principles of The Third Orchestra’s pieces is that they always evolve, with each performance, and in each successive community that we join.

Example 1 is an excerpt from *I will write my blues*. I recently worked with the innovative intercultural Ensemble Extrakte in Berlin. When we came back from the very first break, Sören, the harmonica player, was improvising the melody that you heard. It felt fun, natural, so I called everybody together while he was still playing, and we worked with it for half an hour. Later I added it into the London show. Sören is a special musician, he plays 60’s blues in a band, doesn’t read music, but has an incredible ear and, as I said to him, with us, however complex a score, he never plays a wrong note. There is often something fruitful to be gained from combining of readers and non-readers. Here you see what is on the score, but in performance you would have also heard Max Bailie’s viola solo, sounding a bit like Jimi Hendrix!

I will write my blues

Ursula Rucker

Birke/Rouhangeze/Wiegold

① ♩ = 114

Musical score for the first system of 'I will write my blues'. It features a grand staff with treble and bass clefs. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/8. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 114. The first measure of the treble staff is marked 'Sören' and 'f'. The bass staff has a whole rest in the first measure.

Musical score for the second system of 'I will write my blues'. It continues the grand staff notation from the first system, showing the continuation of the melodic and harmonic lines.

② *solos etc.*

Musical score for the third system of 'I will write my blues'. This system is marked 'solos etc.' and shows more complex rhythmic patterns in both the treble and bass staves, including some triplet-like figures.

Musical score for the fourth system of 'I will write my blues'. This system continues the complex rhythmic and harmonic development, ending with a double bar line and repeat dots.

③ *pp* Alice

and make my salve in - to a

strings *pp*

harp

erhu 2nd time

Rou *Alice*

thread stitch my-self so love with blood-lines

erhu leads to saw!

that bleed free-dom freedom

both

Example 1: Extract from I will write my blues

Section two of the piece cycles, it might have solos or textures that develop and emerge. Section three is then a held chord, followed by a cue for decoration around the word ‘freedom’, and much improvisation flowed from that.

There was a particularly interesting moment in the rehearsal: I had written a chord that was based on the notes of Sören’s tune, but Max said, “No, no, let’s do it like this”, and completely resounded it for the three string players, finding a much more natural, open sound.

Another piece in the show was *Oh to be a hawk*, featuring Cheng Yu playing pipa, which she and I prepared together. Example 2 sets out all her material, and it was one of the freer pieces in the show. She played the composed material, and the others improvised around her, often guided by my improvisation signals. You will hear some of this piece in the rehearsal extract that is coming up.

③ 3

Rou
helpless and hope-less ain't no way to be... plus time is short so get free...
so get free...
so get free...

④ *pizz trem* ⑤ ⑥ *Rou*

⑦ *END* *wind sounds*
all flapping *sometimes i want to run so free and fast that my broken parts get whole* *Rou*
sometimes i want to run so free and fast
sometimes i want to run so free *haah*
sometimes *sometimes*
sometimes

Example 2: Complete pipa materials for Oh to be a hawk

2. Realisation: The second part of the creation process is devising musical details in rehearsal, a process that Baroque musicians call realisation. This involves learning what's written, establishing the grounds of each of the sections, then elaborating around them. Establishing a ground first is very important, jazz musicians like to say, “don't improvise until the drums and bass are tight”. A ground, rhythmic or textural, needs to have presence and focus, to enable and inspire the devising and improvising.

In rehearsal we also create orchestrations, which I love to do spontaneously, using players' ears to create extra parts, find roles, and so on. As noted, as part of the devising process I use signals, which keeps it flowing. They are also used in performances.

For example, there are hand signals for SOLO, LOOP, COPY, STOP and PLAY THROUGH THE STOP. The latter is very effective, like seeing someone go through a red light into a new world; HARMONISE means the same rhythm but different notes, and this can be the source of fascinating spontaneous harmonisations; GO TO PREVIOUS SECTION or RETURN BACK; REPEAT/CYCLE sections, and the last signal means DO WHAT YOU LIKE.

The latter is important, given to an individual, or to the whole, the leader lets go of control and the music takes off on its own.

The signals facilitate real-time creating and performing. Not stopping and saying, please will X copy Y? Just signalling COPY, and then there's an instant—and this is so important—an instant reaction through ears rather than through any explanation. Miles Davis once said, “you have to get them before their commenting minds begin”, and he might have been talking about John Coltrane or Bill Evans!

I often say to aspiring leaders, “evoke, don't describe”. Provoke a spontaneous imagining rather than give a heady series of instructions.

3. Performance: The resulting performance involves what has been set, but then also there are spontaneous journeys. A section might be signalled [1], [2], [3] etc. at any moment, and the improv. signals might intervene at any point to take the music to a new place.

The nature of the leadership

My role, then, is that of holding the centre of this three-part process. I co-compose, direct, help arrange, organise. I play keyboard, which I feel is important. Overall, I direct the flow of the work, always looking to maintain momentum.

Part of this is by always varying the directing approach, from very precise instructions to being completely open. I maintain there are only three things one can request of a player in rehearsal/realisation:

Do this

Do something like this

Do what you like

The first is simple, defining and focusing an idea. The very intensity of drawing a musician in until something is just right creates a pristine focus in the room.

The third request is critical, the point at which the leader, and all participants, let go, with no expectation.

The potentials of the second request are really fascinating, creating a stimulus, allowing choice, so unexpected perspectives might emerge. Combining a material limit with an intention works well—“use just the black notes, spiralling”.

Maintaining the play between these three possibilities is critical. Another liminal space, if you like, maintaining a constant sense that decisions might come from a multiplicity, and infinity, of sources.

What a player brings into this crucible of imagination is fascinating. Of course, a fine player would be very familiar with generic solutions, but in this fluid space they often bring something that surprises themselves.

I act as an *agent provocateur*. I look into people's eyes and see where they are, where they might go. I work with people's energetic qualities as well

as their sounds and instruments, sensing where they want to be, and am always conscious of the vitality and energy of the whole room, in that moment.

One can view a glimpse of a process on YouTube.⁵ This is a little crude, as I was rushing through something at the end of the day, but I think this video does offer an interesting example. We only had two rehearsals for this concert. This is the end of the second rehearsal. It shows explorations around the aforementioned Cheng Yu piece.

For this kind of process to work, there needs to be deep connections established, between myself and the players, and they with one another. Shri [Sri-ram], the Indian bass, said of the Grand Junction performance: “It was like supernatural. Things came off the floor, then took off and flew across the room”. At such a point in the performance, I feel I have little to do with it, it just happens. After all the rigorous preparation, things invade!

The Third Orchestra

Why is it called The Third Orchestra? I was having lunch with a good friend, and I suddenly said, “There needs to be a new orchestra, it should be called the third orchestra.” This was instant, with no pre-meditation. But now I am able to give reasons as to why it is a good name.

The “first orchestra” is obvious: the symphony orchestra, the jazz big band, it is monolithic, hierarchical. One way of seeing a ‘second orchestra’ is as binary: classical meets jazz, East meets West. Here, musicians might come as representatives.

In the Third Orchestra, members come as themselves. They bring their own unique story, along with their traditional lineage. Perhaps a traditional performer of Korean court music has also played free jazz or studied classical harmony. I argue that the Third Orchestra is post-binary, it is post-identity, people are not placed on particular pedestals as representatives, all come as individuals, and are all equal.

The members come from classical, jazz, folk, world, experimental

⁵ <https://youtu.be/edcjTsEkMn8>

backgrounds, from any tradition. They might be able to read notation or prefer to work by ear. They might be used to composing music formally, copying a master teacher or developing music collaboratively. Certainly, in The Third Orchestra everyone is engaged creatively, as well as being an executant.

Thirdness

As I said, the name of the orchestra was spontaneous. But whilst we were preparing the first performances in 2019, I was asked to be the examiner of a PhD by a Chinese composer, in which she quoted the Taoist sage, Lao Tzu [老子, lived sometime between the sixth and fourth centuries BCE]:

*the Tao begets the one
the one begets the two
the two begets the three
the three begets everything*

Everything. And thus, this is thirdness, not threeness.

Every sound, every culture, but above all, the story of every person.

So that Third Orchestra concert at Grand Junction was two weeks ago. Let's step backwards!

Club Inégales

Since 2011 I have been the director of Club Inégales, London, presenting over 180 events. This has included 21 concert seasons, with a total of around 100 concerts, and they have always had the same three-part form, first, resident band Notes Inégales plays, then a guest or guests play, then in the third set both groups play together something prepared just in the afternoon, directed by me.

The guests have come from a very wide spectrum, from a Maori shaman, Horomona Horo, to Lionel Loueke, Herbie Hancock's guitarist, to English folk artists, such as Chris Wood and the trio Leveret, to the grandfather of free improvisation, saxophonist Evan Parker. Also there have been guests

from China, Korea, Japan, India (such as the distinguished late Indian master, Drubha Ghosh), through to the Australian Art Orchestra (with their innovative project Hand to Earth, which included traditional aboriginal artists and a Korean vocalist) and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment.

Club Inégales is hosted in the basement bar of the distinguished law firm Hodge Jones and Allen, at Euston, London. In an act of great philanthropy, they have generously offered the project that space for 10 years.

Notes Inégales have released four CDs on the NMC Recordings label, under the Club Inégales banner.

Kafka's Wound, including klezmer music, was devised with distinguished writer Will Self, based on his telling of, and commentary on, a dark story by Franz Kafka. *Expect the Unexpected* is taken from two marathon performance days, for which Club Inégales commissioned twenty-two “one-page” scores in association with the EFG London Jazz Festival to celebrate 25 years of the festival. The pieces were performed, without rehearsal, with the jazz guests playing with the resident band. The fourth, most recently released CD—although it was recorded in 2011—is *Envoi*, a homage to Miles Davis, which has just received a five-star review in the BBC Music magazine.

Van Diemen's Land was made with the wonderful folk singer Sam Lee, following an evening when he was a guest at Club Inégales. That evening we decided to just improvise together—his songs, our accompaniments. It worked really well, so we took one song from the evening, *Van Diemen's Land*, planned a form for it, then took it into a recording studio for a day that included more songs, more improvising, and thus the CD was generated.

Notes inégales is a term taken from French baroque music, and it, in effect, means “swing it”. It has been said to be the closest classical music came to jazz. *Notes égales* are played equally, while *notes inégales* are unequal, swung. Or we could use the terms “shift” or “shuffle”. I love the American word shuffle. So the work is “unequal”, it shifts, we experiment, we explore, take a sideways look.

The 21 seasons at Club Inégales represented an extraordinary arc from 2011. *Envoi*, the last CD, was recorded at Montreux in Switzerland with Christoph Fellay, the innovative Swiss percussionist just a week before the club opened, with him, in September 2011.

Looking further backwards in time, I'd like to mention other important milestones in the development of my practice.

Brunel University 2003-2018, Head of Music Research

Brunel most generously supported my research, but it was also an opportunity to enjoy many hours of experimentation alongside students, especially in the weekly improvisation group, New Noise.

BBC Proms 2007: He is armoured without

He is armoured without was written for “Brass Day” in the 2007 season of the BBC Proms in the Royal Albert Hall. It was centred on five musicians from Uzbekistan, including the 5ft-long ancient karnay trumpets. I was supported in creating this by Central-Asian specialist Dr. Razia Sultanova, including a visit with her to Uzbekistan. It also featured the Queen's Coldstream Guards, the strings of BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, two soloists and 80 other brass volunteers. There were 24 trombones behind the orchestra, 32 trumpets in the high gallery, 12 tubas emerged from below to surround the Prommers, and the Uzbek musicians playing with me on stage.

The fanfare trumpeters of the Coldstream Guards were fine musicians. There was one rehearsal they couldn't make because they were guarding the Queen, one of their main tasks. They were open-minded musicians. In the first session I asked, “could you make those instruments sound like John Coltrane?”, and they said, “Yes, sir”, and made some extraordinary sounds on their fanfare trumpets. Across the Albert Hall the *fairly* old trumpets of the Coldstream Guards faced the ancient trumpets of Uzbekistan, supposedly the oldest trumpets in the world.

The Guildhall School 1984-94

I had a special opportunity to develop my work at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, London. As Artistic Director of the Department of Performance and Communication Skills, for 10 years, from 1984, I directed a two-and-a-half-day-a-week course with 20 postgraduates, drawn from across genre and culture. It became a wonderful laboratory with its own space in the crypt of St George in the East in Wapping. It partly drew from my years working with young people.

We started the week with Tai-Chi, explored African drumming, dance, theatre, and everybody composed and improvised, all of which was directed towards helping them become a flexible, creative, practical musician. The students performed and collaborated in many venues, hospitals, prisons, schools, community centres, as well as in conventional performing centres. My goal was that, by the end of the year's course, all of the students could go out and make music in any room, anywhere, with whoever was there.

The point of change

Looking further back, I can trace the point at which my search for a new syntax, a new practice really began. In my 20s I was very successful as a composer and conductor, my compositions were published by Universal Edition, I had my own ensemble, Gemini, BBC commissions and so on. But I was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the contemporary classical way of working. Then, around the age of 30, I found myself writing a series of pieces called 'Preludes'.

Somehow I knew I had to tread water. After writing the five Preludes, in fact, I undertook little conventional writing or conducting for some 15 years. I was determined to find out how music worked in other genres, and in other parts of the world, not just the sound, the harmony, the rhythm, but the practice. How is it led? How was it created? Where is it played? What is its function for its audience? Is it notated? If so, what does the notation consist of? How do you learn, is it at the feet of a master, or by scholarly study?

During this experimental time, I studied Gamelan music in Java and worked with leading African and Indian musicians including Deepak