

Portfolio of Compositions
The Spatial, Theatrical Voice

Movement for string quartet and vocalist
Hymnal and Mantra, for choir
Manuals, for four voices and four violins
The Short Fear, for actor and bass clarinet

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for David Bright, whose love and support I will never forget.

The Spatial, Theatrical Voice

This portfolio, to be immediately frank, has been extremely difficult to produce. The emotional and logistical issues that arose at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown restrictions have had a profound impact on my relationship with my art form. I made it a personal mission, as did many, to be as artistically productive as possible during the first wave of UK coronavirus restrictions in an attempt to maintain a sense of normality and sanity. This productivity was also important to keep up following the death of my granddad in June 2020. He had always been supportive of my studies in music, making special effort to see me perform in choral concerts throughout my undergraduate degree. His passing encouraged me to complete this portfolio to the absolute best of my ability to make sure his support was not wasted.

The overriding focus of this portfolio became clear quite late into its formation. Rather than beginning with an immediate focus and delving deeply into that form the outset, I began extremely broadly, looking at largely disparate ideas including: the orchestral piano; the genderless choral force; rearranging popular music for Western classical ensembles; and Hindusanti konakkol vocal performance. Almost all of my early sketches and ideas featured the voice in some way, but there was no conscious exploration of the voice until *Movement for string quartet and vocalist* and *Hymnal and Mantra* were started.

Once I had realised a specific theme, I absolutely did not want this portfolio to be an exhaustive list of every possible avenue, laboriously overturning each stone, producing a set of works that would be much better written up as a long Wikipedia article. Instead, I wanted to

write a few concentrated pieces with a similar overriding theme but vastly different approaches and outcomes. I also felt that, this being an academic assignment, I could benefit more from institutional feedback if I produced a set of works that critically explored the voice and expanded on music material in a more intellectual sense, rather than producing more abstract, conceptual performance art pieces that have become a focus in my recent output.

Movement for string quartet and vocalist attempts to portray extreme rage by a vocalist in a chamber setting, who controls, manipulates and misleads the audience. *Hymnal and Mantra* presents the choral force as a genderless, organic unit, exploring the use of the choir as a kind of fluid keyboard instrument, with frequent glissandi and textural applications of text. *Manuals* explores vocal timbre and blends the voice with the violin, literally surrounding the audience with the sound of a strange church organ, attempting to create the image of a sacred space. *The Short Fear* explores the effects of setting and space in vocal performance, where many performance options are given to an actor narrating a poetry setting, performing in quasi-dialogue with another instrument. These pieces explore the concept of the 'spatial voice,' where vocal forces are employed: non-standardly around the performance space; to imply a setting or scene; or as a method of controlling audiences within a space. *Movement for string quartet and vocalist* and *The Short Fear* extend this exploration of space to include the idea of the 'theatrical voice,' where solo vocalists and actors perform dramatically within a space to influence and communicate with audiences directly.

I will be presenting commentary on all four pieces in order of their completion.¹ For each piece, I will provide important contextual information, describe the content of the score and appraise the piece in terms of its success in conveying the original artistic concept. Following these individual commentaries, I will present a concluding analysis on the success of the portfolio as a whole. In this conclusion, I will discuss the strengths of the portfolio, and present potential artistic trajectories and areas of further research.

Movement for string quartet and vocalist

The first piece in this portfolio grew out of an idea of wrong-footing or tricking audiences, exploring ways in which to lure them into a false sense of security. The main goal of this was to present a character or personality that is, at least at first, incredibly hostile to the audience, who has given up trying to reason with others who wish to stifle or contain their personal passions. I immediately wanted the ensemble to convey a sense of Western classical regularity reminiscent of composers of the late-18th century. This more accessible² style, after being established by the quartet alone with the vocalist sat silently, is then shattered suddenly by the vocalist striding powerfully to the front of the stage and shouting directly at the audience.

Although initially inspired by the outdated humour of Joseph Haydn's *'The Joke' Quartet* and W. A. Mozart's *A Musical Joke*, where the irony relies on an audience's understanding of

¹ Although all four pieces were completed within the same timespan, it is important to clarify their chronology in order to describe their influence on each other, as well as to show the conceptual and stylistic journeys of the portfolio as a whole.

² Accessible for the regular, perhaps conservative audiences of chamber music, those coming to watch a Haydn string quartet or Mozart piano sonata.

harmony, melody, structure and texture, I wanted to include later, more expressive and personally enjoyable styles of string quartet writing in the opening section so that audiences were aware that these stemmed from classical style, but were also not entirely rooted in traditional harmony and counterpoint. This was also so that, when the material returned at bar 81, it could smoothly follow the vastly different preceding musical content after a short transition section at bar 76. I used Edvard Grieg's *String Quartet in G minor* as a base for the more Romantic, expressive quartet writing, with large, resonant chords and octave melodies also forming the opening bars of his piece.

The vocalist may use whatever range they wish to, performing however they feel most comfortable; this piece is about the audience's discomfort, not the performers'. The benefits of using a lower or deeper register include a greater resonance and timbral power over the quartet, whereas using a higher register has the potential for a more shrill, piercing anger, although these benefits are relatively marginal and I have no strong preference in either direction. I have enough trust in vocalists to use the notated and written instructions to craft a suitable and dynamic character and do feel that my score provides them with enough information. I also made sure to remove any prescriptions of gender within these instructions as this type of aggression and defense is by no means best performed by a certain gender. The vocalist is encouraged to adapt the expressive instructions to suit their own voice and character, in turn creating a more convincing and powerful performance.

The vocalist's first line - "Are you fucking listening now?" - was inspired by Sleaford Mods' 2014 track, *Tied Up In Nottz*, where an expletive is used in the first four words of the song - "The smell of piss is so strong it smells like decent bacon." This immediately sets up the song's

distinctive narration and its colloquial use of language. The use of frequent swearing by no means devalues this as music - not that swearing itself is an indicator of less-sophisticated language -, rather it more accurately describes vocalist Jason Williamson's working class angst. I consciously wanted to reflect Sleaford Mods' music in my compositional practice as many of Williamson's lyrics reflected my own feelings of being stuck and held down in Nottingham, both during the COVID-19 pandemic³ and the preceding three-and-a-half years at university, as do his references to unemployment and drug use. Williamson's Midlands accent and blunt speech also reminded me of my upbringing in a working class area of Birmingham, where many of the people around me growing up would swear and shout for impact, whilst actually meaning well.

At bars 50 to 68, the quartet moves from an accompanying role to an overt extension of the vocalist's aggression. This marks a moment of climax, where the vocalist's emotion is at its most intense, despite being silent and visibly relaxed. This violent texture references the aggressive string sound used in Julia Wolfe's *Dig Deep*, 2011, where the composer writes "dig deep into the string" next to the initial dynamic markings, a note I have also included at bar 66. This instruction ensures the overall sound is harsh and gritty, exaggerating the section's clashing harmonies and polyrhythms.

I had devised a few options for the piece's direction following this climax, including one where the vocalist's rage was furthered by having this string figure become an ostinato, over which the vocalist would shout again at the audience, this time more directly attacking them. However, I decided to maintain a more subdued mood to reflect a kind of *peripeteia*,⁴ where the

³ These feelings of entrapment were especially heightened following the UK government's announcement of a nationwide lockdown on 23rd March 2020, restricting travel and social interaction.

⁴ A reversal of luck or fortune for a character within a dramatic narrative, often denoted by a change in their emotion and speech.

vocalist realises their aggression is a defense, an attempt to conceal the extent of their vulnerability and sensitivity. This alters the perception of the character from just a screaming ball of anger to a more human, flawed individual.

Inspired by a 1929 recording of *Façade (An Entertainment)* by William Walton and Edith Sitwell,⁵ I wanted the vocalist to perform without pitch, but still in rhythm, as does Sitwell in the narration of her poetry. I also wanted the accompanying quartet to physically act by at times moving exaggeratedly into new tempi, as at bar 29, or through dramatic group changes to *sul pont.*, as at bar 34. I initially used tempo markings to further describe the role of the performers as well as musico-dramatic intentions. However, I found it was more clear to describe the visible action through boxed text placed above the vocalist or quartet's part where necessary.

The quartet is almost always treated as a single unit. I personally find this approach to string quartet writing satisfying, treating the group as one sonic body. Also, the stage presence of four musicians acting as one is visually impactful, even when performing in the background. I made a conscious choice not to have the quartet perform in too high a register. This was so that the strings did not overpower the vocalist; the upper range of the violin can be shrill and piercing.⁶ The quartet also often reduces their dynamic when the vocalist is speaking so that their text is clear and understandable.

⁵ This recording was re-released on a remastered CD in 2014, which includes an introduction by Terry Hepworth. Here, Hepworth described the difficult recording process of *Façade* and the efforts made to restore sound quality from the original 1929 wax recordings.

⁶ This is not to say that the lower registers of the quartet do not also have a powerful presence, but I felt that their lower range heightened the vocalist's anger, so employed this instead in the piece.

I am not entirely convinced that this piece was ultimately successful. Either it is finely-tuned to the audience's minds and sensibilities, or it simply comes across as rude and childish. Most people will not sit through being, and take time out of their day to be, shouted at, although maybe that was partly the point. I did make provisions for this, luring listeners into a false sense of comfort with careful planning of programme materials and twisting written communications to the audience to in turn twist the truth, to make sure audiences are both second-guessed and uncomfortable. I think it is fair to assume that audiences would not be so willing to engage with this piece if they knew of its contents beforehand. I wanted audiences to be duped, caught off-guard, but that cannot happen if there is no one watching in the first place.

Hymnal and Mantra, for choir

This piece was initially inspired by a short fragment from Russell Shaw's soundtrack to the 1997 PC game, *Dungeon Keeper*.⁷ The third track⁸ combines downwards vocal glissandi with sound effects of dripping water and cave-like reverberation to create an incredibly eerie atmosphere, immediately placing players in the game's subterranean fantasy setting. Voices often slide downwards with each other in parallel thirds, creating a constant harmonic instability which never truly settles. This continuous harmonic fluidity and the overall unnerving effect of the sliding voices influenced me to write an acoustic choral piece which exploited the technique. I also wanted to combine these sounds with microtones and non-standard vocal techniques to

⁷ Inserting the game disc into a CD player would play Shaw's soundtrack as an album with separated tracks.

⁸ Begins at 7:32 on the CD.

expand on the relatively simple 'sliding thirds' motif, generating more harmonic and textural variance.

Hymnal and Mantra is written in a rough ABA' structure. The A section, bars 1 to 89, is the *Hymnal* and the B section, bars 90 to 150, is the *Mantra*, with the A' section being a loose recapitulation of motifs exposed in two preceding sections. The *Hymnal* section is built around glissandi⁹ which first appear in the top part, then are passed around the choir. These glissandi occasionally settle on fairly consonant harmonies, such as the D#m7 chord at bar 15.¹⁰ These moments of quasi-resolution are then destabilised by further glissandi and chromaticism. This section is mostly based on non-linguistic syllables, apart from the word "Hymnal," first used at bar 51. This word is employed texturally in order to articulate the *i*, or *y*, and *m* syllables, rather than to convey any specific religious meaning.

The *Mantra* section uses a more text-orientated motif, first exposed at bar 108 after a short section of counterpoint between two soloists derived from material sung earlier at bars 24 to 49. The text, "Glory to you, my god," is intended to be deliberately vague in its religious ideation. As with the word "Hymnal" before, the use of this text is not to attach a specific religious doctrine to the piece, rather suggest a feeling of numinosity, to create a soundscape that is otherworldly and non-prescriptive in its spirituality. This motif is marked by more homophonic choral textures, as in bars 123 to 142.

⁹ N.B. Within the accompanying audio files, almost all of these glissandi do not play due to the constraints of the notation software used. This is true for all pieces and audio files where glissandi are used.

¹⁰ This chord returns at bar 71 with a similar function.

The recapitulation returns to the glissandi exposed in the first few bars, then slides upwards to the *fortissimo* climax at bar 188. The dynamic then reduces until the end, firstly alongside a gradual move into more accessible harmonies. The word “Hymnal” is then divided into its constituent syllables, ending up as a humming sound at bar 223. The piece ends with a restatement of the *Mantra* text, with each part finally sliding up to a unison pitch.

Giacinto Scelsi uses the ‘+’ symbol in *Tre Canti Sacri*, 1958, and *Uaxuctum*, 1969, to denote where vocalists should hum or sing with a closed mouth.¹¹ I would also have used this symbol in my notation if there was more syllabic variance or more frequent changes between open- and closed-mouthed singing. However, I decided to notate closed-mouth singing by writing “Mm. _” so that the instruction to hum was more clear and comprehensible.

My use of microtones was inspired by their employment in Scelsi’s music, as well in Iannis Xenakis’ *Nuits* and Alvin Lucier’s *Music for Piano with Slow Sweep Pure Wave Oscillators*, 1992. Lucier in particular influenced my experimentation with beating tones, where pitches of very similar cent values are sounded together to produce a rhythmic pulsation. Lucier also exploits this phenomenon in *Criss-Cross*, 2013, this time having electric guitars retune to slowly orbit around a static pitch. In my piece, this effect is most clear from bars 31 to 49, where the second-lowest part gradually slides to the pitch below it. These beating tones are at their clearest at bar 47, where the higher part is only a few cents above C3. Tuning these pitches may be difficult, especially where larger choral forces are employed. This is made easier in context, however, by having the moving part slowly slide into pitch, allowing vocalists to

¹¹ Used more universally in horn notation to denote a hand-stopped note, or rarely within wider brass music to instruct the use of a mute.

fine-tune more subtly. Xenakis uses microtonal glissandi in *Nuits*, where upwards glissandi are combined with a non-linguistic text to give the effect of painful shrieking, as in the opening bars.

Moments of relative consonance are inspired by the pandiatonicism of Ēriks Ešēvalds' music, with his 2011 choral work, *Stars*, influencing sections with a stronger sense of harmonic stability, although this stability never lasts for a sustained period. In *Stars*, Ešēvalds exaggerates D major pandiatonic clashes in the voices through the use of tuned wine glasses, the pure tones of which pleasantly interact with the sung pitches. Combining these two forces etherialises the timbre, more accurately representing stars shining through the darkness of night. Going forward, it would be interesting to return to this piece for inspiration, as I think combining the static wine glass tones with sliding pitches would produce a unique kind of beating tone.¹²

My vision for *Hymnal and Mantra* remained consistent throughout and is largely identical to the final product. I wanted the piece to present a numinous, strange, eerie soundworld where a sense of comfort or stability is rarely sustained. I consider this an personal success that I managed to stick with an idea for the duration of a piece's production, as I can see more starkly the piece's formative journey. I am quite content with the result, and see this piece as a solid starting point for the exploration of non-standard choral textures. I am also happy with the overall development of such a small starting motif, the 'sliding thirds.' The material has been spun out naturally, allowing any development to be as fluid and organic as possible, whilst also not being spread too thin, helping to sustain audience interest.

¹² Meredith Monk uses a tuned wine glass as accompaniment in *Cow Song*, 1973, underneath a plainsong-like, non-textual vocal line, not to create beating tones, but rather as a static pitch to stabilise her melody and tuning.

Manuals, for four voices and four violins

Much of the textural language of this piece was inspired by Thomas Tallis' 40-part motet, *Spem in alium*, which divides the choir up into eight groups of five. Material in this motet is initially passed fluidly around the groups, featuring more antiphony later on, where select groups pass material across the floor, before finishing the piece with a resounding chord from the whole choir. A performance of this piece in 2019 by the Nottingham Cathedral Choir had these eight groups arranged around the cathedral, exaggerating these moments of antiphony and portraying the opening music as actively transporting itself around the room through these groups. Even in performances of *Spem in alium* where the vocalists are instead arranged in more traditional blocks in one space or area, the music still visibly and audibly moves around the space.

Often in *Spem in alium*, the harmony is static. There are moments where one chord is held for quite a few seconds, especially at cadential points. This can highlight very subtle differences in the timbres of individual vocalists, as some are singing in unison. Individual vocal nuances thicken the overall texture when only triadic pitches are sung by the choir. This textural thickening also occurs when two singers in dialogue arrive at the same pitch briefly, most noticeably in the soprano voices where they sing their highest notes. This blurs the identities of each vocalist, making differentiating distinct lines almost impossible in the wall of choral polyphony.

I decided to explore the idea of blur and fluidity present and ways in which to present this with both vocal and instrumental forces. I wanted to create a piece that blurred the identities of voice and instrument in the same way that individual voices are nigh indistinguishable from each other in *Spem in alium*, blending the ensemble into one mass of sound. I also wanted to examine ways in which the spatial potential of Tallis' piece could be applied to smaller, more manageable ensembles. I chose to write for an ensemble of four high voices and four violins primarily due to the similarity in tone quality between the two forces when a single pitch is held without vibrato.

Although the musical material is slow and fluid in its expansion in my piece, there are three defined sections with slightly different approaches to space and texture. The piece opens with the violins passing a simple figure clockwise around the room. The violins then act antiphonally by passing material across the space as two groups. The dynamic gradually increases up to a small climax, with the violins dropping out as the four voices enter at the upbeat to bar 60.

The second section starts at bar 78. The ornamented vocal line here was directly influenced by Meredith Monk's 1981 piece, *Dolmen Music*, where again non-linguistic text is used for textural effect, allowing the voice to be used more as an instrument rather than a force for lyrical expression. In the second section, Monk gradually introduces the six solo voices with a "Wah-oo" pattern, with the "-oo" being embellished with semitone acciaccaturas, used to rhythmically and texturally excite the music. I employed this technique in bars 82 to 130, combining these folk-like flicks with sustained violin pitches which vary in vibrato intensity. Here, the voices and violins begin to blend timbrally, with material slowly moving around the room

clockwise as each line is introduced. Bar 131 marks a sudden change in tonality, signalling the start of the main climax of the piece. A low-G pedal is almost constant throughout this section, especially from bar 143, with the lowest open violin string being sounded by all four players. The violins play octave glissandi on the G string up to the climactic *fortissimo* glissandi in the voices at bar 180.

The final section, starting at bar 181, is much more meditative and subdued than the preceding two sections. Long, sustained pitches in all the parts allow the harmony to slowly evolve. Starting at bar 189, the voices pass a smooth “glide” between each other going clockwise. From bar 190, the violins pass around subtle chord punctuations anticlockwise, an effect which is most clear at bar 200. At bar 201, the ensemble is divided into four groups, one at each corner. This attempts to combine the vocal and string timbres, blending the group into a mass of sound which slowly travels around the space clockwise. Soft ‘**D**’ consonants are introduced at bar 231, leading up to the ensemble all playing a G unison at bar 238. This moment is where the blending of forces is most clear, with the individual identities of each performer being sacrificed to produce a one whole sound at the final bar, a single pitch, similar to the sound of an organ, which fills an entire “sacred” space.

The use of percussive sounds like “**Da(h)**” helped to accentuate moments of climax, as at bar 152, and more clearly define softer repeated pitches, as at bar 231. The latter was inspired by Eric Whitacre’s use of “**La**” and “**Ma**” in the *Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine*, 2010. Here, Whitacre articulates static harmony through the use of these sounds, giving the ending to the piece a rhythmic vitality that would be much more difficult to achieve through sustained pedal notes. “**Da**” and “**Dat**” are used in John Adams’ *Harmonium*, 1981, where, in the

first movement, highly energetic passages of orchestral music are combined with percussive pulsations from a full *fortissimo* choir.

The successes of this piece come from its sense of fluidity and use of space. I am happy with the result, although it does differ greatly from my original vision. I imagined the performance space being transformed beyond recognition through the use of scenery, props and costume, whereas the final product only prescribes specific lighting. I also planned to have this be a shorter piece as part of a set which explored the implications of sound on space, writing music which reflected different settings, like: a ruined temple; a vast body of water; or a forest. Despite this divergence from my initial idea, I still feel that this piece has the ability to transform a performance venue into a numinous, otherworldly space.

The Short Fear, for actor and bass clarinet

The Short Fear was the last of these four pieces to be completed, being started as the other three were almost entirely finished. This piece is therefore the most current presentation of my experiments into musical vocal roles and functions. In a set of pieces exploring the voice, I felt it important to include a setting of a poetic text. Poetry, by nature, is a crafted, organised collection of language, just as music is an organisation of sound. Many composers choose to set beautiful and concise poems, the structures of which can be exploited within the music. Emily Dickinson's work in particular is set prolifically by English-speaking composers due to its brevity and intensity, being used in Adams' *Harmonium*, and more recently by Judith Weir in

Good Morning, Midnight, 2013.¹³ Much of Dickinson's poetry relies on deeply profound imagery, drawing influence from religion, death, womanhood and, importantly, sound. The wide-reaching themes in her work immediately draw in musicians who can highlight them for an effective setting. However, after working with poetry for quite a few years already, I wanted to find a text that presented more challenges in terms of a musical setting.

For this piece, I was more interested in poetry that offered very little in terms of imagery and metaphor, that was either too bland to be interesting or too simple to be successful. This was mainly so that the words themselves would have to be deconstructed and manipulated in order to generate musical interest, requiring a more experimental approach to text setting and performance. I chose to focus on a work by B. S. Johnson, a writer who was a much more sophisticated novelist than he was a poet. *The Short Fear* fit the above criteria, being as brief as a Dickinson poem, but lacking the imagery, floridity and depth.

¹³ I also have previously set Dickinson's poetry to music, most recently *Not any sunny tone*, performed at Lincoln Drill Hall in March 2018.

My awkward grossness grows: I go down, through

I maintain myself in the conviction
 that I may have as much to say as others
 and more apposite ways of saying it

Certainly I feel that all has been said

The short fear is that even saying it
 in my own way is equally worthless

The Short Fear, B. S. Johnson (1933-1973)¹⁴

Johnson is much better known for his experimental novels, particularly *House Mother Normal*, 1971, which describes the mental condition of eight elderly residents of a care home. The narrative follows the same day repeated for each of the residents as well as the “House Mother,” the amoral head nurse. Gaps are left in each of the sections where different characters speak. If the different accounts of the day were flattened into one, the gaps would be filled completely, creating seamless, chronological speech. Despite his innovations in narrative and form, Johnson’s career successes were not huge, which troubled him greatly,¹⁵ contributing to his eventual tragic suicide in 1973.

¹⁴ As published in *Poems Two*, Johnson, B. S., 1972, p.56.

¹⁵ *Aren't You Rather Young To Be Writing Your Memoirs?*, Johnson, B. S., 1973.

Where the *Movement for string quartet and vocalist* is written for a musically-literate vocalist, *The Short Fear* is for a dramatic performer more used to reading from a text-based script. The inclusion of a more strictly notated musical accompaniment presented further challenges in blending this form of instruction with a script-like format, the latter being more immediately familiar and understandable for actors. I wanted the actor's part to be comprehensible for both actors and musical vocalists, given that the bass clarinet part relies on musical notation. This meant that I could not include any specialist notational terms or symbols within the spoken part, but could still include them in the bass clarinetist's part.

For the most part, the bass clarinet is static or silent as the actor speaks so as not to complicate cues or distract audiences from the actor's delivery.¹⁶ For the same reason, the volume of the bass clarinet is also greatly reduced if it is playing whilst the actor is speaking, with the loudest marking being *mezzo piano* at bar 51. This dialogic style of writing is inspired by the *stichomythia* employed by Greek tragedians, particularly Euripides in the 431 BC tragedy *Medea*, where Medea and Jason often argue by exchanging short sentences in quickfire succession.

The "cut-up" style of text setting was inspired by the manipulation and repetition of recorded speech used in Steve Reich's *Different Trains*, 1988. This technique is also used for comedic effect in the YouTube video artist Swedemason's 2009 release, *Jeremy Clarkson Beatbox*. Swedemason uses samples of recorded speech and vocal effects to create

¹⁶ The bass clarinet does play more active figures at bars 51, 53, 74 and 125. Here the actor is producing static vocal effects (hissing, growling, etc.) under which the bass clarinet is playing a repeated phrase. The bass clarinetist waits for the actor to stop making sound before moving on to the next bar.

accompanying music for longer vocal samples, distorting their original sound and meaning to satirise the presenter Jeremy Clarkson.

As the clarinettist is free to cue the actor where needed, a regular metre is not required. Metrical instability is established almost immediately, with the actor being the first to speak and the bass clarinet entering on the offbeat. This instability is continued throughout by near constant time signature changes and frequent offbeat accents. There is a consistent, regular pulse, however, which makes these metrical changes more noticeable.

The working title for this piece, for when there was the idea of including more than one poetic text, was *3 Sad, Mediocre Poems by 3 Sad Men*. I moved on quickly from this idea as I felt it was unfair to Johnson and the other two poets considered, Dylan Thomas and T. S. Eliot. I also felt that Thomas and Eliot's work explored much more profound themes through extensive imagery and metaphor, not fitting with this title or alongside Johnson's "mediocre" poems. I am content that this piece did not become a serious concert work, instead being a more entertaining piece that has huge theatrical potential.

In many ways, this portfolio has presented me with an opportunity to “find my voice.” Prior to its completion, I had reached an artistic roadblock, unsure of what my music should say and the direction it should take. Lockdown, for all its emotional toll, reassured me that I was allowed to experiment, to not have a clear artistic focus at such an early stage in my career. I now feel that, after seven months of intense productivity, my music does have its own character and focus. Exploration of the voice will be central to my music going forward, as well as experiments with sound and space, liberating music from the stage into the wider performance space.

Parody and satire within art music is also something I wish to explore further. Where *Movement for string quartet and vocalist* experiments with the subversion of style and genre, I feel there are many ways in which this idea could be expanded. Instead of parodying the string quartet as a genre, I would be interested in ironising the instrumentation itself, for example using period instruments to give the pretense of the Baroque drawing room, then defacing and shattering that sensibility, that florid beauty through the use of musical and dramatic grit.

I am overall content with this final product. These pieces, in my eyes, accurately reflect a long period of hard work through a difficult situation. I am proud to have completed a full portfolio, regardless of how successful these pieces are individually. In their own right, however, I feel that these pieces are largely successful in portraying their concept, although there is definitely room for refinement in terms of my musical style and compositional technique. I have given myself a solid grounding for further academic compositions, and I am excited to eventually expand on the themes presented within these works, as they are by no means complete explorations of the voice and its relationship with space.

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Consulted Repertoire (chronological)

- *Medea*, 431 BC, Euripides
- *Spem in alium*, c.1570, Thomas Tallis
- *Sonata No. 1 in G minor for solo violin*, 1720, J. S. Bach
- “*The Joke*” *String Quartet Op. 33, No. 2*, 1781, Joseph Haydn
- *A Musical Joke*, 1787, W. A. Mozart
- *String Quartet in G minor*, 1878, Edvard Grieg
- *Three Pieces for String Quartet*, 1914-18, Igor Stravinsky
- *Façade: An Entertainment*, 1922/1947-8, William Walton and Edith Sitwell
- *Living Room Music*, 1940, John Cage
- *Tre Canti Sacri*, 1958, Giacinto Scelsi
- *St. Luke Passion*, 1966, Krzysztof Penderecki
- *Terretektorh*, 1966, Iannis Xenakis
- *Nuits*, 1967 Iannis Xenakis
- *Uaxuctum*, 1969, Giacinto Scelsi
- *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*, 1969-74, Graham Chapman, John Cleese, Terry Gilliam, Eric Idle, Terry Jones, Michael Palin
- *House Mother Normal*, 1971, B. S. Johnson
- *The Short Fear*, 1972, B. S. Johnson
- *Cow Song*, 1973, Meredith Monk
- *Failing*, 1975, Tom Johnson
- *Lonely Child*, 1980, Claude Vivier
- *Harmonium*, 1981, John Adams
- *Dolmen Music*, 1981, Meredith Monk
- *Different Trains*, 1988, Steve Reich
- *Betsy Bell and Mary Gray*, 1989, Steeleye Span
- *Music for Piano with Slow Sweep Pure Wave Oscillators*, 1992, Alvin Lucier
- *Dungeon Keeper*, 1997, Russell Shaw
- *Oktophonie*, 1999, Karlheinz Stockhausen
- *Gloria Patri*, 2001, Urmaz Sisask
- *Jeremy Clarkson Beatbox*, 2009, Swedemason
- *A performance is never rehearsed, a performance is never repeated*, 2010, Andy Ingamells
- *Leonardo Dreams of His Flying Machine*, 2010, Eric Whitacre
- *Stars*, 2011, Ēriks Ešenvālds
- *Dig Deep*, 2011, Julia Wolfe
- *Good Morning, Midnight*, 2013, Judith Weir
- *Criss-Cross*, 2013, Alvin Lucier
- *How to make pyramids from circles and lines*, 2014, Rosie Clements
- *Tied Up In Nottz*, 2014, Sleaford Mods
- *Queen’s Speech 4*, 2016, Lady Leshurr
- *Mouthwings (Live at Saint Mark’s Cathedral)*, 2018, Mountain Man
- *Issues/Hold On*, 2018, Teyana Taylor
- *Confessions*, 2019, Sudan Archives
- *Last Sniff*, 2020, Wilma Archer and MF DOOM
- *Acid*, 2020, Jockstrap