MUSIC. OLOGY. ECA

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Contents

From the Editors

We are so excited to present the inaugural issue of MUSIC.OLOGY.ECA. This has been an almost year-long project and while there have been a few bumps along the way, we are incredibly pleased with the result. The aim of the journal is to provide an opportunity for masters and early-stage PhD students doing research in music to have an opportunity to be published. From the start we wanted to create an interdisciplinary music research journal and are happy to say that this first issue includes essays by students across music, sound design, and Celtic studies! Each essay highlights aspects of music, while also interlacing the research with the home discipline.

The idea for MUSIC.OLOGY.ECA came – as many great ideas do – during an evening at the pub. We had just finished our first few weeks of classes and having attended the Samson Young/Real Music exhibition at the Talbot Gallery (an amazing example of music and art working together to create a cohesive front), we settled into Drummond Street's Brass Monkey. We were chatting about ideas for the year ahead and felt inspired to create a platform where students could share interdisciplinary music research that would be easy enough to understand for people outside the music discipline.

As the year progressed, the shape and format of the journal changed, but the concept stayed largely the same.

We were lucky enough to have guidance and support from the faculty Reid School of Music and, in particular, the MMus Musicology Programme Director, Morag Grant. We also were incredibly happy to receive a large number of submissions for this inaugural issue (double what we were able to include!).

We are thrilled to present Issue No. 1 of MUSIC.OLOGY.ECA. Read it, share it, and discover a new facet of music research. And keep your eyes peeled for future issues; while we are graduating, MUSIC.OLOGY.ECA will continue to be part of the Reid School of Music.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Waxman & Abi McQuater
Co-Founders & Co-Editors

‘Where Did That Voice Come From?’

The ‘Mismatched’ Voices of Girls in TV Talent Competitions

Melissa Morton
PhD Candidate, Music, University of Edinburgh

Recommended Music to acompany this article:

‘Gloomy Sunday,’ by Billie Holiday, performed by Angelina Jordan
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rI6ZhRk86Hs&t=1s

‘Nessun dorma,’ from *Turandot*, composed by Giacomo Puccini, performed by Laura Bretan
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3Mn_WbB0mo

‘O mio babbino caro,’ from *Gianni Schicchi*, composed by Giacomo Puccini, performed by Jackie Evancho
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3d_XTvLalJk

‘O mio babbino caro,’ from *Gianni Schicchi*, composed by Giacomo Puccini, performed by Amira Willighagen
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDqTBlKU4CE&t=322s

'Where Did That Voice Come From?' The 'Mismatched' Voices of Girls in TV Talent Competitions

This essay tells the story of four unique yet strikingly similar moments.

On Saturday 10 August 2010, *America's Got Talent*'s eleven million viewers encountered an unusual audition. Ten-year-old Jackie Evancho—a tiny girl dressed in pink—stood in the centre of a vast stage and sang Puccini's '*O mio babbino caro*', her voice filled with vibrato, eyebrows raised with emotion, arms gesturing outwards towards her audience. Once she reached her final triumphant note, show host Nick Cannon joined her on stage, exclaiming: 'where did that voice come from?' The judges were similarly flummoxed; Piers Morgan asked her incredulously: 'are you sure you're not thirty?'

Three years later, *Holland's Got Talent* claimed a comparable discovery. Nine-year-old Amira Willighagen's assured and polished performance of the same aria received equally shocked reactions. Competition judge Gordon Heuckeroth declared: 'it's not normal, it's unbelievable!' As the entire studio audience stood, cheering, Heuckeroth raised up the coveted 'golden ticket', immediately promoting Willighagen to the competition's final.

In the 2014 series of *Norway's Got Talent*, eight-year-old Angelina Jordan, with frizzy dark hair and a white dress, walked barefoot onto the stage. She sang 'Gloomy Sunday' by Billie Holiday, uncannily emulating Holiday's mournful, grainy voice, prompting competition judge Omer Bhatti to declare: 'I think you are an old soul, that has lived many lives'.

In 2016, thirteen-year-old Laura Bretan auditioned with Puccini's '*Nessun dorma*' for *America's Got Talent*. When Bretan reached the climatic '*vincero*', drawn out and laden with vigorous vibrato, the audience stood and cheered, as golden confetti rained from above. Nick Cannon returned on stage to reiterate the question he had addressed to Evancho six years previously: 'where did that voice come from?'[1]

Where do our voices come from? In what way is our voice really *ours*, a possession of our own? What forms of social and cultural functions do voices perform? These are questions that have long troubled philosophers and musicologists. However, the preponderance of child singers on the stages of televised talent shows has propelled these questions into the heart of popular culture. When the voice we hear does not seem to match the body we see, this exposes the fragile and precarious nature of the relationship between voice, body and subjectivity.

Televised talent shows have been preoccupied with 'mismatched' singers of all ages and genders, and previous 'mismatched' male contestants of note include 40-year-old Carphone Warehouse employee Paul Potts and 24-year-old male soprano Greg Pritchard.[2] However, 'mismatched girls', as a socially constructed category, have attracted a particularly significant degree of notice and controversy. We therefore need to enquire whether there is something in particular about the female child's voice that encourages such representational significance. In positing the concept of the 'mismatched girl', I refer to Fleeger's important book, *Mismatched Women*, in which she traces a history of women with voices that fail to 'match' their bodies.[3] To Fleeger, who adopts an approach

[1] YouTube clips of the auditions are available at: Evancho: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3d_XTvLalJk>. Willighagen: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDqTBlKU4CE&t=322s>. Jordan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rI6ZhRk86Hs&t=1s>. Bretan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3Mn_WbB0mo>. [All accessed Jun 25, 2019].

[2] Potts' audition can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnp-8GrHOIk>. [Accessed Jun 27, 2019]. Pritchard's audition can be viewed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-ZjOEk4-dI&t=121s>. [Accessed Jun 27, 2019].

[3] Jennifer Fleeger, *Mismatched women: The siren's song through the machine*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

"Where do our voices come from? In what way is our voice really ours, a possession of our own? What forms of social and cultural functions do voices perform?"

based on feminist psychoanalysis, these women are subversive. Mismatched women, by defying expectations of how they should sound, expose and transcend the superficial logic of patriarchy, by which women are typically valued on their appearances. In this essay, I expand upon Fleeger's thesis that mismatched women, and therefore mismatched girls, refuse to fit within conventional categories. However, rather than taking a psychoanalytical approach, I consider the voice from social and cultural perspectives, consistent with more recent musicological theories about voice as a performance of individual and collective identities.[4] This essay therefore aims to locate the voices of mismatched girls within the cultural and social contexts of their performances, demonstrating the ways in which they become symbols for our understandings of girlhood, authenticity and liveness.

[4] see: Nina Eidsheim. *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practise*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); Suzanne Cusick, 'On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex', in *Audible Traces*, ed. Elaine Barkin and Lydia Hamessley (Zürich: Carciofoli Verlagshaus, 1999); Amanda Weidman, 'Anthropology and Voice', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 43, (2014): 37-51.

Where does voice come from?

Voices are often considered to encapsulate an individual's identity or sense of selfhood. In philosophy, voice has been defined by Adriana Cavarero as a 'nucleus of uniqueness' and by Mladen Dolar as a 'fingerprint, instantly recognizable and identifiable'. [5] However, we are often fooled; ventriloquists, radio impersonators, and mismatched singers all confound

[5] Adrianna Cavarero. *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 2; Mladen Dolar. *A Voice and Nothing* More. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press: 2006), 22.

the expected relationship between voices and their bodily sources. These examples reveal that voice is in fact always a performance, that voices and bodies are perpetually incongruent with one another. As Suzanne Cusick states, we often mistakenly 'assume that physical behaviour inside the body's borders cannot be "performances"'.[6] However, recent work in musicology, emphasising the embodied and physical nature of sound, has demonstrated that voice is in fact performed. The act of singing or speaking is made up of a series of processes, all of which are intensely modifiable—the compression of the lungs, vibrations of the vocal folds and the filtering of sound by the vocal tract. Diana Sidtis and Jody Kreiman argue that skilled manipulations of this anatomy 'can produce extreme or unrecognizable versions of a person's voice'.[7] In fact, the differences within the voice of a single speaker can be as great as the differences between different speakers.[8]

Mismatched girls highlight the performative nature of voice, as their voices seem to belong to someone else. Catherine Driscoll has drawn a parallel between emerging concepts of feminine adolescence and understandings of the self in the eighteenth century, and argues that the 'difficulty of becoming a subject, agent, or self-aware person' has 'continued to be perceived as considerably greater for girls'.[9] Girls are often defined in liminal terms as 'in transition or in process'.[10] Therefore, the liminal position of female child singers renders them ideal representations of the already fractured relationship between voices, bodies and selfhood.

Many fans even declare mismatched voices to be evidence of reincarnation: one representative comment suggests that Angelina Jordan has an 'old soul trapped in a small girl's body'.[11] Mismatched girls thus play with notions of selfhood as they contribute to the circulation and reanimation of the voices of others, reminding their fans of familiar, bygone singers. Jordan, who performed Billie Holiday's 'Gloomy Sunday', evokes comments such as: 'this is Billie Holiday reincarnate' and

[6] Cusick, 'On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex', 29.

[7] Jody Kreiman and Diana Sidtis. *Foundations of Voice Studies: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Voice Production and Perception.* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell: 2011), 66.

[8] Ibid., 71.

[9] Catherine Driscoll. *Girls: Feminine Adolescence in Popular Culture and Cultural Theory*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 50.

[10] Ibid., 6.

[11] Comment on Angelina Jordan. 'Angelina Jordan 7 year old sings Gloomy Sunday by Billie Holiday - Norways Got Talent 2014,' *YouTube*, posted by TV2, Mar 10, 2014. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rI6ZhRk86Hs&t=1s>. Retrieved Jun 28, 2019.

'a tiny Amy Winehouse in there'.[12] This discourse also found its way into journalism; one newspaper headline read: '8-Year-Old Reincarnates The Soul Of Billie Holiday'.[13] Similarly, during Amira Willighagen's audition, judge Gordon Heuckeroth said to her: 'They say that old souls live on in people and when I hear you sing you sound just like Maria Callas'.

In this way, the voices of mismatched girls allude to what Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut call the 'intermundane', the 'interpenetration between the worlds of living and dead'.[14] Musicologists have long associated recording technology with the intermundane. For example, Jonathan Sterne draws a parallel between the invention of recording technology in the nineteenth century and Victorian practices of embalming the dead.[15] Framed in this way, sound recording does not only preserve sound, but is believed to preserve some kind of 'essence' of the individual. According to this conception of recording technology, the personhood and subjectivity of singers like Holiday and Callas are circulated and 'reanimated' beyond their lifetime and control. This is what Stanyek and Piekut describe as the 'distributed nature of personhood'.[16] Mismatched girls are also inseparable from recording technology—all four claim to have had no training, and learnt to sing from watching YouTube videos of famous singers, both live and dead. Only through listening to recordings of now-deceased singers can mismatched girls imitate their voices and can audiences perceive this temporal juxtaposition as a 'reincarnation'. Therefore, for some viewers, mismatched girls, as representations of an 'in-between' or 'liminal' state, appear almost able to transcend boundaries between themselves and others, and between the living and the dead.

In sum, voice is a culturally learned performance, and a single speaker can 'perform' multiple voices. Consequently, a 'natural' voice does not exist. However, in the second half of this essay I will argue that *Got Talent* attempts to naturalise the performed nature of voice, often in order to mitigate

[12] Ibid.

[13] Martinez, Olga '8-Year-Old Reincarnates The Soul Of Billie Holiday,' *Epoch Times*, Jan 30 (2016). Available at: <https://www.theepochtimes.com/8-year-old-incarnates-the-soul-of-billie-holiday_1953930.html>. [Accessed Jun 28, 2019].

[14] Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut, 'Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane,' The Drama Review, vol. 51, no. 1. (2010), 14.

[15] Jonathan Sterne, T*he Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), 298.

[16] Stanyek and Piekut, 'Deadness', 20.

accusations of technological 'trickery', reassuring the audience that they really are hearing 'live' voices.

Sonic girlhood and liveness

In televised talent shows, practices of lip-syncing and AutoTune are derided, deemed as trickery and cheating.[17] As Paul Sanden states, performances that 'display the least amount of technological "interference" are valued over' those in which technological mediation 'is audible'.[18] Accordingly, the way in which *Got Talent* is produced aims to convince the audience that the contestants' voices indisputably 'come from' the bodies of the singers. In this way, a lack of technological manipulation is aligned with authenticity. Fans of mismatched girls frequently debate the authenticity of their voices.

Some show distrust, for example:

> This was a phony performance, this child was not singing.... She was lip-syncing.[19]

> How is that possible! It sounds dubbed! [20]

Others praise the voices as 'natural':

> Magnificent raw untrained talent.[21]

> She has ... a rare talent from a place beyond our comprehension. [22]

To mitigate accusations of 'dubbing', the show relies on a constructed sense of liveness. Like Sanden, I consider liveness not as a characteristic of musical performance, but as a cultural discourse.[23] Liveness is a concept that describes attributes of performances that are often not temporally 'live',

[17] Fleeger, Mismatched women, 167.

[18] Paul Sanden, *Liveness in Modern Music: Musicians, Technology, and the Perception of Performance*. (New York; London: Routledge, 2013), 35.

[19] Laurie Melisurgo, 'Was young singer Jackie Evancho lip-synching on 'America's Got Talent?' *NJ.com*. Aug 11, 2010. Available at: <https://www.nj.com/entertainment/tv/2010/08/was_young_singer_jackie_evanch.html>.

[20] Comment on Jackie Evancho,'Jackie Evancho first audition Americas Got Talent full,' *YouTube*, published Sep 14, 2010. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3d_XTvLalJk>.

[21] Comment on Amira Willighagen, 'Amira Willighagen - O Mio Babbino Caro,' YouTube, published Nov 6, 2013. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qDqTBlKU4CE&t=322s>.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Sanden, *Liveness*.

such as in the case of a 'live recording' of a concert. Today, in 2020, when I watch a YouTube clip of Evancho's audition from 2010, I hear a voice that has been converted by a microphone into electrical signals, transduced again into sound through the loudspeakers in the auditorium, recorded, mixed and edited by the production team, digitised as a stream of data and uploaded onto the Internet, and processed and re-produced by my laptop's speakers. Meanwhile, the image of Evancho's body has made its own journey: the footage from multiple cameras from multiple locations in the hall was edited and spliced together and uploaded as a data stream. Nonetheless, *Got Talent* needs to convey to me, the viewer, that there is something inherently live about this video, that somehow I am experiencing the true and unadulterated sound of Evancho's voice. Since their voices seem to come from somewhere else, mismatched girls are particularly subject to accusations of fakery and technological manipulation. Authentication is therefore particularly necessary in cases of 'vocal mismatch', where the voice appears incongruous to the body.

The production team of *Got Talent* actively attempts to reassure its audience that they are experiencing real voices, emerging from real bodies. For example, after her semi-final performance, Evancho was asked to sing '*a capella*' to prove that she was singing live.[24] Judge Howie Mandel then emphasised: '[the voice] is coming out of you'.[25] The girls themselves also depict their voices as natural. Jordan states that 'singing is as important as breathing to me', whilst Evancho declares that 'music and singing to me is the reason I exist'.[26] Rather than portraying singing as a culturally learned and physiologically complex performance, mismatched girls and their fans present singing as innate—as 'natural' as breathing.

Dana Gorzelany-Mostak argues that, to offset the 'mature' aspects of Evancho's voice, mistakes and vocal imperfections enact a 'sonically constituted juvenation strategy', assuring us that her voice is 'real'.[27] This is reflected in the performances of all four girls, who take frequent breaths,

[24] Jackie Evancho, 'JACKIE EVANCHO proves she is Not LIP SYNC-TOP 10-Americas got talent', *YouTube*, published Aug 12, 2010. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Di_ylb-eT5Y>.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Angelina Jordan, 'Angelina Jordan - News Feature - Norway - 2016 (subtitled),' *YouTube*, posted Jul 14, 2016. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3XXFu_V8Lcs>.
Jackie Evancho, 'Jackie Evancho Opens Up About Her Body Dysmorphia | EXTENDED,' *YouTube*, posted Feb 15, 2019. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N5qq_JpbMUQ>.

[27] Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, 'The curse of the '*O mio bambino caro*': Jackie Evancho as prodigy, diva, and ideal girl', in *Voicing girlhood in Popular music: Performance, Authority, Authenticity*, edited by Jacqueline Warwick and Allison Adrian, (New York; London: Routledge, 2016), 379.5.

"Rather than portraying singing as a culturally learned and physiologically complex performance, mismatched girls and their fans present singing as innate—as 'natural' as breathing."

often in the middle of words and phrases. For example, in Willighagen's performance of '*O mio babbino caro*' she breathes in almost every bar, reassuring us of her child's lungs, despite her powerful voice and fast vibrato.

When we hear a certain voice as 'youthful', this may not only be the product of internal physiological conditions. Stras, Driscoll, and Pecknold have theorised 'sonic girlhood' as a performed and deliberately exaggerated vocal timbre, examining girl singers in North American popular music from 1960s girl groups such as The Shirelles, to present-day stars Rebecca Black and Taylor Swift. Regardless of age, these singers perform sonic attributes of 'girlhood', including 'vocal fry' or 'glottal rattle', and timbres that are 'grating', 'hoarse', and 'breathy'.[28]

In the cases of Evancho, Willighagen, and Bretan, their decision to sing opera arias distances them from performances of girlhood in popular music, instead signifying 'maturity' or 'sonic womanliness'.[29] However, moments of imperfection allow the audience to temporarily witness 'girl' vocality. In Evancho's audition, this is manifested in her high-pitched intakes of breath at the beginning of phrases, and the occasional intonation mistakes. For example, the F on the final syllable ('ro') of the first phrase '*o mio babbino caro*' becomes sharp as she runs out of breath towards the end of the bar.[30] Willighagen also alters '*O mio babbino caro*'. Her strong Dutch accent permeates the performance, and she often mispronounces lyrics. For example, the line '*a comperar l'anello*' becomes '*ha compertar l'ainello*' and in general, the 'o' sounds are lengthened to 'oo.'[31] Roland

[28] Pecknold,'These Stupid Little Sounds in Her Voice', 46.

[29] Gaylyn Studlar, *Precocious Charms: Stars Performing Girlhood in Classical Hollywood Cinema*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013),110.

[30] Evancho, 'Jackie Evancho first audition', 00:01:57.

[31] Willighagen 'Amira Willighagen', 00:02:18.

Barthes might argue that we hear the 'grain' of Willighagen's body, 'speaking its mother tongue'.[32] In this way, the performance is authentically individuated, tethered to Willighagen's 'live' body.

In Angelina Jordan's performance of Billie Holiday's 'Gloomy Sunday', the occasional verbal slip or wobble in her voice function as authentication strategies. For example, she omits the word 'are' in the line: 'Dearest the shadows I live with are numberless', and rather than 'would they be angry' she sings 'would make me angry', rendering these lines almost nonsensical.[33] Moreover, she often breathes in the middle of phrases, such as in the long rising phrase 'I wake and I find you asleep in the deep of my (breath) heart'. This phrase, which extends over four bars and rises through the interval of a minor seventh from b to a', is the emotional and musical climax of the song. The wheezing of Jordan's voice as she gasps for air in the middle of the phrase reinforces her emotional authenticity as well as her youthfulness.

Laura Bretan also makes linguistic errors in her performance of '*Nessun dorma*', omitting several syllables in the first phrase. Since most of her verbal omissions occur during the first phrase, we can assume that these mistakes are caused by the breathless excitement of being on stage. In addition to signalling a girlish 'breathy' timbre as described above, these breaks in the phrase also point to the liveness of her performance. Vocal imperfections that imply nervousness inspire identification with audience members—one YouTube fan writes to Bretan: 'I cringed and started crying for you with fear and terror'.[34] As Wayne Koestenbaum notes, imperfection carries identifying power, since the 'possibility of failure' gives 'fans a function'.[35] He states that we 'imagine that the note's wretched aspects are a mirror, reflecting the greedy demands we make of the singer, and asking us: "How would you manage such a note?"'[36] Therefore, imperfections also facilitate a form of emotional 'liveness' and immediacy.

[32] Roland Barthes 'The Grain of the Voice,' in S. Heath (trans. and ed.) *Image-Music-Text*. (London: Fontana, 1977), 182.

[33] Jordan, 'Angeline Jordan 7 year old sings' 00:01:26.

[34] Comment on Laura Bretan 'Laura Bretan : 13 Year Old Opera Singer Gets the Golden Buzzer - America's Got Talent 2016,' *YouTube*, published by LondonProductions S.A., Jul 6, 2016. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3Mn_WbB0mo>.

[35] Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*. (London: Poseidon Press, 1993), 137.

[36] Ibid., 139.

"Through her uncanny combination of multiple vocal identities, the mismatched girl refuses to be categorised, occupying a perplexing state of in-betweenness and incongruity"

Conclusion

In all four auditions, the 'live' and juvenated sound of girlhood I have described is uncomfortably positioned alongside the girls' imitations of the 'old souls' of adult singers including Callas and Holiday. The instances of 'girl' vocality the occasional slip or imperfection—thus function as reassuring moments of sonic 'girlhood'. Through her uncanny combination of multiple vocal identities, the mismatched girl refuses to be categorised, occupying a perplexing state of in-betweenness and incongruity. She is both young and old—her mature vocal performance is heard as a reincarnation of a bygone singer, and as the voice of a young girl, who breathes in the wrong place and mispronounces lyrics. Her voice appears to come from her own body and from somewhere else—it seems too big to emerge from a tiny girl's body, but the sonic imperfections insist that the voice is real. Therefore, the phenomenon of the girl singer in televised talent shows enables us to consider cultural meanings of girlhood, authenticity, and talent. Ultimately, mismatched girls powerfully illustrate to their audiences that all voices are performed and multiple, and that the relationships between self, body and voice are fractured, complex and, often, illusory.

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The Cosmic & The Corporeal: Audiovision in Under the Skin

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Recommended Music to acompany this article:

Under the Skin Soundtrack, composed by Mica Levi
https://open.spotify.com/album/0MJwS1KqklO8tr95IJAcQA?si=ROuWUvMZRCKhNih_WPFVaA

The Cosmic and The Corporeal: Audiovision in Under the Skin

Under the Skin is a film deeply preoccupied with the human experience. Our protagonist is 'Laura,' an alien in disguise who stalks Glasgow in search of male prey. Whilst the wider implications of her toil remain unclear, we are entirely situated with her throughout — seeing the streets through her eyes, sitting with her in the van during each hunt. She is almost entirely inscrutable, yet she is the conduit through which we experience this world. Our proximity to her complicates the ontological question beyond a blunt dichotomy of Laura and the human subjects. Rather, it's a dynamic continuum whereby Laura might glean empathy while ordinary people are estranged. Indeed, there comes a definitive point at which Laura opts for an inexorable path towards selfhood. The film's audiovisual thrust, in place of dialogue or more conventional narrative arcs, enables this journey. It both expresses the oddity of the terrestrial and Laura's attempted enculturation within it.

The audiovision of *Under the Skin* is the means through which the cosmic and corporeal are articulated. The textual

explications of Michael Faber's novel are reduced to abstract compositions with hinted meanings. I'll explore two of these sequences presently.

Narrative abstraction

Whilst a compelling feat of audiovisual rhetoric in their own right, it is interesting to note that Jonathan Glazer arrived at these sequences both out of sensibility and necessity. In an interview regarding the making of the film, Glazer discusses an embellished earlier draft of the script. In this nascent iteration, the opening 'creation scene' in which Laura materialises would have been a much larger, much longer affair. "Probably a 10-minute scene, a million pounds" as Glazer states. [1] Budgetary constraints jettisoned the original plans for this scene. The end result however, is a highly compelling distillation. Notably, Mica Levi's score is our first sensory excitation. *Al niente* tremolo strings and soft mallet cymbals begin to furnish the beckoning texture. We become aware of a pinprick of light in the middle of the frame, seemingly precipitated by a high tremolo C in the violins. It gradually increases in size and intensity before we jump to a close-up of a star at 00:01:57. Particularly striking is the contrast between the visuals and the music: the former exhibit a spacey languor, while the score, dense in texture and bristling with cello triplets, suggests a more purposeful drive. At 00:02:40, we begin to hear the phonemic utterances of a female voice. Through our vococentric disposition, [2] we now attempt to make sense of this sequence. It seems as though the speaker is engaged in some speech exercise. Accompanying these vocalisations is another image — abstract, but perhaps also figurative: two spherical forms which are beginning to align. At 00:03:27 there is a tangible synchresis as we hear sharper plosives and cut to the image of the black sphere now docked within a larger structure. The voice is becoming more insistent now, and eventually out of the

[1] "The Making of Under The Skin (2013)," accessed December 9, 2019. https://youtu.be/M8RkCg7ro0c.

[2] Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 5.

micro-units emerge words ('film' being one of the first). As the voice develops, so too does the image: it increasingly resembles an eye.

Our inkling of this is confirmed at 00:03:27 as a graphic match replaces the abstraction with the real thing. At 00:04:25 we are hit with the title card and a burst of noise (which turns out to be a gushing stream). This palette cleanser marks the end of this first sequence.

It seems as though we have witnessed a genesis of some description, and that superlunary forces (quite probably sinister) are at work. In the gradual assemblage of celestial bodies

"randomly intoned oscillations in the first violins and tremolos on a triangle connote some terrible industry taking place."

into a literal body part, the cosmic has been enfolded in the corporeal. This enfolding feels corroborated by the shot of the stream at 00:04.29: underscoring this earthly phenomenon are the cymbals which remain from the previous set piece. It seems like a premonition; a hint of the commingling of telluric and extraterrestrial.

Glazer's composition is characterised by echoic shots and sequences that resonate with what has come before. This can be said of the 'Meat to Maths' sequence. The scene unfolds in the void in which Laura traps her victims and is the first time we

are immersed in this unfathomable sepulchre. One of the men looks on at a longer held captive, his musculature atrophying psychedelically. The decaying prisoner then implodes. There is a reprise of the creation music. It soundtracks the lifeless skin of the hollowed detainee, balletically treading the deathly undercurrent. At 00:01:32 we cut to a shot of what appears to be blood running down a chute towards a glowing red terminus. The chilling suggestion of a production line is compounded by a change in scoring—high, randomly intoned oscillations in the first violins and tremolos on a triangle connote some terrible industry taking place. [3] Things further intensify at 00:01:54 as we seemingly follow the blood to its destination. A screaming quintuplet figure in the violin propels us through an unreal environ of pulsating red. There is an energy here; a palpable causality in the harvest of the victim and the hum of this alien landscape. We are experiencing the inverse of what took place in the opening (what we could call 'Maths to Meat'): here, we are witnessing the transfiguration of a human victim into fuel for some incomprehensible purpose. Taken with the 'Creation' sequence, we could say that these two scenes evince the fluctuating dual-morphology of cosmic and corporeal that occurs throughout the film.

[3] Mica Levi, Under the Skin (Chester Music: London, 2013), 30.

The Othering of the Mundane

Under the Skin is remarkable in the way it treats its human subjects. In an interview with Channel 4, Glazer discusses the importance of maintaining 'the alien lens.' [4] It was vital that the story be told from Laura's perspective. The upshot of this credo is our alienation from many of the human subjects in this film. We experience this in an early scene. After a period of relative stillness, where Laura pulls off into the murky dawn light, we cut to her descending a shopping centre escalator at 00:10:20. The sound is overpowering in this paroxysm of human activity. As is the sight of all the people whom Laura passes by. There is no styling here. [5] Rather, Glazer's unfeeling

[4] "Jonathan Glazer on *Under the Skin* | Film4 Interview Special," accessed December 9, 2019. https://youtu.be/hZUvIfXKVVc

[5] "Jonathan Glazer on Under the Skin | Film4 Interview Special".

camera assesses the masses as Laura would: a convoluted hoard of obscure individuals, glimpsed briefly in the austere fluorescent light.

Abetting this sense of dislocation is our familiarity with Scarlett Johansson as a denizen of the Hollywood A-list. Of course she would appear alien in the context of *vértié* Glasgow. But because of our adjacency with her throughout the film, we also feel alienated from all the ostensibly normal people she happens upon. This is especially evident in the interactions she has with the men she attempts to pick up. These are almost entirely improvised conversations with non-actors unaware of the camera. Ensuring a natural feel in these encounters meant that they had to be captured in one take. And in order for that to happen, there needed to be a sufficient amount of angles to be drawn upon for the edit. These requirements resulted in the build of 10 specialised cameras to be deployed clandestinely throughout the van.[6]

The result is a series of encounters that are deeply strange, owing to the very ordinariness of her targets. The upmarket seduction of Johansson's London cadence further estranges the thick, oft incomprehensible brogue of the men. Indeed, the minimal dialogue of this film has no plot-driving purpose. It's a tellurian murmur that Laura decodes for the essentials.

Exacerbating this othering of the men is the way in which they are depicted in the frame. Sometimes, they float entirely outside it as a disembodied voice. Most often, we see them from the vantage of the van window. As Ara Osterweil points out, our view is "At least triply mediated to see the world simultaneously through alien eyes, the van's windshield, and the lens of the camera."[7]

While the audiovision of *Under The Skin* makes the prosaic exceptional, it relays wrenching drama as a passing curio. In a particularly devastating scene, Laura chats with a swimmer on the coast, her intentions undoubtedly malign as

[6] "The Making of Under the Skin (2013)".

[7] Ara Osterweil, "Under the Skin: The Perils of Becoming Female," Film *Quarterly 67*, no.4 (Summer 2014), 46.

ever. It then becomes apparent that a tragedy is unfolding: a woman is spotted swimming fully clothed in the vicious swell. Her husband soon follows, barreling into the waves. We soon realise that the woman has gone in after their dog, who is trapped in the treacherous riptide. We see no close-ups of these desperate people: as the swimmer runs towards them at 00:24:57, Laura remains impassive and the catastrophe is observed from the cool remove of several wide-angle long shots. This very human struggle, motivated by empathy, appears almost farcical through her gaze.[8] It is a cause and effect that she observes, but cannot identify with. Underscoring the scene is the same cymbal texture from 'Creation,' spiriting us further upwards into Laura's cosmic apathy. At 00:26:24 the swimmer collapses back on the shore, exhausted from his attempted rescue. It is here that Laura sniffs an opportunity. We hear the simple bass drum–snare figure that induces the seduction music (more on this anon), which has up to now been associated with Laura's cruising for prey. It seems this situation is no different to her. It may have been argued that a frisson of sexual charge, of *some* feeling, might have been a motivating factor in the liquidation of her suitors. But as she clubs the back of the prostrate swimmer's head with a rock and drags him across the shingle, we are at our furthest remove from Laura. She is a killing machine, operating with upmost precision and without remorse.

[8] "Under the Skin - The Alien Lens," accessed December 9 2019. https://youtu.be/nteRfDiMui0

Laura's acculturation

The audiovisual abets two thematic enquiries: both Laura's estrangement from the world and her attempt at assimilating into it. Particularly notable is the softening of Mica Levi's scoring in the second half of the film. At this stage, Laura is taken in by a kindly man (billed as 'The Quiet Man') who spots her adrift on a bus. He asks her whether she needs help and upon her answering affirmatively, he takes her back to his house.

"She is a killing machine, operating with upmost precision and without remorse."

After bringing up a cup of tea, and turning the bar heater on in her room, he says goodnight. At 01:16:22, we have a lingering shot of Laura and the reddening heater. One can't help but think of the terminus from 'Meat to Maths.' It is a thought-provoking composition that just might afford some insight into what Laura may be thinking: that perhaps she could survive on the warmth of human kindness rather than the death-heat of anthropoid fodder. At 01:16:42, Laura once again peers at her reflection in the mirror. It is markedly different this time however. There is a tangible sensuousness here in the warmth of the chromatic field, the delicacy of Levi's score and most obviously in Laura's undress. Her body is no longer weaponised; her nakedness is her own, the germ of self-identification. The music abets this new sense of understanding: a bare yet consonant fifth, swelling and subsiding in the strings (what is heard in the film is even simpler than what appears in the score).

It foreshadows the fuller imbibition which takes place at 01:22:32. Here, Laura further partakes in the human experience: it seems as though she will sleep with the man. The music is at its most ardent here. Levi has spoken about wanting to connote the first romantic experience of a teenager[9] The juxtaposition of real and synthesised strings imbue the scene with a swooning quality reminiscent of Vangelis' work for *Blade Runner* (1982). [10] Once more, the music connotes Laura's interiority which we may not fully ascertain from watching her — she still seems somewhat aloof in this moment and

[9] Mica Levi, "Under Mica Levi's Score," interview by Adrian Rapazzini, Interview Magazine, April 3, 2014. https://www.interviewmagazine.com/film/mica-levi-under-the-skin.

[10] Vangelis, *Blade Runner (Music From The Original Soundtrack)*, Warner Music UK Ltd, 1994. https://open.spotify.com/album/6NkuCdMz5tGmHbOXAWbtCW?si=GGcAiG36QbmAEVbSfAGN8A.

bemusedly stiff in the act. But the music feels as though it very much belongs to her. A modulating pitch wheel is conspicuous in a synthesiser melody that is dulcet and pining, yet off-kilter. It feels as though Laura embodies these microtonal oscillations. They are the burgeoning romance within her, or her straining to experience it. They are her wish to transcend her limits.

This expedition is cut brutally short. It's evident that something is wrong. Laura springs from the bed and grabs a lamp, pointing it at her genitalia (or at the place where it should be). It is now clear that there will be no consummation of her personhood. As Elena Gorfinkel states "This sex act feels like an end, the arc of a timeline, a reproductive and relational horizon forestalled, a dysphoric recognition." [11]

This forestalling of Laura's humanisation is reflected in the score. From here on in, we will hear none of the mesmeric swoon of strings and synthesiser. The next musical moment of note is, chillingly, a reprise of the seduction theme.

I briefly alluded to this thematic material earlier on, and it would be worth revisiting it in a little more depth. It makes its initial appearance at 00:12:33, bar 11, in the violas during the first cruising scene. Accompanied by a menacing pulse of sampled bass drum and snare, this music becomes associated with Laura's hunting. Throughout the opening sequence, it intensifies through an increase in tempo and an embellishment of the disquieting three-note motif with ancillary lines.

As her first victim follows her into her lair, the reverb of the bass drum and snare dissipates and we are left with a drier, more focused pulse. There is a deft moment of synchresis at 00:19:34 as a descending fifths figure in the basses and cellos precipitates a tracking shot from the perspective of the man as he walks into the interminable void.

This combination of atypical tracking shot, perspectival shift and scoring transports us to this new, liminal space. There is a moment's breath as the man follows Laura deeper into the void before a thickened texture of piccolo, violins

[11] Elena Gorfinkel, "Sex, sensation and nonhuman interiority in *Under the Skin*," *Jump Cut*, no.57 (Fall 2016). https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/jc57.2016/-GorfinkelSkin/index.html.

and violas plays a wilder elaboration of the theme. It is here that Levi's interest in chopped and screwed music becomes especially apparent.[12] The processed melody lends a distinctly unworldly flavour to the scene. This is Laura's siren call and it has thoroughly hypnotised her prospective internee. The narcotic caterwaul beckons him to follow her and he descends almost obediently into the viscous black. This seduction music reappears and develops throughout the first act. It is reprised in the beach scene explored earlier as well as two further seduction scenes (00:33:53 and 00:56:29).

The denouement takes place in the woods, where Laura has fled after her failed attempt at intercourse with The Quiet Man. After an encounter with a logger who patters innocuously about walking trails, she finds a bothy where she stops in to indulge in another human pleasure: sleep. Her reverie does not last long. She is roused from her rest by the malevolent logger who gropes her awake. She flees into the depths of the woods and hides behind a fallen tree. Upon resurfacing, she reencounters the logger who pursues her this time. Fatefully, we hear the strains of the seduction music. It is of course associated with the annihilation of male targets in the first act. The tragedy here, besides the brutal abjection she will suffer at the hands of her assailant, is that she chose to abandon her life as a cog in the malign alien apparatus. But in relinquishing her preternatural power, and opening herself up for construal as a gorgeous ingénue adrift in the world "…the so-called norms (of whiteness, masculinity, humanity) are implicitly challenged, even as they inevitably hold sway."[13] Her allure, the previous source of her formidable proficiency, is nicked and re-weaponised fatally against her. There is a captivating moment of stillness amidst the assault. Stripped of her sartorial and epidermal cover, the alien gazes down at her own face which she holds in her hands. We float for a while at this boundary of ontological limit, suspended in the high microtonal wavering of flute and violin and the low tremolo of synthesised strings. Then

[12] Mica Levi, "Playlist: Mica Levi on her Musical Influences," March 27, 2017. https://londonsinfonietta.org.uk/stories/playlist-mica-levi-her-musical-influences

[13] Osterweil, "Under the Skin: There Perils of Becoming Female," 50.

the culminating wrath of male hegemony is visited upon her. Her violator douses her in accelerant and sets her alight. This moment is scored with a reposeful Db9 chord, diffused through the strings and flute. It is the sound of a strange world being set to rights. An aberration remedied with the native pathology.

Final Thoughts

Audiovision is the primary channel through which the cosmic and corporeal are explored in *Under the Skin*. Through Glazer's maintaining of the 'alien lens' (as well as an alien audition) the subject of humanity is ravelled. No true elucidation is ever offered. Rather, the question appears as a fluxional iridescence we glimpse from afar. The audiovisual is also the means through which we may have some access to Laura's inner life. We glean some notion of her experience in the second act. Though there is still an awkwardness in Laura's embodiment (her odd poses in the mirror by the heater, her rigid passivity during intercourse), we still get an idea of her emotional development through the adopted softness of Levi's musical language.

The continuum of the cosmic and corporeal is also intriguingly articulated in the 'Creation' and 'Meat To Maths' sequences which were previously discussed. Music, sound and visuals combine to create condensed abstractions that convey the interflow and transvaluation of the bodily and extramundane. These sequences are the most conspicuous audiovisual manifestations of a process that in fact thrums throughout the entire film— and arguably drives it. This propulsive reciprocality finally abates at the end. Just as the seduction music originally conveyed her victims to the cosmos, it now conveys Laura to the earth. Her ultimate enculturation is in death. As her body burns, her particulate matter will synthesise with the atmosphere and return in the falling snow. [14]

[14] Gorfinkel, "Sex, sensation and nonhuman interiority in *Under The Skin*."

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Vangelis. *Blade Runner (Music From The Original Soundtrack)*. Warner Music UK Ltd, 1994. https://open.spotify.com/album/6NkuCdMz5tGmHbOXAWbtCW?si=GGcAiG36QbmAEVbSfAGN8A.

Narrative and Number in Busby Berkeley's Footlight Parade

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Recommended Music to acompany this article:

‘Honeymoon Hotel,’ from *Footlight Parade*,
Music by Harry Warren and lyrics by Al Dubin
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpH7_zNjEps

‘Human Waterfall,’ from *Footlight Parade*,
Music by Sammy Fain and lyrics by Irving Kahal
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRqcZcrgPaU

‘Shanghai Lil,’ from *Footlight Parade*,
Music by Harry Warren and lyrics by Al Dubin
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8icVlEYmb98

Narrative and Number in Busby Berkeley's Footlight Parade

The brief 'Pre-Code' era of American film history, which lasted from 1929 until mid-1934, tackled many controversial themes in its films which would not be depicted on screen again until decades later. These included promiscuity, prostitution, drug use, interracial relationships, and homosexuality, as well as a focus on stronger female characters. [1] The enforcement of the Motion Picture Production Code (MPPC) in 1934 banned the exploration of these themes in future productions, while also forcing many past films to be edited to fit new regulations and some to become lost entirely. [2]

One successful genre of this era was the backstage film musical, where audiences witnessed the inner workings of a theatre studio and watched the creation and performance of a musical production unfold. Busby Berkeley, a choreographer for Warner Bros., was a key figure here, choreographing numbers for many film musicals throughout the early 1930s. This essay will focus on one of these film musicals, *Footlight Parade*, [3] and

[1] Thomas Doherty, Pre-Code Hollywood: Sex, Immorality, and Insurrection in American Cinema; 1930-1934. (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[2] The Chiseler, 'Where is "Convention City" Hiding?', *Tumblr,* 2011. https://chiseler.org/post/1562863854/where-is-convention-city-hiding.

[3] Lloyd Bacon and Busby Berkeley, 'Footlight Parade', United States: Warner Bros. Pictures, 1933.

examine its key musical numbers: 'Honeymoon Hotel', 'By a Waterfall' and 'Shanghai Lil'. Using these examples, I will analyse the relationship between musical number and film narrative, while relating the film to wider issues surrounding musicals in the 'Pre-Code' era and beyond.

Footlight Parade was one of three major 1933 Warner Bros. musicals choreographed by Busby Berkeley, with the others being *42nd Street* [4] and *Gold Diggers of 1933*. [5] These musicals' plots were strikingly similar with almost identical casts; [6] as such, the films' potential popularity relied on the success of Berkeley's musical numbers rather than narrative prowess.[7] *Footlight Parade*'s narrative shares this goal: director Chester Kent (James Cagney) must showcase three musical prologues in one night to secure an important contract. Despite time constraints, love scandals and financial struggles of the Great Depression, they prevail against all odds.[8] Later Warner Bros. musicals like *Dames*[9] and *Gold Diggers of 1935*[10] would lack this level of narrative importance towards their numbers, as the cast no longer completely relied on their success.[11] Due to this, it could be argued that their overall significance is weakened.

Uniquely, *Footlight Parade*'s musical prologues are at the end of the film, allowing for the narrative to naturally progress toward a finished product. Each performance celebrates the "individual triumph of everyone who made it", while granting its audience a sense of closure.[12] Martin Rubin notes that *Footlight Parade*'s overall structure contains elements from not only the backstage musical, but two other musical forms from the nineteenth century: farce-comedy and tour-of-the-town.[13] The farce-comedy style of musicals typically have a straightforward plot, with the narrative focusing on bringing its cast to a venue where they can watch or perform a variety of shows.[14] *Footlight Parade* demonstrates this through the narrative's progression towards the theatres where 'Honeymoon Hotel', 'By a Waterfall', and 'Shanghai Lil' are to be performed. Meanwhile, tour-of-the-town musicals tend to feature a

[4] Lloyd Bacon and Busby Berkeley, '42nd Street', United States: Warner Bros. Pictures, 1933.

[5] Mervyn LeRoy and Busby Berkeley, 'Gold Diggers of 1933', United States: Warner Bros. Pictures, 1933.

[6] Cy Caldwell, 'To See or Not to See', *New Outlook* CLXII, November (1933): 43.

[7] Mark Roth, 'Some Warners Musicals and the Spirit of the New Deal', *Velvet Light Trap* 17 (1977), 2.

[8] Morris Dickstein, 'Fantasy, Elegance, Mobility: The Dream Life of the 1930s', in *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2009), 380.

[9] Ray Enright and Busby Berkeley, 'Dames', United States: Warner Bros. Pictures, 1934.

[10] Busby Berkeley, 'Gold Diggers of 1935', United States: Warner Bros. Pictures, 1935.

[11] Mark Roth, 'Some Warners Musicals', 6.

[12] Morris Dickstein, 'Fantasy, Elegance, Mobility', 239.

[13] Martin Rubin, 'Busby Berkeley and the Backstage Musical', in *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader*, ed. Steven Cohan (London: Routledge, 2002), 56.

[14] Martin Rubin, 'Backstage Musical', 55.

"whirlwind tour of the big city", with rapid transitions between different venues accompanying the cast's singing and dancing[15] This is demonstrated in *Footlight Parade* during the cast's rushed transitions between venues after each performance. Loud sirens are heard throughout these transitions, emphasising the urgency of the situation and importance that the production's success holds for everyone involved.

The first musical prologue is 'Honeymoon Hotel'.[16] Despite widespread credit to Berkeley, this number was in fact directed by Larry Ceballos, as Berkeley was filming *Roman Scandals* at the time.[17] Ironically, this discredit is reflected in *Footlight Parade*'s narrative when the choreographer Francis (Frank McHugh), who ultimately pulled the show together, receives no credit.[18] 'Honeymoon Hotel' has a strophic, rhyming musical structure, maintaining a simple melody to avoid distraction from the primary focus, the visuals. The number starts with *Footlight Parade*'s main performers Scotty (Dick Powell) and Bea (Ruby Keeler) walking together before being obscured by suitcases. An immediate distinction between the narrative and the cinematic audience is established; while the camera focuses on Powell and Keeler's feet (hiding their faces for effect), this would not happen within the theatre. However, the opposite occurs during a check-in sequence where the camera directly follows Powell and Keeler as they navigate the lobby, providing camera angles that would be completely invisible to the diegetic audience.[19]

Later, as Powell leaves his hotel room, he marches in unison with the other men. Through these "eroticised barracks", a glimpse of Berkeley's military influence from his job as a First World War lieutenant is shown.[20] While later numbers contain more obvious representations of this influence, this use is more subtle. This is followed by the camera zooming out to reveal an intricate multi-levelled set, consisting of two corridors and four bedrooms all fully constructed, furnished and lit. This is the first major example in *Footlight Parade* of Berkeley's

[15] Martin Rubin, 'Backstage Musical', 54-55.

[16] Dick Powell and Ruby Keeler, 'Honeymoon Hotel', in *Footlight Parade* (United States: Warner Bros. Pictures, 1933).

[17] Frank Tuttle and Busby Berkeley, 'Roman Scandals', United States: Samuel Goldwyn Productions, 1933.

[18] Michael LaRocco, 'Larry Ceballos as Busby Berkeley: The Credit Dispute in Footlight Parade and the Branding of 'Buzz'', *Film History* 30, no. 2 (2018), 142.

[19] Per Krogh Hansen, 'All Talking! All Singing! All Dancing! Prolegomena: On Film Musicals and Narrative', in *Intermediality and Storytelling*, ed. Marina Grishakova and Marie-Laure Ryan (Gottingen: De Gruyter, 2010), 157.

[20] Cheyney Ryan, 'Lawyers as Lovers: Gold Diggers of 1933 or 'I'd Rather You Sue Me Than Marry Me', *University of San Francisco Law Review* 30, no. 4 (1996), 1130.

unrealistic set design; this construction would be physically impossible to present on a physical theatre stage, adding an air of illusion and fantasy to the scene. While it shows the cinematic audience the diegetic audience's view of the action, the setup is impractical. This is because scenes unfolding inside separate rooms may go unnoticed depending on the audience's seating position or attention, showing that the actors are playing more to the camera than to their physical onlookers.[21]

The other women staying in the hotel visit Keeler to welcome her, and a sense of utopian community is demonstrated.[22] Hotel guests typically do not have familiarity with each other, and a sense of belonging is built amongst the women despite a hotel's entire purpose being a temporary living space. The title 'Honeymoon Hotel' is rather ambiguous; however, one of the security guards breaks this illusion, "*You're in Jersey City, and not in Hollywood!*" This statement, albeit minor, grounds the scene within reality and, as seen in later numbers, 'Hollywood Hotel' becomes the most physically plausible number. Although this hotel could not realistically be on stage, its layout does not stray outside physical possibility for a real hotel, justifying the guard's statement to some extent.

'Honeymoon Hotel's clear romantic subtext helps to support the pre-existing narrative throughout *Footlight Parade;*[23] Powell and Keeler's characters begin a blossoming romance backstage, and their performances in both this number and 'By a Waterfall' solidifies their relationship, following Berkeley's typical romance method in Warner Bros. musicals.[24] 'Honeymoon Hotel' takes this a step further by thrusting them into a scenario where they must act as if they are married; a camera pan to a toddler in a magazine ends the number on an unsubtle note as Powell and Keeler lay in bed together. However, merely a year later, sexual undertones such as these would be forbidden from musicals altogether under enforcement of the MPPC. While 'Honeymoon Hotel' shows elements of fantasy through its unrealistic set design within a theatre space, it remains within

[21] Martin Rubin, 'Backstage Musical', 56.

[22] Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', in *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader,* ed. Steven Cohan, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 24.

[23] Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', 28.

[24] Rick Altman, 'The Show Musical', in *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989), 227.

the realm of normativity. The next musical number starkly contrasts with this, removing the performance from reality completely and becoming a place of pure spectacle.

"While 'Honeymoon Hotel' shows elements of fantasy through its unrealistic set design within a theatre space, it remains within the realm of normativity."

The second number, 'By a Waterfall', is an elaborate water ballet filled with beautiful women dressed as nymphs.[25] Of the three major musical numbers in *Footlight Parade*, 'By a Waterfall' journeys the furthest into the realm of fantasy in terms of choreography. The diegetic inspiration for this prologue comes when Cagney looks across a street and sees "*A mountain waterfall splashing on beautiful white bodies*", which are revealed to actually be a group of African American children running around a fire hydrant, dimly lit with their faces obscured. This discovery of inspiration in a non-theatrical environment reflects the future methods that Radio-Keith-Orpheum (RKO) Pictures would adopt from the mid-late 1930s for their musicals. Unlike Warner Bros.' film musicals, RKO's numbers were not restricted

[25] Dick Powell and Ruby Keeler, 'By a Waterfall', in *Footlight Parade* (United States: Warner Bros. Pictures, 1933).

to the stage and took place anywhere within the narrative environment.[26] Cagney's character's inspiration here seemed to predict the direction that future musicals would take, yet the issue with this specific discovery is that his vision of utopia becomes whitewashed. The abundance of female figures, ornate decorations and elaborate staging in his final product showcases "the preferred, white, upscale alternative to darker bodies", and the value of the original scene becomes greatly diminished.[27] The act of white-washing in musical numbers was a staple for Pre-Code productions as well as Berkeley's other musicals: both *42nd Street* and *Gold Diggers of 1933* from that same year featured many more seemingly mass-produced beauties.[28]

However, this prejudicial notion cannot be entirely blamed on Berkeley; his musical numbers were often made separately from the narrative which can be seen throughout *Footlight Parade*.[29] During rehearsal scenes, the choreography and actions seem almost nothing like Berkeley's final creations, with an unrealistic jump in quality between the narrative and number. 'By a Waterfall' is the most striking example of this. The space featured in this number transcends physical limits to a much greater extent than in 'Honeymoon Hotel', with a sudden and unrealistic transition halfway through the number from a waterfall to a beautiful, ornate swimming pool with fountains and diving boards. The number itself ends on another unrealistic transition when Keeler, dressed as one of the nymphs in the pool, suddenly changes into a dress and is completely dry within seconds, waking Powell with splashes of water.

Through Powell's sleeping state, the larger-than-life set can be explained as a dream sequence, helping to justify Berkeley's use of multiple angles in his camerawork.[30] The number is intended to be unrealistic to both the theatrical and cinematic audiences, the camera "liberated from the mimicry of a static audience viewpoint" and free to capture shots which would be unseen or obscured for diegetic audience members.[31] Underwater shots with nymphs swimming through each other's

[26] Martin Rubin, 'Backstage Musical', 59.

[27] Linda Mizejewski, 'Beautiful White Bodies', in *Hollywood Musicals: The Film Reader,* ed. Steven Cohan (London: Routledge, 2002), 184-5.

[28] Thomas Doherty, 'Pre-Code Hollywood', 276.

[29] William Murray, 'The Return of Busby Berkeley', *New York Times Magazine*, March 2, 1969.

[30] Gary Lee Steinke, 'An Analysis of the Dance Sequences in Busby Berkeley's Films: 'Forty Second Street'; 'Footlight Parade'; and 'Gold Diggers of 1935' (University of Michigan, 1979), 93.

[31] Christopher Lewis-Smith, 'A Brief History of the Dancer/Camera Relationship', *Moving Image Review & Art Journal* 5, no. 2 (2016), 147.

legs, birds-eye views of the synchronised swimmers and close-ups of the women's faces as they rose from the water are all featured, with seemingly hundreds of these women appearing out of nowhere and singing despite being underwater. [32] This was likely achieved through a non-diegetic voiceover added in post-production, which further adds to the scene's surrealism as a live theatre production of the time would not have been capable of this.

While 'By a Waterfall' is more of a cinematic marvel than a dancing one, the female form is still utilised through complex choreography. The true spectacle in this element of the musical number comes from the intricacy and complexity of the masses moving in formation, rather than the individual dancer. These would culminate in complex, geometric, "kaleidoscopic masses of impersonal flesh" which warped to create intricate patterns and shapes, abstracting the female flesh.[33] 'By a Waterfall' includes several of these, including a rotating multi-layered star[34] and snaking lines.[35] This sequence comes to a climax through a spectacular multi-tiered human fountain which rises from the ground, with the nymphs standing on these rotating tiers and water sprinkling outwards around them. As these women sit down in unison, a birds-eye view is shown of them and opening their legs repeatedly, becoming kaleidoscopic shapes. These non-representational shapes of the female form show the audience what utopia may feel like, specifically in Powell's dream.[36] The focus on the abundance of female flesh in this scene becomes a representation of the male gaze towards women,[37] yet Berkeley's intention here is to not completely fetishize the women's bodies but celebrate them,[38] by abstracting them in such a way that they become something entirely new.

Additionally, this ornate fountain and the geometric patterns created by the women's legs reflect the Art Deco style of 1930s urban architecture, furnishings and jewellery.[39] Art Deco pieces often combined glass, geometric patterns and

[32] Rachel Joseph, 'Longing for Depth: The Frame of Screened Stages in the Screendance Spectacles of Busby Berkeley', in *The Oxford Handbook of Screendance Studies*, ed. Douglas Rosenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 489.

[33] Morris Dickstein, 'Fantasy, Elegance, Mobility', 238.

[34] Warnerarchive, 'Footlight Parade (1933) - The Human Waterfall.', YouTube video, 2016, 0:40. https://youtu.be/FRqcZcrgPaU?t=40.

[35] Warnerarchive, 'The Human Waterfall', 01:35. https://youtu.be/FRqcZcrgPaU?t=95.

[36] Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', 20.

[37] Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', 28.

[38] Molly Haskell and Manohla Dargis, 'The Thirties', in *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 146.

[39] Lucy Fischer, 'City of Women: Busby Berkeley, Architecture, and Urban Space', Cinema Journal 49, no. 4 (2010), 115.

adornments of female figures,[40] with designers such as René Lalique and Jean Dunand being key figures in this movement.[41] Conveniently, this use of glasswork helped Berkeley to capture many different angles of the girls above and below water, which was a brand new idea at the time and allowed Berkeley to take advantage of the set's design to achieve new technological feats.[42] 'By a Waterfall's fantastical arrangement, set design and choreography dove into the realm of pure escapism; while its apparent whitewashing of paradise is problematic, it is still a technologically impressive sequence which has withstood the test of time.

[40] Lucy Fischer, 'City of Women', 125.

[41] Anika Dačić, '10 Art Deco Artists Who Changed the World of Decoration Forever', *Widewalls* (2015).

[42] Gary Lee Steinke, 'An Analysis', 95.

"The true spectacle in this element of the musical number comes from the intricacy and complexity of the masses moving in formation, rather than the individual dancer."

The final prologue in *Footlight Parade* is 'Shanghai Lil', where Cagney takes the stage in place of the intended star Barrington (Philip Faversham) alongside Keeler after he becomes drunk and refuses to perform.[43] His character's inclusion within a musical number holds significance; throughout *Footlight Parade* (and *42nd Street*), the onscreen directors are prominent throughout the narrative elements of the film, only being overshadowed during the musical numbers.[44] Warner Bros. would never again give this degree of time in the spotlight

[43] James Cagney and Ruby Keeler, 'Shanghai Lil', in *Footlight Parade* (United States: Warner Bros. Pictures), 1933.

[44] Mark Roth, 'Some Warners Musicals', 1.

to the director. In fact, future films went on to diminish the director's role entirely, prioritising the performers' character development instead.[45]

The first half of 'Shanghai Lil' takes place within an opium den filled with prostitutes, with Cagney playing an American sailor who is searching for his 'Shanghai Lil'. The woman in question is portrayed by Keeler in yellowface makeup and broken English: "*I miss you very much a long time*". Cagney's attraction to Lil is rivalled, however; several men at a bar table sing about their longing for Lil while other prostitutes scorn her success, "*That Oriental dame is detrimental to our industry!*" One important factor of this scene is the ethnicity of the brothel's patrons. White, African American, Asian, and Jewish men are all given equal screen time through a panning shot of the bar, demonstrating a "barroom equality" absent from the rest of the film.[46] This is likely due to Berkeley's choreography being separate from Bacon's direction.

As the sailors in the bar toast to Shanghai Lil, Cagney punches one of them and a brawl ensues. The film speed is reduced during this fight to make it appear faster and more intense, which helps the scene transition from the slow introduction of the bar to the faster-paced section that follows.[47] When Cagney changes into his sailor uniform and reunites with Keeler, they begin a spontaneous tap-dancing sequence on the bar table. This impromptu dancing is reminiscent of RKO's future musical numbers, which would narrow the distinction between narrative and number by presenting the narrative world as more utopian and the musical world as more natural; a performance could happen anytime, anywhere.[48] These characters' ability to perform perfectly together without prior preparation is another characteristic of RKO works, such as *Shall We Dance*?.[49] In the case of 'Shanghai Lil', this was shown through Cagney taking Barrington's place and effortlessly performing with Keeler without the need for rehearsal.

[45] Mark Roth, 'Some Warners Musicals', 1.

[46] Ellen Scott, 'More than a 'Passing'; Sophistication: Dress, Film Regulation, and the Color Line in 1930s American Films', *Women's Studies Quarterly* 41, no. 1-2 (2013), 68.

[47] Gary Lee Steinke, 'An Analysis', 102.

[48] Richard Dyer, 'Entertainment and Utopia', 26.

[49] Mark Sandrich, 'Shall We Dance?', United States: RKO Radio Pictures, 1937.

A set change occurs on camera through use of wheeled set pieces as a military horn resonates. The bar set is seamlessly rolled back to reveal a mass of marching sailors in a crowded street with a bridge, several buildings, and a wide walkway. Much like the sets in the previous musical numbers, its sheer size is impossible for a theatrical stage. Yet, similarly to 'By a Waterfall', this open space serves as a canvas for Berkeley to demonstrate his choreography skills. This time, it is a more literal showcase of his military influence through the "disciplined male body" rather than the female form.[50] As the soldiers march, Chinese women in short cheongsams and conical hats join them and the two groups merge, a birds-eye view shot making them indistinguishable from each other as they raise up cards that make the American flag, Franklin D. Roosevelt's face (who had been inaugurated earlier that year) and the National Rifle Association logo, before firing guns in unison. The patriotism surrounding this scene is emphasised by the music.[51] Both 'Yankee Doodle' and 'Anchors Aweigh' are heard as the flag is assembled. The referential political meaning behind this is clear.[52] Through the act of white sailors and Asian women celebrating in solidarity, Berkeley is rallying support for Roosevelt's New Deal, a scheme aimed at providing relief for America's poor and racially prejudiced citizens during the Great Depression.[53]

The number ends when Cagney manages to sneak Keeler onto the ship, showing her a flipbook animation of a boat sailing across the sea using playing cards. The camera shows Cagney and Keeler turning towards the audience, yet the flipbook is presented in a way that could only ever be seen by Cagney & Keeler. Yet again, the number plays more to the camera and becomes detached from the diegetic reality it is part of.[54] The scene itself symbolises the sailor and Lil sailing away towards a new life together, yet this notion is unrealistic in practice as there would be numerous issues with Lil being

[50] Nadine Wills, 'Clothing Borders: Transition Discourses, National Costumes and the Boundaries of Culture', *M/C: A Journal of Media and Culture 3*, no. 2 (2000).

[51] Roger A Kendall and Scott D Lipscomb, 'Experimental Semiotics Applied to Visual, Sound, and Musical Structures', in *The Psychology of Music in Multimedia*, ed. Siu-Lan Tan, Annabel J Cohen, Scott D Lipscomb and Roger A Kendall (Oxford: University Press, 2013), 52.

[52] John Booth Davies, 'Events of the Past: The Critical Role of Things We Have Heard Previously, in the Perception of Music', in *The Psychology of Music* (London: Hutchinson), 1978, 69-70.

[53] Louis Kaplan, 'A Patriotic Mole: A Living Photograph', *CR: The New Centennial Review* 1, no. 1 (2001), 112-3.

[54] Martin Rubin, 'Backstage Musical', 56.

"The level of spectacle and fantasy within these musical numbers detaches them from narrative reality, with Berkeley's dynamic camerawork giving the cinematic audience a unique experience compared to the diegetic audience within the film"

smuggled into America.[55] However, 'Shanghai Lil' neglects to acknowledge the realism of the situation, as it is unimportant to the story. Admission of this may have broken audience immersion, removing the utopian atmosphere surrounding the number.

What allowed 'Shanghai Lil' to stand out from *Footlight Parade*'s other numbers is the incorporation of both Berkeley's famous choreography skills and a meaning behind the performance. Despite most numbers being an intentional escape from the Depression, Berkeley was able to rally up support for a cause by using propaganda as spectacle. 'Shanghai Lil' was still permitted to be shown despite the controversial nature of its themes. However, these would be banned a year later under enforcement of the MPPC.

While the musical numbers in *Footlight Parade* focused more on spatial spectacle rather than narrative development, the numbers still hold some significance. 'Honeymoon Hotel' and 'By a Waterfall' provided a chance for a young couple to develop their romance, while 'Shanghai Lil' allowed the director to achieve a taste of the limelight from his own production. The level of spectacle and fantasy within these musical numbers detaches them from narrative reality, with Berkeley's dynamic camerawork giving the cinematic audience a unique experience compared to the diegetic audience within the film, and his choreography abstracting the human form in an aesthetically pleasing and innovative way.

Berkeley's distinctive style of creating musical numbers provided an entertaining escape for filmgoers during the 'Pre-Code' era and time of the Great Depression. Despite his numerous Warner Bros. musicals sharing similar plots and cast members, the uniqueness of their musical numbers kept audiences coming back for more, eager to see what wonders Busby Berkeley could showcase next with the same narrative template.

[55] Nadine Wills, 'Women in Uniform: Costume and the 'Unruly Woman' in the 1930s Hollywood Musical', *Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 14, no. 3 (2000), 321.

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Originality or Familiarity?

A discussion on programming a recital of new and existing musical works

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Recommended Music to acompany this article:

7 Takes, composed by David Behrens
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Xkx4w5RSOI&list=PLrJ-fzeHqjXl4WRjCOo8bvlZHIiPdNsg4

Rhapsody in Blue for Piano Solo and Orchestra,
composed by George Gershwin
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cH2PH0auTUU

Originality or Familiarity?

A discussion on programming a recital of new and existing musical works

'Since public concerts began centuries ago, engaging audiences has been a concern'.[1] This statement succinctly establishes that there is no one method of constructing a successful recital programme. With that in mind, this essay will explore the dramaturgical strategies used to present my chosen repertoire, initially outlining what lead to the formation of the programme, before discussing elements of musical narrativity and how that can aid in conveying meaning on a deeper level. In addition, I will investigate the importance of utilising novelty in balance with familiarity to entice an audience, whilst keeping an awareness of the drawbacks that each can impose. Finally, the presence of a unifying theme will be discussed with regards to how it can potentially add originality, resulting in a programme that can be simultaneously engaging and informative.

Given my mixed jazz and classical training on both piano and alto saxophone, I decided to introduce a theme to my recital: *On the Boundaries of Jazz*. The concept of boundaries and

[1] John C. Tibbetts, Michael Saffle and William Everett, eds., *Performing Music History (*Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 327.

musical fusion is rather appropriate in the context of jazz, as the style itself only emerged from the combination of cultures in the first place.[2] The very nature of jazz is that it absorbs and makes the 'richest use of new musical materials, systems and languages'.[3] I consequently wish to present this programme with an equivalent attitude—that of experimentation and exploration whilst nevertheless taking into account established musical styles and their cultural contexts. Parallel to performing, another significant interest of mine is composition, so I took this opportunity to write two pieces for my programme—one for alto saxophone and piano, and one for solo piano. Given that my foremost aim is the audience's enjoyment, the main reason to add original music into the programme was to make this recital unique and as enticing as possible. A considerable benefit of writing original work was that I could simultaneously tailor the compositions to fit the theme, whilst writing to my own performance strengths, both of which should facilitate the audience's engagement. As a result, my programme, in order, is as follows: Zequinha de Abreu's *Tico Tico no fubá* (a Brazilian song arranged for saxophone and piano), *Kind of Klezmer* (original composition for saxophone and piano), *7 Takes* (original composition for solo piano), George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (arrangement for piano and string quartet).

After deciding on these pieces, the first aspect to establish was the order of performance. Given that the theme I have chosen for this recital incorporates elements from several musical disciplines, and that this is therefore a hybrid style, there are no set programming conventions. However, conventions and etiquette from the original styles are still relevant and contribute to the decision-making progress concerning performance order. Regarding new, original compositions, the art of programming must be used especially carefully. Edward Cone comments that 'all too often new compositions are quarantined, consigned to programmes consisting entirely of unfamiliar works', noting that 'intelligent programme construction is impossible' under

[2] Sidney Finkelstein, *Jazz: A People's Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1948), 78.

[3] Ibid.

such circumstances.[4] Consequently, a sensible solution to this issue would be to combine new work with familiar repertoire to provide both comfort and novelty for an audience, hence my decision to begin and end with pieces that are each well known in their respective styles. Although *Tico Tico no fubá* was originally written for classical guitar and voice in the Brazilian choro style in 1917, [5] it was Charlie Parker's rendition of the song that caught my attention, redefining it as a jazz standard. I will perform an arrangement inspired by this version. Due to the addition of an improvised solo between two incarnations of the main melody, this piece constitutes the closest resemblance to 'pure' jazz on the programme, with none of the subsequent pieces following such a trademark structure. It was a conscious decision to place this as the opening item—not only should its catchy, up-tempo melody draw people's attention, but despite its South American rhythms, it nonetheless provides an example of jazz in a relatively conventional sense before departing more consciously to fuse with other musical styles.

The first of my compositions, *Kind of Klezmer*, as the name suggests, takes inspiration from traditional Jewish and Eastern European music, casting the audience from the Americas over to Europe with its distinctive harmonic vocabulary. At this point, the concept of narratives becomes significant. The addition of a theme to this recital already introduces an aspect of narrativity to the programme, transporting the audience between continents by varying musical styles. This initially establishes a geographical element to the whole recital; however, within each piece lie several sub-narratives. The idea of narrative in music is rather convoluted, with a range of opinions surrounding their origin, function and even existence.[6] One question raised, addresses the necessity for music to be able to refer to something outside itself.[7] I would argue that this depends on the function and context of the music in question, but in a concert environment it could be argued that it may not be a *necessity*, yet nevertheless could

[4] Edward T. Cone, 'The pianist as critic', in *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation*, ed. John Rink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 243.

[5] Tamara Elena Livingston and Thomas George Cara Garcia, *Choro: A Social History of a Brazilian Popular Music* (Indiana University Press, 2005), 101.

[6] Eduard Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful: A Contribution Towards the Revision of the Aesthetics of Music* (Hackett Publishing, 1986), 28.

[7] Werner Wolf, 'Narrative and narrativity: A narratological reconceptualization and its applicability to the visual arts', *Word & Image* 19 (2003): 181, accessed 20 February 2020. doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2003.10406232.

add another layer of meaning to a performance. Despite the associations that 'narrative' has with semantics, Eduard Hanslick argued that music is unrelated to semantic content, and that 'the content of music is tonally moving forms'.[8] Juxtaposing this view, however, are several academic investigations which have shown that jazz musicians favour using language metaphors when talking about their practice.[9] Furthermore, in an improvisation masterclass I attended, the late saxophonist Joe Temperley told me that 'if you don't have anything to say, don't play',[10] clearly equating speaking with performing. Aside from performers' choices regarding narratives, the audience too will form their own interpretations, and so the responsibility lies with the performer to convey how their performance should be perceived.[11]

In an effort to engage younger generations in 'classical' music performances, performers are increasingly expected to speak directly to their audience with respect to the music they play, rather than playing it without such interaction.[12] Although this departure from more traditional performance contexts could be seen as a rather defeatist actuality, I see it rather as an opportunity to connect with an audience on a level that could result in their heightened responsiveness. In terms of my recital, this kind of interaction could bridge the gap between the laid-back presentation in jazz performance, and the more formal introductions heard in purely 'classical' contexts, a gap in which my recital might be placed. I intend to use this method of communication as a strategy for engaging my audience to allow them to easily accompany me on this journey across the boundaries of jazz and appreciate the narratives I outline along the way. To justify this decision, Ludwig Wittgenstein observed that 'listener's narrativisation of music may be dependent of cultural competence',[13] implying that the socio-cultural context of each listener could potentially result in a wide variety of interpretations throughout the audience. Although this is a valid point, made by a highly acclaimed philosopher, I plan to

[8] Hanslick, *On the Musically Beautiful*, 28-29.

[9] Sven Bjerstedt, *Storytelling in Jazz Improvisation: Implications of a Rich Intermedial Metaphor* (Lund University, Malmö Academy of Music, 2014), 311.

[10] Joe Temperley, 'A Masterclass with Joe Temperley', Masterclass, Lochgelly Centre, October 23, 2014.

[11] William Rothstein, 'Analysis and the act of performance', in *The Practice of Performance: Studies in Musical Interpretation,* ed. John Rink (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 237.

[12] Tibbetts, Saffle and Everett, *Performing Music History*, 327.

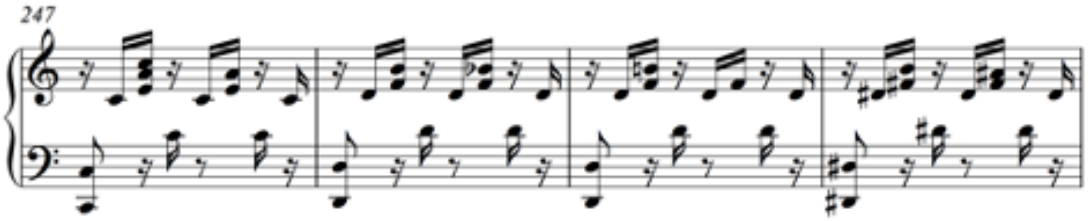
[13] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 67.

use this means of introduction before each piece to unite the audience in their understanding of my programme, eliminating any potential confusion that may otherwise occur.

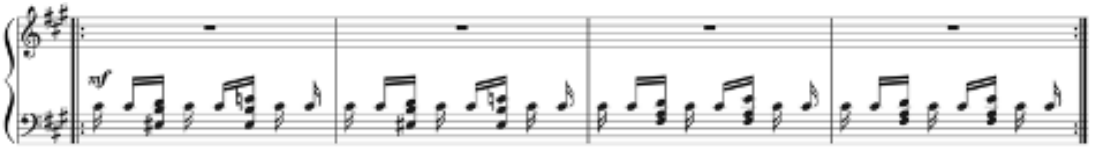
The function of each piece on the programme is also a pertinent aspect in relation to the narratives they present. While I use *Tico Tico no fubá* primarily to exploit its inherently high energy levels to initially entice my audience. Its narrative purpose is that of establishing a level of jazziness parallel to a recognition of its country of origin, setting the theme of the recital in motion. *Kind of Klezmer* then serves to introduce the aforementioned concept of cross-continental musical inspiration into the programme. *7 Takes* utilises the structure of theme and variations to further accentuate this switching between styles, presenting seven main incarnations of the theme. My intention with *7 Takes* is to both emulate musical aspects of the programme that have already been heard, while foreshadowing those to come in *Rhapsody in Blue*, functioning in part as a microcosm of the whole programme. As such, the narrative being conveyed through this piece is as equally related to the other pieces' narratives as it is to its own. One of the most notable musical links is the presence of certain rhythms, namely the 3,3,2 grouping (a bar of eight split into two consecutive groups of three, followed by a group of two). This is a rhythm that Gershwin frequently employs across his works and *Rhapsody in Blue* is no exception, so I decided to incorporate this into *7 Takes.*[14] Although both pieces feature this rhythm multiple times, one of the most obvious comparisons is shown below—example 1 from *7 Takes*, example 2 from *Rhapsody in Blue.*

[14] George Gershwin, *3 Preludes For Piano* (Alfred Music, 2010)

"the narrative being conveyed through this piece is as equally related to the other pieces' narratives as it is to its own."



Example 1. David Behrens, *7 Takes*, bars 247-250



Example 2. George Gershwin, *Rhapsody in Blue*, bars 367-370

Another noteworthy connection is that this rhythm has its roots in South American music,[15] linking back to *Tico Tico no fubá*, and providing a sense of completion in drawing together the first and last items on the programme. The idea of theme and variations is also not exclusive to *7 Takes;* Gershwin's musical development of certain themes result in considerable evolution over short spaces of time. The most extreme example of this is with the iconic 'love' theme,[16] first heard in the orchestra at the opening of the second movement, before being imitated on piano in a similarly slow, emotive manner. It is not until the finale that the same melodic material returns in the orchestra, accompanied by the piano in one of its most virtuosic passages—a repeated staccato ostinato (from which the example above is taken) into which the previously delicate 'love' theme is sent forth. This passage succinctly unites each end of the wide narrative spectrum of the piece, and the device used is variations on a theme.

A considerable means of engaging an audience surrounds the idea of novelty,[17] and whilst including original compositions adheres to that means, a resulting challenge is having to overcome the audience's potential 'resistance to innovation'.[18] Samuel Gilmore candidly states that 'if audiences do not like to listen to new music, performers are forced to play old music'.[19] Given that I am in the fortunate position of performing a programme entirely of my own choice,

[15] John Charles Chasteen, *National Rhythms, African Roots: The Deep History of Latin American Popular Dance* (University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 91.

[16] David Schiff, *Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 9.

[17] J. Peter Burkholder, 'Museum Pieces: The Historicist Mainstream in Music of the Last Hundred Years', *The Journal of Musicology* 2 (1983): 128, accessed 21 February 2020. https://www.jstor.org/stable/763802.

[18] Deena Rosenberg, *The Music Makers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 93.

[19] Samuel Gilmore, 'Tradition and Novelty in Concert Programming: Bringing the Artist Back into Cultural Analysis', *Sociological Forum* 8 (1993): 222, accessed 20 February 2020. https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2FBF01115491.pdf.

this is less of a concern, but I do nonetheless need to justify and convince my audience of these pieces to avoid over-exploiting this freedom. As already touched upon, the programming of such items is of sizeable importance. Regarding recitals of entirely new music, Edward Cone comments that an audience can be 'numbed by excessive novelty'[20] and as a result 'cannot hear the interrelationships between the compositions', [21] insinuating that it is in nobody's interest for such programmes to exist. Thus, I came to my decision to keep the key concepts surrounding my own pieces easily understandable—the first involving Klezmer traditions to introduce more diversity, and the second using variations on a theme to demonstrate the multiple genres that can be absorbed into jazz.

[20] Cone, 'The pianist as critic', 243.
[21] Ibid.

Whilst programming original works into a recital has its challenges, performing a piece as famous as *Rhapsody in Blue* conversely brings its own complications. At this point in my recital, the notion of bringing novelty to the programme suddenly switches from being potentially overabundant to non-existent. Although there is a great deal of novelty to me as a performer, *Rhapsody in Blue* has nevertheless existed for almost a century now, entering the realm of the 'familiar masterpiece'.[22] Cone points out that the decision to perform such a work 'implies that the piece has not been exhausted by all its previous performances, and [the performer] promises an interpretation which is somehow novel'.[23] Having been performed by the likes of Leonard Bernstein, André Previn and Lang Lang to name just a few, the idea of bringing something new is somewhat daunting; however, one considerable aspect of novelty in my performance is the presence of a string quartet to play the orchestra part. Although this does not significantly alter how the piano part is performed, it should suffice to add an element of refreshing unfamiliarity to the piece as a whole. Regarding my personal interpretation, the question of the score's role is raised. In jazz idioms, the score is mentioned far less due to the copious amount of improvising and flexible

[22] Ibid., 242.

[23] Ibid.

approach to melodies; as Scottish jazz pianist Richard Michael once said, 'jazz musicians never play the same thing once'.[24] Cone states that 'the performer's responsibilities […] begin with what I call his obligations to the score—but they do not end there',[25] continuing that whilst an understanding of the score 'is necessary, it is never sufficient'. Nicholas Cook supports the same argument, stating that 'the experience of live or recorded performance is a primary form of music's existence, not just the reflection of a notated text. And performers make an indispensable contribution to the culture of creative practice that is music'.[26] These are both opinions with which I would agree, as I believe listening to other performers' renditions can significantly influence one's own interpretation, consciously drawing awareness to sections that might be played in vastly different manners between performances. This also supports William Rothstein's point that 'one performer's narrative may differ radically from another's for the same work',[27] a reality which provides a beneficial range of choices from which I can build my own interpretation.

Due to its comparative length and sheer scale, *Rhapsody in Blue* contains the most internal narratives of all pieces on the programme, absorbing almost half the length of the recital. This piece alone contains six different musical themes, each with its own distinctive characters and so the performer's responsibility lies in justly presenting these characters in an appropriate manner. Gershwin conceived each of these themes on a single train journey, describing the piece as a 'musical kaleidoscope of America—of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our metropolitan madness' referencing also the train's 'steely rhythms'.[28] One of these themes indeed became known as the 'train',[29] creating a very direct association through use of specific rhythms. Raymond Williams described 'rhythm [as] a way of transmitting a description of experience',[30] a statement which could hardly fit better with the literal narratives that Gershwin outlines in this piece. The importance of each of

[24] Richard Michael, 'Jazz and Improvisation Workshop', Workshop, University of St Andrews, March 31, 2015.

[25] Cone, 'The pianist as critic', 244.

[26] Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (OUP USA, 2014), 1.

[27] Rothstein, 'Analysis and the act of performance', 237.

[28] Ron Cowen, 'George Gershwin: He Got Rhythm', *Washington Post*, 11 November 1998, accessed 21 February 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/horizon/nov98/gershwin.htm.

[29] Schiff, *Gershwin*, 9.

[30] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Parthian Books, 2011), 40.

"I believe listening to other performers' renditions can significantly influence one's own interpretation, consciously drawing awareness to sections that might be played in vastly different manners between performances."

these themes could be summarised by Leonard Bernstein's point that 'the identity of the piece […] lies in the melodies, not their sequence'.[31] David Schiff comments that 'any one of these six melodic elements stands for the whole',[32] and so any successful interpretation should convey this significance in the incarnation of each theme. A study in music and language proposed that music has three elements of narrativity: suggestion, symbolism and imitation,[33] all of which could be relevant to both *Rhapsody in Blue* and the rest of my recital. *7 Takes* employs a very literal use of imitation to reflect on other parts of the programme, while the idea of suggestion can relate to *Tico Tico no fubá* and *Kind of Klezmer* with their respective links to South America and Eastern Europe. The concept of symbolism again relates most to Gershwin's explicit narratives as he explores such a variety of moods and styles using the same six musical themes.

Arguably the most revolutionary aspect of *Rhapsody in Blue* was its introduction of jazz, the popular music of the time, into the 'classical' concert hall. Being premiered in a concert entitled 'An Experiment in Modern Music',[34] Gershwin stated that he had heard so much about the 'limitations of jazz', that he 'resolved to kill that misconception with one sturdy blow'.[35] This level of innovation is harder to appreciate today, as jazz forms a unique case in having evolved through the twentieth century to become 'treated as serious concert music, listened to attentively, quietly, and motionlessly, it has adopted some aspects of the tradition of 'classical' concert music'.[36] Despite the cultural connotations of jazz having changed since the piece's conception, I still hope to inject the same anarchic energy into my performance as that which was present at its premier, emulating the cosmopolitan chaos that Gershwin so desired. As Roddy Murray, gallery director of An Lanntair arts centre in Stornoway, once commented, 'history will tell you what happened, art will tell you what it felt like'.[37] This is the sentiment I hope to convey when performing *Rhapsody in Blue*.

[31] Schiff, *Gershwin*, 2.

[32] Ibid., 9.

[33] Calvin Smith Brown, *Music and Literature: A Comparison of the Arts* (University Press of New England, 1948), 258.

[34] Schiff, *Gershwin*, 2.

[35] Walter Rimler, A Gershwin Companion: A Critical Inventory and Discography, 1916-1984 (Popular Culture Inc., 1991), 81.

[36] Henry Pleasants, *The Agony of Modern Music (*Simon and Schuster, 1955), 171.

[37] Susan Mansfield, 'Iain Morrison on marking the centenary of the Iolaire tragedy', *The Scotsman*, 24 October 2018, accessed 22 February 2020, https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/music/iain-morrison-on-marking-the-centenary-of-the-iolaire-tragedy-1-4819224.

Although the idea of having a theme for a programme is relatively common, it is still a topic of some dispute. Composer Christopher Fox remarks that:

> For the listener, it must tend to stifle the lively, individual response to each work beneath the weight of preconceptions imposed by the single construct on a whole series of works. For the composer, it is a diminution of the integrity of his or her own work for it to be placed in a contrived context in which emphasis is being thrown on just one of its (real or imagined) characteristics. For the performer, it is a further step in a process of alienation which has continued throughout the Modern period.[38]

The argument against such a claim, in my case, would be that my chosen theme is still broad enough to avoid limitations to this degree and rather provides a context in which the chosen repertoire is justified. Ironically, had I decided against any theme, I would potentially have had to narrow the variety of styles currently present to avoid performing a combination of pieces that may, to a certain degree, have seemed incongruous. Indeed it has been found that the inclusion of a theme can 'create a new layer for the active listener by heightening intellectual and emotional awareness'.[39] Music Performance Director and Vice Chairman at Faber Music, Sally Cavender, notes, however, that 'the motivation for including an item in a programme is so often an extra-musical point',[40] implying that performers and programmers might prioritise programmatic links over the fundamental musical quality of a recital. Whether true or not, this serves as a reminder that the music itself must be of a sufficient standard to justify inclusion in a programme, regardless of how elaborate the interrelations might be. If a programme is particularly dependent on such a theme, then that theme must equally strike a balance between sophistication and accessibility, as Mark Gotham points out,

[38] Mark Gotham, 'Coherence in Concert Programming: A View from the U.K.', *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 45 (2014): 304, accessed 20 February 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/43198649.

[39] Diane Lewis, 'Programming Our Convictions', *Choral Journal; Lawton, Okla*. 45 (2004): 18, accessed on 21 February 2020.

[40] Gotham, 'Coherence in Concert Programming', 303.

'there is of course an upper-limit to the technical content which can realistically be included in advertised themes or expected to be apparent to an audience'.[41] However, despite the theme's role in explaining the chosen repertoire, the enjoyment of the programme should equally not depend on the audience understanding all the narratives and concepts behind it, just as the music alone should not rely on such concepts. They should rather support each other symbiotically and this understanding should only enhance, rather than enable, the listening experience, drawing attention to specific aspects of the music to enable a potentially higher, more intellectual appreciation. The incorporation of a unifying theme in conjunction with several novel aspects, should allow me to engage my audience in a programme that I will genuinely relish performing and be proud to present.

[41] Ibid.

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Tunes of Glory

The Role of Ceòl Mòr in the Social Ascendancy of Pipers in 16th to 17th Century Gaelic Scotland

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Tunes of Glory: the Role of Ceòl Mòr in the Social Ascendancy of Pipers in 16th to 17th Century Gaelic Scotland

Socio-political and cultural background:

It would be no exaggeration to say that Gaelic Scotland in the 17th century was a society embroiled in momentous changes of a social, political, religious, economic, and cultural nature. These forces of change had engulfed the British Isles as well as continental Europe, but within the ambit of Gaelic society and culture, as much in Ireland as in Scotland, their effects were wide-reaching if not catastrophic.[1] Irish society had already become heavily militarized since at least the 13th century, when native Gaelic warlords made frequent use of Gaelic-speaking mercenaries from the Hebrides to bolster their own power base against the English occupiers or against one another.[2]

This process reached its climax during the 16th century, possibly precipitating the Elizabethan conflicts and the Protestant Plantations in Ulster at the start of the 17th century, and with it the ultimate dissolution of any semblance of Gaelic

[1] Hugh Cheape, *Bagpipes* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland Enterprises Ltd – Publishing, 2008), 41-42; Wilson McLeod, *Divided Gaels. Gaelic Cultural Identities in Scotland and Ireland c.1200-c.1650* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 54, 194-196; James A. Stewart Jr., "War and Peace in the Hebrides: The Origin and Settlement of *Linn nan Creach*," *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 16 (2004): 146-148.

[2] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 43-45; McLeod, 40-47.

Irish autonomy.[3] Gaelic Scotland was inextricably caught up in these struggles, being the main source of auxiliary military power in Ireland, and not only there. As an important source of fighting men for other conflicts, Gaelic Scotland supplied surplus troops for the wars raging on British soil in the wake of the English Civil War as well as the carnage raging throughout the German principalities on the continent during the Thirty Years War of 1618-1648.[4]

These two processes, the breakdown of an independent Gaelic political structure in Ireland and the militarisation of society in Gaelic Scotland, would result in two distinctive as well as related phenomena. On the one hand there was the decline of the professional bardic poets and the system of aristocratic patronage which had fostered and sustained them. This was an inevitability with the destruction in Ireland of the old Gaelic order which had been the life's blood of professional poets in both Ireland and Scotland.[5] This gradual dissolution of the bardic poetry system resulted in the growth and development of new poetic structures and themes in vernacular Scottish Gaelic. This poetry would also achieve patronage of a sort, but without the formal organisational structures of the older learned orders.[6]

The second major development of this time was the meteoric rise in social status of the hereditary pipers in Gaelic society in Scotland. This may have been due to the aforementioned socio-political developments in Ireland and Scotland. As a result of the weakening of the older order of professional arts, an opportunity had presented itself for the rise in social stature of a new class of *aos-dàna* (a Gaelic term meaning "people of arts"): the pipers. As with the growth in popularity of newer forms of vernacular Scottish Gaelic poetry, the pipers were to establish themselves as the musical equivalents of the purveyors of panegyric verse as represented in the appearance of a new, highly-developed compositional form, *ceòl mòr* ("great music").[7] This paper will examine the fortuitous constellation of socio-political and cultural changes

[3] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 44; McLeod, 53-54, 195-196; Stewart, "War and Peace," 147-149.

[4] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 42, 45; McLeod, 195-196.

[5] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 49; Hugh Cheape, "Traditional Origins of the Piping Dynasties," in *The Highland Bagpipe: Music*, History, Tradition, ed. Joshua Dickson, 97-126 (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2009), 105-106; *Gàir nan Clàrsach*: The Harp's Cry, ed. Colm Ó Baoill (Edinburgh: Birlinn Ltd, 1994), 6-7; McLeod, 194-196, 212-214; Derick S. Thompson, "The Seventeenth-Century Crucible of Scottish Gaelic Poetry," *Studia Celtica* 26 (1991): 159-160.

[6] Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 105-107; *Gaelic Songs of Mary MacLeod*, ed. & transl. J. Carmichael Watson (Glasgow: Blackie & Sons, 1934), xix-xxi, xxvi-xxviii; *Gàir*, 1-2, 7, 29-33; John MacInnes, "The Bard Through History," in *The Voice of the Bard: Living Poets and Ancient Tradition in the Highlands and Islands*, ed. Timothy Neat and John MacInnes, 321-352 (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1999), 329-330, 335-336; John MacInnes, "The Oral Tradition in Scottish Gaelic Poetry," *Scottish Studies* 12 (1968): 33-35; McLeod, 66-70, 112-113, 194, 212-219; Derick S. Thompson, "Scottish Gaelic Traditional Songs from the 16th to the 18th Century," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 105 (2000): 95-98; Thomson, "Seventeenth-Century Crucible," 156-161. Aristocratic patronage in early Gaelic society was usually typified by the granting of lands in perpetuity to those exponents of the learned arts who rendered their artistic/cultural services to a Gaelic lord. As these learned families usually remained in service to these lords over many generations, these lands became hereditary possessions.

[7] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 41-46, 49-50; Hugh Cheape, *The Book of the Bagpipe* (Belfast, Northern Ireland: Appletree Press, 1999), 62-67, Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 97-98, 102-104, 106-108, 110-113, 124-126

which allowed the families of hereditary pipers to achieve this significant change in fortunes, as well as highlighting the unique compositional form of pipe music which enabled their entry into the upper echelons of Gaelic society in Scotland.

Historical context of piping in Gaelic Scotland

The bagpipes being an ancient pastoral musical instrument with long traditions in most European cultures, there is nothing unique about them in a Scottish context.[8] The form of pipes which have come to be associated with Gaelic Scotland, however, cannot be discerned in historical records much before the 16th century.[9] The pipes do not appear in Gaelic accounts before the middle of the 16th century, and even then, there are no references to the pipes as a musical instrument before the 17th century.[10] One of the first definitive accounts we have of what one would now call the Highland bagpipes comes from a French observer to the Battle of Pinkie in eastern Scotland in 1547.[11]

Bagpipes were traditionally assigned a low-caste role in society in Ireland and Scotland, as well as in much of continental Europe. Even where they may have been considered as musical instruments their function was seen as ephemeral. These early forms of the bagpipes would not have been seen as instruments capable of inciting men in battle, far less being the vehicle for a highly developed form of musical composition, one which would afford its practitioners entrance to the top levels of society.[12] There is evidence to support the notion of pipers in Lowland as much as in Highland Scottish society fulfilling the role of musical support or accompaniment to daily menial chores as well as for entertainment.[13] The opportunity for upward social mobility, however, required a more powerful impetus and this would be supplied by the monumental changes which accompanied the destruction of the old Gaelic order in Ireland.

[8] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 39-40; Cheape, *Book*, 18-24.

[9] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 40, 42; Cheape, *Book*, 62-63; Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 107.

[10]Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 42; Cheape, *Book*, 62-63, 66-67; 107; Michael Newton, *On the Introduction of the Baroque Violin into the Gaidhealtachd* (2016), 3; Michael Newton and Hugh Cheape, "The Keening of Women and the Roar of the Pipe: From Clàrsach to Bagpipe, ca. 1600-1782," *Ars Lyrica Celtica* 17 (2008): 76-77.

[11] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 40; Cheape, *Book*, 65; Francis Collinson, *The Bagpipe: The history of a musical instrument* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 65.

[12] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 42; Cheape, *Book*, 45-47, 59-61, 62-63, 66-67; Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 107.

[13] Cheape, *Book*, 59-61; Allan MacDonald, "The Relationship between Pibroch and Gaelic Song: its Implications on the Performance Style of the Pibroch Urlar" (M. Litt. Diss., Edinburgh University, 1995), 15-17.

As has previously been outlined, the late-16th through to the early-17th century was a period of unprecedented upheaval and conflict throughout the British Isles. The changes which had undermined the traditional support network of noble patronage for bardic poets signified a wider change in societal priorities.[14] In Gaelic Scotland, the militarisation of society in an age of perpetual conflict brought with it the requirement for an instrument capable of motivating and inciting considerable numbers of armed men in the field. This was quite beyond the capacity of the harp (which had been the traditional instrument for musical panegyric in Gaelic Ireland and Scotland), not to mention the bagpipe in its previous developmental forms.[15]

The pipes underwent a major transformation from the 16th to the 17th century, acquiring a form more recognizable with that of the Great Highland bagpipe of today. This instrument now had a more sophisticated and ornate form, and an impressive range of acoustic projection and power.[16] Wherever references to the pipes in Gaelic poetry from this period occur they invariably highlight its acoustic strength and almost "explosive" energy. It was not until the later part of the 17th century that Gaelic poets even referred to the pipes in terms of its musical qualities.[17]

[14] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 43-44.

[15] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 42-46; Cheape, *Book*, 45-47, 62-63, 66-67; Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 107.

[16] Cheape, *Book*, 62-65.

[17] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 42; Cheape, *Book*, 62-63, 66-67; Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 107.

"Wherever references to the pipes in Gaelic poetry from this period occur they invariably highlight its acoustic strength and almost "explosive" energy."

Pipers as a new social elite: a process of change and continuity

The rise in prominence of vernacular poetry and the music of the hereditary pipers were integral parts of a surge in cultural and political self-confidence in Gaelic Scotland. With the new, refined and more powerful *pìob mhòr* ("great pipe"), the Highland pipers had a musical instrument capable of providing ample stimulus in battle. What remained was a means of achieving a social status commensurate with that of the older learned orders or the new *aos-dàna*.

The relatively rapid rise in social status of pipers in Highland society begs some pointed questions. Given what is known thus far of the low social esteem accorded to pipers before the 16th to 17th century, this sudden turn of fortunes must lead us to presume some considerable degree of "insider information" on the part of the pipers. What becomes apparent upon closer investigation is that the dynasties of master pipers did not emerge out of a vacuum. Most of them show unmistakable evidence of a close kinship with pre-existing learned orders, a pattern somewhat similar to that of the newly emerging class of vernacular poets.[18]

The pipers were attempting to establish their professional credentials by following a well-trodden path for practitioners of high art forms in Gaelic society. An Irish pedigree had always been seen as advantageous for acquiring the ultimate "seal of approval" for a member of the *aos-dàna*.[19] Vernacular poets of noble lineage would not have had quite the same necessity of proving a quasi-professional patronymic, but the pipers were attempting to do something similar without the benefit of an immediately recognizable "noble" heritage or tradition.

Most of the learned arts in Gaeldom followed a formulaic pattern: skilled and learned families of high reputation maintained schools for the instruction and transmission of their

[18] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 41-46; Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 97-98, 101-103, 106-113.

[19] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 41-44, 47-50; Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 97-98, 101-103, 104, 107; McLeod, 83-85, 92-94; Derick S. Thomson, "Gaelic Learned Orders and Literati in Medieval Scotland," *Scottish Studies* 12 (1968): 75.

art, which was imparted to students through a lengthy and strict regimen of (usually) oral instruction involving a rigorous form of memory training. These schools were traditionally located on the lands which these families held rent-free in return for their services to noble families who were the chief patrons of these *aos-dàna*. Usually these families perpetuated their skills or arts in a hereditary manner, often remaining associated with particular noble patrons over hundreds of years. Another common theme in this system of instruction was the peripatetic attendance of various schools at regular intervals, even by masters of these art forms. More often than not, this involved the attendance of a school of learned arts in Ireland as a mark of excellence.[20]

The noted piping dynasties appear to have been assiduous in their efforts to graft their own professional pedigrees onto pre-existing and respectable models. By establishing themselves as hereditary families of highly-trained musicians, providing a recognized panegyric product for noble patrons who rewarded their services with hereditary, rent-free lands, and maintaining schools of highly-disciplined and rigorous training in which oral instruction and memory training figured prominently, the piping dynasties had successfully created a seamless link between themselves and a venerable tradition of the propagation of the professional learned arts in Gaelic culture.[21]

[20] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 41-43, 47-49; Cheape, *Book*, 67-69; Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 103-107, 109-113.

[21] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 43-44, 47-49; Cheape, *Book*, 66-69; Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 98-100, 102, 107-113.

Ceòl mòr: something new from something old

The likelihood that Highland pipers in the 16th and 17th century could have achieved such an impressive rise in their social status by re-using the same simple melodies which had been associated with the pipes as a low-caste instrument is as unrealistic as supposing that recognition and patronage could have automatically followed from presenting a completely new

"Piping's vigorous and powerful new acoustic format had found its niche in the martial world of 16th- to 17th-century Gaelic Scotland."

and unfamiliar musical product. The greater likelihood is that a suitable impression would have been made with a compositional form which was already familiar to the patrons of the learned arts.[22] Piping's vigorous and powerful new acoustic format had found its niche in the martial world of 16th- to 17th-century Gaelic Scotland. Now all that was required was a suitable equivalent to the panegyric verse or music of the poets and harpers to achieve their goal of securing patronage and a place in the elevated ranks of the *aos-dàna*.[23]

The biographies of the leading piping dynasties betray a close affinity with the older learned orders. This may have afforded them an intimate knowledge with suitable pre-existing compositional forms which could be adapted to the pipes. The two most likely candidates appear to be poetry and the music of the harp.[24] The harp was at one time the traditional accompaniment to the oral presentation of bardic poetry.[25] Harpers also belonged to the same elite stratum of *aos-dàna* as the *filidh* (the Scottish Gaelic term for the class of professional poets).[26] In fact, so closely entwined were they with the metier of the professional poets that we have accounts of families of harpers holding lands near to those of the MacMhuirich poets in Kintyre, where both families gave their services to the Lords of the Isles.[27] The pipers would surely have been aware of the prestige which could accrue from imitating a style of composition which already received patronage. It is known

[22] Collinson, 148-151; *The Blind Harper: The Songs of Roderick Morison and his Music*, ed. William Matheson (Edinburgh: R.&R. Clark Ltd, 1970), xv; MacDonald, 57-59; Newton, "Keening," 78; Cheape, "Traditional," 111-113, 121-122.

[23] Cheape, *Book*, 66-69; Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 43; Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 98, 102-103, 111-113; Collinson, 148.

[24] Collinson, 148-151; *Blind Harper,* lxv; MacDonald, 57-59; Newton, "Keening," 78; Cheape, "Traditional," 111-113, 121-122.

[25] MacInnes, "Bard," 328.

[26] MacInnes, "Bard," 324-325.

[27] Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 49; Cheape, *Book*, 62-63; Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 98, 101-102, 109, 112-113, 117; Derick S. Thompson, "Gaelic Learned Orders and Literati in Medieval Scotland," In *Scottish Studies* 12 (1968): 67, 69-70; Newton, *Baroque* (2016), 1.

that *ceòl mòr* appeared almost abruptly by the end of the 16th to the start of the 17th century as a virtually finished product, betraying no intermediary developmental phases. The only logical explanation for this phenomenon must be the pre-existence of a very similar compositional form.[28]

The Welsh monk Giraldus Cambrensis' accounts of harp music from 12th-century Ireland give an aesthetic impression of a style of composition which seems redolent of the compositional structure of *ceòl mòr*, with its regularly occurring ornate and formulaic series of grace-note cadences over top of a melodic line. Edward Bunting also noted similarities between Giraldus' descriptions and the harp music which he had transcribed during the Belfast Harp Festival of 1792.[29] The renowned scholar Hugh Cheape is equally certain that a further study of *ceòl mòr* would reveal underlying structural similarities between the stressed metres of vernacular verse as well as the syllabic metre of bardic verse and the melodic construction of *ceòl mòr*. He reasons that since "clan panegyric…lay at the core of the bardic tradition and characterized the *pìobaireachd* tradition…congruency in the *pìobaireachd* form can perhaps be sought within the metres of the poets."[30]

One particular dynasty of master pipers, the MacKays of Gairloch and Raasay, gives us some invaluable information for contextualising a hypothetical connection between poets, harpers and pipers.[31] Iain Dall MacKay (c.1656-1754), the "Blind Piper" to the MacKenzies of Gairloch in Wester Ross, led a lifestyle more consistent with that of a poet than of a hereditary piper. He regularly travelled to other noble houses to offer his artistic creations, both poetry and *piobaireachd* (literally "pipe music," but usually refers to the classical music *ceòl mòr)*. No stranger to the Isle of Skye, having received extensive instruction from the MacCrimmons (perhaps the most famous as well as enigmatic dynasty of pipers in Gaeldom, and hereditary pipers to the MacLeod chiefs at Dunvegan Castle on

[28] Collinson, 149-150; MacDonald, 57-59.

[29] Collinson, 150-151; Paul Dooley, "the harp in the time of Giraldus," in *Harp Studies: perspectives on the Irish harp* ed. Sandra Joyce and Helen Lawlor, 32-36.

[30] Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 112.

[31] Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 120-121; *Blind Harper*, lxiii.

Skye),[32] Iain was a regular member of the "Talisker circle" of *aos-dàna*, Gaelic cultural luminaries who frequented the house of John of Talisker on Skye.[33] One of the more notable of these was Ruairidh Dall, the blind harper and poet, who had been a regular at the court of the MacLeod clan chief, Iain Breac of Dunvegan.[34]

The poetry and *pìobaireachd* of Iain Dall MacKay has led Cheape to speculate that one of MacKay's most famous pieces of *ceòl mòr*, "Crosanachd an Doill" ("The Blind Man's Obstinacy/Contention") might be the musical form for a type of syllabic verse, the *crosanachd*. This poetic metre had been popular with poet bands for the composition of satire. The Fernaig Manuscript, a compendium of Gaelic texts collected between1688 and 1693 in MacKay's country, contains several examples of *crosanachd*, demonstrating its popularity in the area.[35] Iain Dall appears to have considered himself to be a learned poet of the *aos-dàna*, which would make such a "technology transfer" a credible possibility. [36]

Also noteworthy is the fact that Iain Dall and the blind harper Ruairidh Dall were apparently close friends. Iain Dall is reputed to have claimed that the *ceòl mòr* known as *Fàilte Choire an Easa* ("Corrienessan's Salute") had originally been a composition of Ruairidh Dall's.[37] What we might take from this anecdote is the suggestion that harp music and *ceòl mòr* were closely connected, with poetry being the link between them. Piping had adopted both the panegyric function of the harpers as well as their music.[38]

Conclusions: a tale of borrowing, adaptation, and evolution

The evidence available to us seems sufficient to suggest some plausible conclusions. The dynasties of hereditary pipers who had emerged from the socio-political, economic, and cultural turmoil of the 16th to the 17th century in Gaelic Scotland had

[32] *Blind Harper,* xlviii-xlix, l; Cheape, *Bagpipes*, 45-47; Cheape, *Book*, 67-69; Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 113-114; Dickson, *Piping*, 76-77; Collinson, 141-143, 146-147, 151, 155.

[33] *Blind Harper*, lxiii; Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 120-121.

[34] *Blind Harper*, lxi-lxvi.

[35] Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 121-122.

[36] Ibid., 122.

[37] *Blind Harper*, lxiii-lxv.

[38] Cheape, "Traditional Origins," 98, 102, 107.

set themselves up as respectable members of the learned elite. Their familial connections with older established families of the learned classes no doubt facilitated this process. Apart from their martial utility as musical inciters in battle, they had aided their own integration into the ranks of the Gaelic *intelligentsia* by following a time-honoured mould. This involved, among other elements, the establishment of formal schools of instruction for propagating their panegyric art form, for which they received aristocratic patronage.

This art form, the crowning glory of musical composition for the Highland bagpipe known as *ceòl mòr*, was readily acknowledged and accepted as suitable for receiving patronage, a fact which strongly suggests that the musical structure of *ceòl mòr* came as no surprise to those who lent it their noble support. Whatever evidence which has survived seems to point to a clever and artful adaptation for the Highland bagpipes of a pre-existing compositional form which likely came from the world of the professional harpers, but which also shows strong structural affinities with the work of the trained bardic poets. The professional dynastic pipers of Gaeldom had thus managed to create for themselves an honoured position within the *milieu* of the exalted ranks of learned Gaelic society in a manner which intimated a seamless link with the past.

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