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**AN EXPLORATION OF THE OCCURRENCE OF ARTISTIC DEVELOPMENT
WHILE COMPOSING**

Composition of Music, Text, and Improvisation

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Artistic Development While Composing
Fall 2018
Music Degree Programme
Oulu University of Applied Sciences

ABSTRACT

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This thesis was written for the purpose of exploring the artistic development experienced by an individual while they attempt to compose music. In unique fashion, I have chosen to be the subject of my own thesis. The reason I chose to write my thesis on this topic was so that I could simultaneously improve my limited music composition skills while also attempting to provide valuable scholarship for the students and faculty of the future.

The objective of this thesis is to document my artistic progress while composing music. As a result, I have accomplished this objective by composing a song cycle consisting of five songs. Over the past year, I have used a journal to document each step I took while writing the text and composing the music. My song cycle uses elements of atonal music as well as spoken voice. The composition of the music also uses the process of improvisation.

Throughout this process, I have noticed one key element that I have faced time and time again and that is the continuous cycle of trial and error. However, I overcame each setback by encouraging myself to explore alternative solutions for each error encountered.

One aspect I could have done differently was to have a concrete plan in place from the very start for how to accomplish my final goal of writing a coherent song cycle. Since I was oblivious to how complicated composing can be, I was not prepared for the amount of knowledge one must have before composing a work of their own. I could have greatly helped this endeavor by taking, for example, a course specifically on composition in my last semester. At a minimum, this type of course would have given me a good framework and elementary understanding of the process.

Nevertheless, I was able to successfully rely on relevant books and articles to accomplish the objective of this thesis. The material I used – and that I often sourced here – helped guide me through the compositional process by giving me insight into how to organize my composition and how to find mistakes within my work.

In conclusion, I have successfully been able to complete this thesis by making a composition of my own. I have accomplished this goal by evaluating my work in order to find solutions for any setbacks I faced. By encouraging myself to write the text and freeing myself through the art of improvisation my song cycle was born.

Keywords: Composing, Composition, Text, Poem, Improvisation

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1 INTRODUCTION

For hundreds of years, composers and poets have captivated us with a great variety of musical compositions, many of which we know very well today. As a classical singer, I am acutely aware of the ways in which even just one genre of music can have so much diversity. Even so, from simple melodies to grand orchestral masterpieces, each composer must go through a similar process of trial and error and invention and reinvention. Nevertheless, each composer has plodded through this process in one fashion or another and brought new compositions into this world.

The purpose of this work is to better understand the artistic process a person goes through while composing. I have accomplished this exploration by writing my own text, composing music through improvisation, and collaborating with a pianist and cellist to produce the composition. The final product will be a song cycle consisting of five pieces written for piano, cello, and voice. I will use elements of modern composition with atonal music and the use of spoken voice.

2 MY COMPOSITIONAL PROCESS

Finding a topic for a thesis was quite a challenge from the very beginning because the nagging question in my mind had always been “What practical skill do I really want to improve upon, and how can I make my process of improvement a valuable exercise for other students and scholars?”. The answer I kept coming back to before finally settling on a topic was music composition.

Roughly two years ago, I took an ear training course and was intrigued by the rules of harmony and intervals. During this course, we were required to compose our own invention following the rules of composition we had learned. This was my first insight into music composition. Since then, my studies in music theory have taught me the complexities of composition and chord formation. My interest in poetry has also made me alert to the importance of reading great literature so that subtext is not lost to history. As an example, while singing lieder, I need to understand the basis for and history around the text to truly understand the chord development within the piece. The learning experience I had in this ear training course and in my other studies really helped germinate the idea of putting together a composition in the future.

Researching the difference between two different methods of composition became my initial thesis topic one year ago. At the time, I planned to research the observable differences between two methods of composition by composing two songs whilst following the compositional method of choice. For the first song, I intended to use the method of writing the text first, followed by composing the music. I intended to begin the second piece by composing the music first and then writing the text on the basis of the melody. The original reason for exploring these two different methods of composition specifically was so that I could test which method was more efficient. With this idea in mind, I left for my exchange semester in Lugano, Switzerland in September 2017.

While on my exchange, I had the opportunity to study the work of John Cage with my professor Luisa Castellani. We studied his book *Silence* in our John Cage and L'Orfeo course. During this course I was required to sing his piece called "The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs". This song intrigued me because of its unique use of the piano. Instead of playing the piano keys, the lid was closed and was used as a drum. For the notes of this song, there is an introduction to the piece where Cage explains this usage of the piano. He describes what is expected of the singer as well. Please find the description in Figure 1 below.

For the Singer

The words of this song are adapted from page 556 of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. Sing without vibrato, as in folk-singing. Make any transposition necessary in order to employ a low and comfortable range.

For the Pianist

Close a grand piano completely (strings + keyboard).

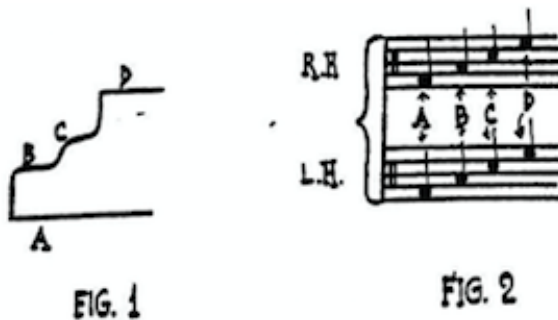


FIG.1 shows a cross-section of the piano so closed. "A" indicates the under part of the piano structure and is notated as shown in FIG.2 on the 1st space of the percussion staff; "B" indicates the front part of the keyboard – lid, "C", its back and higher part (they are notated respectively on the second + third spaces); "D" indicates the top of the piano. \downarrow = play with fingers; \downarrow = play with knuckles of closed hand.

FIGURE 1. Cage's Description for Musicians "The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs" (1942)

This usage of the piano would later inspire me to use spoken voice in my own compositional work. In our performance of John Cage and L'Orfeo, we used one of his texts from *Silence* called "122 Word on Music and Dance". In Figure 2, the text can be found with markings as to how we performed this piece. The original text is written in English and can be found on page 96 of his book, but due to the fact that we were studying in an Italian speaking school, we used the translated version of Cage's text on page 125. This was my first introduction to spoken voice. This technique has assisted me throughout my composition.

- As natural as possible!

#96

Questo testo è uscito nel numero del novembre 1957 di "Dance Magazine". I curatori mi avevano assegnato due pagine nel menabò, e il relativo numero di parole è stato deciso dalle operazioni casuali. Sono state le imperfezioni nei fogli su cui scrivevo a decidere la disposizione spaziale dei frammenti di testo, che è però diversa nella stampata finale, essendo esito del lavoro su altri due fogli di misura differente e con imperfezioni in punti diversi.

2 pagine, 122 parole su musica e danza¹

Per ottenere il valore ^{to obtain the value}
 di un suono, un movimento, ^{of a sound}
 contate da zero. (Fate measure from zero. Un uccello vola. (a bird flies)
 attenzione a che cosa è, ^{(pay attention to what is,}
 esattamente per cosa è.) ^{Just as it is)}

→ Alina

Abolita la schiavitù. (Slavery is abolished)
 Ski a ritu
 Metsä
 i boschi (the woods)

Feel the space!

Un suono non ha gambe su cui stare. (a sound has no legs to stand on)
 Ku-i

Il mondo è pieno: può succedere tutto. (the world is teeming; anything can happen)
 movimento

FIGURE 2. John Cage Performance of Spoken Voice (Cage Silenzio, 125)

While working on my thesis in Lugano, I was confronted by many obstacles along the way, such as difficulties with writer's block and music theory. These difficulties made me reconsider my thesis topic in order to move past these obstacles. Instead of composing two songs using two methods of composition, I decided to only use one method: Composition of the text, followed by composition of the music. I will write in more detail about why I chose this process later on in this thesis.

2.1 Process of Completing Original Thesis Idea

With the goal of improving my compositional skills in mind, I began the process of exploring my artistic progression through composition. With the help of William Russo's book *Composing Music*, I began the process of producing text first because in his book he states, "As a general rule, in classical music the text is written before the music; in popular music the music often comes first" (Russo 1988, 145). With this in mind I sat down and allowed for creativity to flow.

2.1.1 Notes for Whom I Love

With so many important figures in my life, I began to write a selection of different poems for these individuals. The name of this selection is "Notes for Whom I Love". This text was not written to be used with spoken voice, but instead it was designed to be sung. The first poem in this collection was written for my mother, thanking her for her unconditional love. The second part in this collection is for Stefan; my baby brother who passed away in 2000. The last text was written to a long-lost childhood friend, Mary.

Notes for Whom I Love - Part I

You have cherished me
You have cared for me
You always bring me in close
I love you, Mom

Since the day I was born
You have loved me
Though I have done wrong
You still believe in me
I love you, Mom

You love me
With either tears or joy
You care for me still
You love me
I love you, Mom

Notes for Whom I Love - Part II

I wonder who you would be
Where you would be

And what you would be
If you hadn't been taken away

I think of you
I talk of you
I miss you still
Everyday

I remember you
Small little child, my brother

Notes for Whom I Love - Part III

I see your face
I feel your touch
I hear your voice
But slowly it becomes yet again
Just a blur

Do you remember me?

Mary?

Are you there?

Once I had written these poems, I struggled with connecting them to music. Returning to Russo's book on composition I found the root to this problem. I had missed one important fact about writing a text for music. According to Russo, there is a fine line between the text and poetry.

In short, song texts are written to be heard – and heard without time to reflect on complex lines or phrases. I want to point out some important differences between text and poetry (especially the kind of text found in the work of Gershwin and other popular composers.) The following list should help you understand these differences: (Russo 1988, 145.)

TABLE 1. *Difference Between Sung Words and Poetry (Russo 1988, 145)*

<i>Sung Words</i>	<i>Poetry (especially of the Twentieth Century)</i>
<i>Short lines of regular length</i>	<i>Long and short lines irregularly mixed</i>
<i>Short words, often of one syllable</i>	<i>Long as well as short words</i>
<i>Short sentences and phrases, which correspond over the line</i>	<i>Sometimes very long sentences and phrases (even extending the entire length of the poem) often not corresponding with the lines at all</i>
<i>A regular rhythm in the line, sometimes extending over the entire lyric</i>	<i>Irregular rhythm</i>
<i>Simple, concise thoughts</i>	<i>Abstract thought, sometimes expression at great length</i>
<i>Frequent repetition of words and phrases meant to be heard</i>	<i>Infrequent repetition of words and phrases often read silently</i>
<i>Words and groups of words that are easily spoken</i>	<i>Words and groups of words that are sometimes spoken with difficulty</i>
<i>Perfect rhymes (“best / rest”)</i>	<i>Perfect rhymes and imperfect rhymes (“time” / “fine”) and lookalikes (“gone” / “lone”)</i>

Based on this table by Russo, one can conclude that “Notes for Whom I Love” is in fact a series of short poems and not suitable as text for music. “Notes for Whom I Love - Part III” is a perfect example of how this text is more suitable as a poem. Part III has an irregular rhythm to it. There is the use of imperfect rhymes, such as “face” and “voice” and “Me” and “Mary” (both ending with an “E” vowel sound). Also, it has a variety of short and long lines which are irregular. The short lines being “Mary?” and long lines such as “But slowly it becomes yet again”.

I see your face
I feel your touch
I hear your voice
But slowly it becomes yet again,
Just a blur

Do you remember me?
Mary?
Are you there?

The creativity I had while writing the poems vanished quickly once I realized that the poems would not work as text for music. This in turn, temporarily brought everything to a complete stop, and I was forced to begin anew with Russo's teachings in mind.

2.1.2 Composition of Music

The struggle with writing text that was meant to be sung without sounding too much like a poem (mentioned above in Section 2.1.1) was a setback I had to overcome and made me reconsider my compositional strategy. I decided to put this method aside for later, and instead I began the process of composing the music first and then adding the text later.

The approach I took for this second method of composition was to begin by playing a set of chords. The first chord I played was Emaj7(sus2). I wanted the E in this chord to go down a half step in order for it to make the Gmaj7/D chord formation. I ended this selection of chords with an Am7/E chord. The problem I encountered with this collection of chords was that the transfer between the Gmaj7/D chord and the Am7/E chord did not follow the rules of contrary motion. In the article *Types of Contrapuntal Motions*, the rule of contrary motion is described as follows: "In contrary motion, two voices move in opposite directions — one up, the other down" (Open Music Theory [n.d.]).

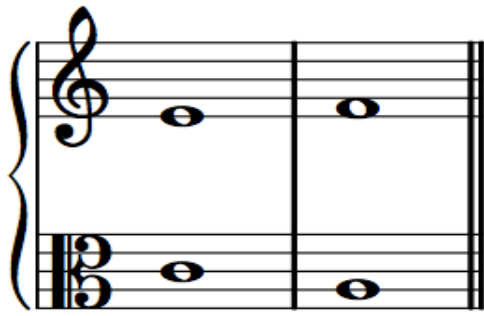


FIGURE 3. *Contrary Motion (Open Music Theory [n.d.]*

Figure 3 shows this opposite movement between two voices. You can see the chord formation I made in Figure 4 below. Take notice from the arrows in Figure 4 that the bass line goes up one step, and the soprano line makes exactly the same movement upwards.



FIGURE 4. *Collection of Chords*

Thus, one can conclude that the struggle I faced while trying to continue with this formation of chords was due to a mistake explained by basic music theory. The D natural in the chord Gmaj7/D should go in the opposite direction as the B natural in the same chord. Since my chord formation did not follow the same rules as shown in Figure 3, the ability to continue this work came to a quick halt. This in turn forced me to begin my music composition exercise all over again.

As I sat at the piano with these chords in mind once again, the thought occurred to me that it might be easier to form the chords if I began by making a melody first. With this new plan in mind, the melody soon came alive. Please find the

melody in Figure 5 below. This melody was meant to be played on the piano. I originally intended on adding the voice at a later point in time.



FIGURE 5. *Composition of Melody*

I managed to make eight bars of music for the piano before I was yet again confronted by a problem. I was unable to figure out a way of continuing the song due to the fact that I am not a pianist, and I lack the experience needed to be adept at playing this instrument. While I was able to come up with a main melody and/or theme of the piece, this skills limitation did not allow me to end the piece properly.

2.2 Process of Completing Song Cycle

With all the obstacles I was facing during the first attempt at composing, I came back to Finland from my exchange semester with a hopeless feeling. Notwithstanding, my professor suggested I team up with two musicians and we could all work together to explore the occurrence of artistic development while composing. On this professor's advice, I was able to form a collaboration with a pianist, Jere Tulirinta, and a cellist, Oskari Elomaa. Instead of composing two sets of songs using different compositional methods, we would compose a song cycle.

After a lot of brainstorming, we all agreed that I should first write the text and then we would meet up together to compose the music. Once the text was written, we came up with the idea to compose each piece with the use of improvisation. This idea came after reading the book *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* by Derek Bailey. While searching through the library for material on composition, I came across this book and it caught my eye since in part four there is detailed information on composers of improvisation. In the section named "The Composer – In Practice [1]", Bailey points out an important fact about what is experience by composers when composing with the use of improvisation.

The unique experience for a composer in the use of improvisation must be the relinquish of control over at least some of the music and, even more critically for the composer, passing over the control not to "chance" but to other musicians'. (Bailey 1993, 70.)

This statement gave me the confidence I needed as a composer to allow for the control to be shared amongst Elomaa, Tulirinta, and myself when creating the music. With the help of another book called *Improvisation for Classical Musicians* by Eugene Friesen, our team of three was able to develop a system. In his book, Friesen says:

If possible, record everything. You never know when you'll improvise something you'll want to capture. When you do, notate it and file it in a journal that you keep just for this purpose. (Friesen 2012, 9.)

With Friesen's instructions on how to document our work, we started the process of improvisation. We decided to improvise each piece one at a time. I will explain in detail about the process of writing the text as well as the process of composing and improvising next.

2.2.1 Composition and Birth of the Lyrics

Remembering the words in Russo's book mentioned above in Section 2.1.1 about the difference between poetry and text, I undertook the task of writing the words for the songs. Going through many composers' works, I found that I was drawn to song cycles. "A song cycle is a group of art songs that are usually created by the same poet and composer and have a unifying subject or idea" (Collins English Dictionary 2012, Cited 10.11.2018).

After narrowing down all the song cycles to the top two favorites, I based my work on them. The two cycles were Bernstein's *I Hate Music!: A Song Cycle of Five Kid Songs* and Kuusisto's *Suomalainen Vieraanvara*. I picked these two song cycles as examples for what I would like to accomplish because they both have a text which are interesting and seemingly random, yet still are connected with one theme.

The theme in *I Hate Music* is "the examination of childhood curiosities and mysteries, as well as an exploration of the word "music" and its associated experiences and meaning" (Staff [n.d.]). The theme I have analyzed in *Suomalainen Vieraanvara* is the process of baking a pie. In both *I Hate Music* and *Suomalainen Vieraanvara* there is the usage of spoken text. The use of spoken voice can be found in the fourth piece, "A Big Indian and a Little Indian", of *I Hate Music*. This part of the song cycle is what inspired me to also use spoken voice in my own cycle of five songs. The part with the spoken voice is shown in Figure 6. Bernstein has underlined the exact words he would like the singer to emphasize and has added a precise description as to how the words must be spoken.

13

(spoken very fast)

You see the riddle is, if the little Indian
 was the son of the big Indian, but the big
 Indian was not the father of the little Indian,
 (7) who was he?— I'll give you two measures:

FIGURE 6. Bernstein's Notes for "A Big Indian and a Little Indian" (1943)

Spoken voice can be found also in Kuusisto's work. In the second song of his cycle, "Nopeatekoinen Piirakankuori", he has given one specific note to which the singer must speak the words. Please see how he uses spoken voice in Figure 7.

2. Nopeatekoinen piirakankuori

Helena Vuorenjuuri

Ilkka Kuusisto

resit.

1 Neljä desilitraa vehnä jauhoja. Yksi ja yksikolmasosa desilitraa öljyä. Kolmeneljäsosa desilitraa maitoa. Puoli teelusikallista suolaa.

FIGURE 7. Kuusisto's Notes for "Nopeatekoinen piirakankuori" (1972)

As mentioned earlier, Bernstein's and Kuusisto's song cycles gave me the idea to make a song cycle of my own. After brainstorming themes for my song cycle,

I thought about creating a cycle about my morning routines and a collection of different magazine articles, but these topics were too limited. In the end, I decided to write about water because it's a broad topic that can encompass things like the sea, rivers, rain, and the tide. The name of this song cycle is "Stream of Thoughts". This name was given in order for the title to tie each song together with the central topic behind each text. With this theme in mind, I started to write the text for my song cycle.

2.2.2 Calm Stillness

To find the inspiration to write, I took a few days' trip to Kuusamo to spend some time in nature. While there, I sat down on a dock at a remote cabin in the wilderness and began to take in my surroundings. Tall trees reached toward the heavens, leaves rustled in the wind, and birds flew across the sky. And then there was the water. The water on one particular afternoon was calm, without a ripple in sight. However, as the wind began to suddenly blow, waves would quickly form. With these images in mind, I began to write "Calm Stillness".

Calm Stillness

(Part A)

Calm stillness is around me
The rush of leaves behind me
I feel it inside me
When no one is around me

(Part B)

I ask myself,
"Does this beauty ever sink"
For the day has been so long
Don't play with it

(Part C)

For the calm stillness around me

I feel it inside me

When no one is around me

In this piece, I wanted to show the change between the calm waters and the stormy waters. The beginning is meant to be calm and showcase the water without a ripple in sight, which means that Part A is slow and relaxed. The music during the gap between Parts A and B begins to reach toward a climax, when suddenly the voice joins in and begins almost bellowing with anger. The words that start a feeling of fury and power are “Does this beauty ever sink?”. This part is designed to be like an explosive but at the same time it is meant to be a very melodic section of the song. The ending, Part C, is written to be calm, yet again.

While proofreading, I began to formulate the story behind the text, and in doing so I made a few slight improvements to the music and text. Because I wanted to bring symbolism into the work, this is the story I came up with: in a world ruled by magic, the music introduces a character who is doing his/her best to be quiet as not to awaken a storm. Part A portrays this calmness before a storm. Following the calm, the character notices they have awakened a sleeping dragon beneath the water. This dragon symbolizes the storm which can be heard in Part B. This causes the character to spiral out of control and panic for their safety. They begin to reconsider what they have done incorrectly and try to get control of the situation once again. At the end of the piece, the character begins to calm themselves down slowly, and finally they find the calmness after the storm once more.

With this story in mind, I began to reword the text once more. The final version of the text can be found below. It also includes the instructions for the musicians.

Calm Stillness

(Voice super slow. One word at a time.)

Calm stillness is around me
The rush of leaves behind me
I feel it, I feel it inside me

..... (solo for either cello or piano)

(Music reaching toward climax until voice joins in with the energy from the music)

Does this beauty ever leave?!
Does it come back with all its rage?
Where have I gone to with it now?
Have I released it from its slumber....?

.... (Music in suspense)

Fear its rage and its temper
For the day has been so long

(Music begins to calm again)

The calm stillness around me
I feel it, I feel it inside me

By explaining the meaning behind the text and showing examples of spoken voice in Bernstein and Kuusisto's work to Elomaa and Tulirinta, they were able to understand what I wanted this piece to sound like. Elomaa suggested this piece

should be atonal, and so, Tulirinta played three notes repetitively and from there “Calm Stillness” was turned into a song through improvisation.

2.2.3 Power of the Mind

The second text I wrote is titled “Power of the Mind”. In this text, I wanted to portray the thoughts I had while sitting on the dock in Kuusamo as discussed in Section 2.2.2. At the time, I was fascinated with how my mind was forming words, thoughts, and observations without truly understanding how my mind decided to bring each of those words and thoughts to fruition.

While still sitting on the dock, I felt as though I had no hurry and could sit there for a long time, but soon enough I found myself writing down the words that came to mind. Interestingly, I felt a temporary feeling of helplessness rush over me for as I could not change much of what was happening around me. There was the wind making the trees rustle and the birds taking flight from the water’s edge. With everything around me, I had very little power over what was happening in the natural world. Everything had its own will. The wind would blow, the waves would crash against the dock, the trees behind me made creaking and rushing sounds in the breeze.

After letting my mind explore the world, my thoughts inspired me to make this composition about the mind and how it explores the world around us without the need for us to change anything. Here is the text I wrote that day:

Power of the mind

I could sit here! Sit here all day.
I could watch the world go by

But now I see
Nothing can be done

For I am not at fault
For the lemon, falling from the tree

That makes me wonder,
What does water have to do with this?

Well, to be honest,

Nothing.

I took a moment to brainstorm the music behind the text of “Power of the Mind”. The best fit was for it to be a short dramatic opera piece. An influx of emotions and drama was needed for this piece. The first phrase “I could sit here! Sit here all day. I could watch the world go by” made me think of an opera scene where the singer is stating their current status before getting to the climax of the piece. This first phrase is recitative and will be repeated once more before getting to the next part of the song. A few details have been added for Elomaa and Tulirinta, so they have an idea as to what I would like in this piece. This song should show the way a mind jumps from idea to idea. This is brought to light through the emotions one can sometimes have when one loses control over a situation. Below is the final version of the text including the additional information for the musicians to follow.

Power of the mind

I could sit here! Sit here all day
I could watch the world go by (repeat twice)

(serious)

But now I see
Nothing can be done
For “I” am not at fault

For the lemon, falling-from-the-tree
That makes me wonder, wonder all day
As I sit here, sit here all day.

What does water have to do with this?
..... (music with suspense)
Well, to be honest.... (suspense continues)

Nothing. (abrupt stop)

While sitting down with Elomaa and Tulirinta, we made the decision to start the piece with some simple chords from both the piano and cello. However, we soon had difficulties with the flow of this piece. Toward the end of the piece, our creativity had begun to get sloppy. The text in latter part of the piece is “that makes me wonder, wonder all day”. Initially, Tulirinta played only a few notes here and there and Elomaa did not play anything. Eventually, however, we added a faster tempo and more movement from the piano and cello to improve the sound of the piece.

2.2.4 Above or Below

The third text to be written was originally called “Swimming and Swimming”. The text in this piece is meant to be random and demonstrate the random nature of wandering thoughts in a dream-like state.

At the time, I was having difficulty focusing on writing, which inspired me to write about this feeling of a loss of concentration. Here, I am trying to decide whether or not I am swimming or drowning. In the end I realize that it’s not possible to drown without water. The actual meaning behind this text is that my mind was swimming to the point it felt as though I was drowning in thought. The text ends with me realizing that I am swimming through these thoughts, and not through actual physical water. Please find the work about these thoughts below:

Swimming and Swimming

Am I swimming
Or
Am I drowning?

What is the difference?

I am swimming
Or
So, I believe

How could I drown without water?

I haven't changed the text since writing them. They are meant to be simple with very little context. This is because I would like the rhythm to be the main focus in this piece. One big change I have made is that I renamed the piece to "Above or Below". If the original name had been kept, the audience would already know too much of what to expect from the song. With the new title, the audience is left to make their own assumptions as to what the text means, at least until they hear it.

During the composition and improvisation process, we faced the most difficulties with "Above or Below". I was inspired by John Cage throughout the process of writing specifically this text. My plan for this song was for it to be similar to the work of Cage mentioned above in Section 2. The piece in particular which I was inspired by was "The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs". I wanted to use the piano in a similar way in which it was used by Cage where the piano was used as a drum. I also wanted to use the cello to this effect as well. As a result, I designed the composition to require the piano and cello to be used to make drumming noises and different rhythms. The reason for the use of drumming on both the piano and cello is due the fact that I wanted a variety in the sounds

provided by these instruments. An example of this technique on piano can be found in Figure 8 below.

THE WONDERFUL WIDOW OF EIGHTEEN SPRINGS

John Cage

The image shows a musical score for the piece "The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs" by John Cage. It is arranged for voice and piano. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the voice part with lyrics "SILENT BY SILENT SAILING NIGHT T- SO- DEL" and the piano part with complex rhythmic patterns and fingerings (5, 3, 5, 3, 5, 3, 3). The second system shows the voice part with lyrics "WILD-TRODS BKS AND FORTA- BASH PAIR QUI- ET- LY ALL THE TRODS SO WILD" and the piano part with similar complex rhythmic patterns and fingerings (3, 5, 5, 5, 7, 5, 3, 3). The piano part is marked "SLOWED" and "p".

FIGURE 8. Cage's Notes for "The Wonderful Widow of Eighteen Springs" (1942)

By showing this example to Elomaa and Tulirinta, we were able to begin the process of mixing spoken voice and this rhythm on the piano. It worked only for a short while, because we ran out of rhythmical ideas. Since we were using an electric piano it was difficult to get an echo from inside the piano. The way we overcame this obstacle was by using a grand piano instead as well as enhancing the echo with the use of the pedals. When closing the lid while holding down the pedals for example, the sound is intensified. This is the technique we used throughout the song.

2.2.5 Weather Report

During one of my many meetings with my thesis professor, we came up with the idea to use a weather report as text material. I listened to a report on a shipping

forecast on August 9th, 2018. I wrote down the text and began to brainstorm how to make this into a song.

The text is repetitive, which means the music from the piano and cello was designed to have some variety to it. Since this is a weather report, the voice part is meant to be spoken. The music stops randomly in the middle of a phrase in order for the voice to be the only instrument heard. Tullirinta brought up the idea for the voice to speak the words of the text, but to sing the numbers. A melody was then formed for the words “good, occasionally poor later”. They are repeated a few times, which is why we chose to have a melody that we all played simultaneously. Below is the entire weather report. This is also the text for the song.

Weather Report

There are warnings of gales in Viking, South Utsire, Dogger, Fisher, German Bight, Humber, Thames, and Dover

General synopsis at 0600. Low France 1007 expected Skagerrak 993 by 0600 tomorrow.

The area forecast for the next 24 hours;

Viking, South Utsire

Southwesterly 4 or 5 becoming variable 3, then northwesterly 5 or 6 later. Showers.

Good, occasionally poor later.

South Utsire,

Southwesterly 4 or 5 becoming variable 3, then northwesterly 6 to gale 8, perhaps severe gale 9.

Rain or thundery showers.

Good, occasionally poor later.

German Bight,

Cyclonic 4 increasing 6 to gale 8, becoming westerly gale 8 to storm 10 later, perhaps violent storm 11 later in north.

Rain or thundery showers.

Good, occasionally poor later.

*Dogger,
In west, variable mainly southwesterly, veering westerly, 4 or 5. In east,
northerly 4 backing westerly or northwesterly 6 to gale 8.
In west, thundery showers. In east, rain or squally thundery showers.
In west, moderate or good. In east, good, occasionally poor later.
(BBC Radio 4, Shipping Forecast 9.8.2018.)*

2.2.6 We, I, You

The last piece “We, I, You” is my personal favorite. With all the other texts written, I realized I was missing a romantic piece and so I began to write something idealistic. I wanted this song to have a simple yet straight forward text but filled with meaning. This was fulfilled by the use of words rich with imagery like “echo” and “fades”. This text symbolizes the tide and how the moon pulls the tide back and forth. The meaning behind this text shows the importance of the tide and how it rushes out for some time, but always returns in the end. This text can be interpreted romantically but the reader is ultimately free to discover that specific interpretation in the piece themselves. The text for this piece is below:

We, I, You

The tide comes and goes
Let it be
Like an echo
Returning with a gentle apology

I remember happiness
It fades
I remember sadness
It returns

We, I, you
As one

Reunited
You and I
My love,
It has been missed

Come back to me
Like an echo

When analyzing all the songs we had created up to this point with Elomaa and Tulirinta, we realized that this piece needed to be very melodic. When considering what the melody could be, I remembered the short melody I had made in Lugano which is explained in Section 2.1.2. I presented this melody to Elomaa and Tulirinta, and our creativity began to flow once more. With the use of my melody, we were able to complete the improvisation of this piece after playing through it just once. We have made slight changes to this piece, such as the melody for the voice in the first section of the text. When initially singing through the piece during the improvisational part of composing, I found it difficult to continue the melody in first part of the song. With the assistance of Elomaa and Tulirinta, I was able to overcome this challenge. The song now has a complete melody for the singer as well as the instruments.

3 CONCLUSION

The use of improvisation during the composition of music and text easily lends itself to a musical process filled with trial and error, which requires the resolve of the composer to overcome any obstacles in the way of completing the task of composition.

Just as any great composer, I faced a similar process of trial and error while composing the songs discussed in this thesis. Nevertheless, with the assistance of a variety of courses such as ear training and another course on John Cage, the doors to many different compositional possibilities opened. I realized that, as a composer, there were no limitations in music other than much of traditional music theory. With this realization, a whole world opened up to me and I began to document my process and soon noticed a pattern in my work: I would test a method, but then was faced with a complication. I was forced to take a step back each time in order to contemplate ways of changing my compositional method in order to be able to proceed with the process of creating a composition.

I had to reconsider my method of composing countless times, whether it was due to mistakes in music theory, writer's block, or the lack of talent any beginner starts with. Throughout this process I have learned how to put music theory and literature into practice. Notably, the compositional process has also strengthened my knowledge of and understanding in music theory and literature. My confidence in music has grown. Through improvisation I have learned to trust my instinct, and to throw myself into the song without holding back. As a result, improvisation has given me some of the best work.

With the proper preparation, nearly any individual has the ability to complete and to compose music. Being proactive in gathering the necessary content for composing, such as information about music theory and the use of improvisation, is immensely helpful to successfully complete a compositional piece.

The documentation of my compositional process contributes to society and scholarship by providing readers with a baseline of what they should expect to experience if they chose to compose as a beginner. Trial and error will be a central theme of any composition and can always be overcome with proper study, knowledge, and dedication. I hope that this thesis can be a tool for schools and different musical organizations to better prepare their students for the process of music composition by providing a variety of compositional walkthroughs as well as music theory lessons. This would ideally give the support students need in order to trust themselves with their own compositions.

The task of this thesis was to document my artistic development while composing music and text with the use of improvisation. I have accomplished this goal by successfully composing a song cycle. This accomplishment has given me the tools to further compose in the future. In my professional career, this thesis has helped by giving me an insight into the process a composer goes through while composing. I have a better understanding of what each composition has gone through in order to be completed.

In the future, I hope to go through this process once more with the experience from my first composition in mind. I will better prepare myself for the constant reoccurrence of trial and error and encourage myself to push through each setback. I hope this experience I have gone through with composing this song cycle will forever be a reminder to all beginners that one must not be afraid of their limitations in practical skills but to rather face this limitation in order to better themselves in that specific area.

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Link for song cycle “Stream of Thoughts”,

Calm Stillness: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvf3WrdP930>

Power of the Mind: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BcbxPGZiRV8>

Above or Below: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RaERPJ4ilCc>

Weather Report: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n6au7I7wlnw>

We, I, You: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kp8xoiKU8Ec>

Calm Stillness

Aundrea Beishline, Oskari Elomaa, Jere Tulirinta

Adagio *sul pont.* *gliss.*

Violoncello *mp*

Piano *mp*

5 *Free rhythm*

S. *mp* Calm still-ness is a round me—

Vc. *mp* *ord. gliss.*

Pno. *mp*

9

S. The rush

Vc. *gliss.* *mf*

Pno.

Detailed description: This block contains the first three systems of a musical score. The first system (measures 1-4) features a Violoncello part in 5/4 time with a dynamic of *mp* and a Piano part with a similar dynamic. The second system (measures 5-8) includes a vocal line (S.) with lyrics 'Calm still-ness is a round me—' in *mp*, a Violoncello part (Vc.) with *mp* and *ord. gliss.*, and a Piano part (Pno.) with *mp*. The third system (measures 9-12) shows the vocal line (S.) with lyrics 'The rush', a Violoncello part (Vc.) with *gliss.* and *mf*, and a Piano part (Pno.).

2

11

S. *gliss.* of lea-ves be-hind me. I

Vc. *gliss.* *mp* *cresc.*

Pno. *mf* *mp*

14

S. *gliss.* feel it. I feel it in - side me .

Vc. *gliss.* *f* *mp*

Pno. *mf*

18

Vc. *più mf* *f*

Pno. *f*

21 *Più mosso*

Vc.

Pno.

23 *A tempo*

Vc.

Pno.

26

S.

Vc.

Pno.

f *gliss.* *cresc.*

Ad. lib. solo (three bars) *sm.* *cresc.*

30
S. Does the beauty ever leave,
Vc. *gliss.*
Pno. play chaotically next five bars
ff
Ad Lib.

33 *poco rit.*
S. Does it come back with all its rage? Where have I gone with it now?
Vc. *poco rit.*
Pno.

36 *dim.*
S. Have I released it from it's slumber?
Vc.
Pno. less chaotically
molto dim.

38 **molto rall.** 5

S. Fear it's rage and it's tem
A tempo

Vc.

Pno. **molto rall.** *mf*

42 -per for the day has been so long. The

Vc.

Pno.

45 **Lento**

S. calm still-ness is a-round me, I feel it, I
Lento

Vc.

Pno.

6

47 **rall.**

S. 
feel it in - side me.

rall.

Vc. 
ppp

Pno. 
dim. e rit. *ppp*

Power of the Mind

Aundrea Beishline, Oskari Elomaa, Jere Tulirinta

Moderato

I could sit here, sit here all day. I could watch

Moderato

mf

con fido

5

—the world go— by— I could sit here, sit here all— day I could watch

2
9

molto rall. **A tempo**

— the world go by — But now I

Serioso

molto rall. **A tempo**

Serioso

Red *

12

see, No-thing can be done.

5

14

For "I" am not at fault For the le - mon

16

fal - ling from the tree That makes me

leggiero

19

won - der, won - der all day

accel. **A tempo**

22 **rall.** *più mosso*
dolce

As I sit here Sit here all day What does wa-ter have to do with this?—

dolce

rall. *più mosso*

26 **Adagio**

espress.

Adagio

legato

30

V

34

3 3

38

3

42

Well, to be

3

45 **rall.**

ho-nest No - - - thing.

rall.

Above or Below

Aundrea Beishline, Oskari Elomaa, Jere Tullirinta

Distant echo

Uu - - uu - uu - - uu. A - m

Ad lib. rhythms by knocking on the side of the cello

Distant echo

Knock side of the piano with knuckles

Play silently with forearm

7

I _____ A - m I _____ I _____

Whisper inaudible words

Repeat x times ad lib.

Knock

Hit sheetmusic Hit sheetmusic

Detailed description: The score is divided into three systems. The first system features a vocal line with the lyrics 'Uu - - uu - uu - - uu. A - m' and a cello part with rhythmic patterns. The second system features a piano part with a 'Distant echo' instruction and a graphic of piano strings being struck with knuckles. The third system features a vocal line with the lyrics 'I _____ A - m I _____ I _____' and a piano part with rhythmic patterns and a 'Knock' instruction. The score concludes with the instruction 'Hit sheetmusic' repeated twice.

2

14

swi - im - ming.

Hold strings with left hand while hitting fingerboard with right hand

ff
Close lid with a bang
Ped

Try to play these notes with lid closed *

19

Or

Am I dro - oo -

Knock frontside and bridge of the cello

Repeat x times ad lib.

subito *ppp*

Pluck low strings inside of the piano

29

wning ?

Speak words slowly and separately
What is the difference? I am

Pluck strings from under bridge

Push the pedal down with a noise
Open lid

Ped

sfz

37

swi - mming Or

Ad lib.
Interactive knocking with the pianist

Knock unused parts of the cello

Pluck low strings inside of the piano

Mumble

Ad lib.
Interactive knocking with the cellist

43

Repeat x times

So, I believe How could

gliss. cadenza free rhythm

Repeat x times

Shout inside the piano with sustain pedal down

fff

49

I drown without water?
whispering

Ad lib. rhythms by knocking on the side of the cello

Weather Report

Aundrea Beishline, Oskari Elomaa, Jere Tulirinta

Moderato

Moderato

mf marcato

mp

marcato e non legato

4

There are warnings of gales in South Utsire, Dogger, Fisher, German Bight, Humber, Thames, and Dover

2

6

General synopsis at 0 6 0 0 Low France 1007

gliss.

8

expected Skagerrak 9 9 3 by 0 6 0 0 The area forecast for the next

11

2 4 hours Viking South Utsire Southwesterly 4 or 5 becoming variable 3

15

then northwesterly 5 6 Showers

17

Good oc-ca-sio-nal-ly poor la-ter South Utsire South-westerly 4 or 5

21

becoming variable 3 then northwesterly 6

23

to gale perhaps severe gale

25

Rain or thundery showers. Good oc-ca-sio-nal-ly poor la-ter

28

German Cyclonic _{Bight} ⁴ increasing _{6 to 8} becoming _{westerly} gale ₈ to storm ₁₀ later, perhaps violent storm _{1 1}

più mosso *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.* *gliss.*

più mosso
ff molto legato

8^o

34

later in north. Rain or thundery showers. Good oc-ca-sio-nal-ly poor la-ter.

37 (8).....

Dogger In west, variable mainly southwesterly, veering westerly, 4 or 5 In east, northerly 4

mp

marcato e non legato

41 **A tempo**

backing westerly or northwesterly 6 to gale 8 In west, thundery showers. In east, rain or

A tempo

A tempo

44

squally thundery showers. In east, Good oc-ca-sio-nal-ly poor la-ter
In west, moderate or good.

sostenuto

sostenuto

sostenuto

We, I, You

Aundrea Beishline, Oskari Elomaa, Jere Tulirinta

Andante ♩ = 83

espress.

mf

5

9

The tide _____ comes and go - es Let it

mp

2

12

be _____ Like an ec-ho _____ Re turning _____ with a gent - le a-

pizz.

16

po - - lo - gy I re-

20

mem - ber hap - pi ness _____ It fa - des I re

arco

mp

24

mem - ber sad - - ness. And it re turns

28

We, I, you as one

31

We, I, you as o - ne

mf

subito p

subito p

4
35

Musical score for measures 35-38. The bass line (B) starts with a *mf* dynamic and contains a melodic line with eighth notes and rests. The piano part (P) is an *f* dynamic improvised solo with a chord progression of C, C/B, Am, Dm, and G.

Musical score for measures 39-42. The bass line (B) features a melodic line with eighth notes and slurs. The piano part (P) continues the chord progression of C, C/B, Am, Dm, and G.

Musical score for measures 43-46. The vocal line (V) has lyrics: "Re - uni- ted. You and I My love, it has been missed". The bass line (B) has a *mp* dynamic and a melodic line with slurs. The piano part (P) has a *mp* dynamic and a complex accompaniment with eighth notes and slurs.

47

Come back to me like an ec- ho_____

f *mf*

51

improvised cello solo

C C/B Am Dm G

Accompany freely with chords above

55

C C/B Am Dm G C