

A Mischief of Magpies

Folk horror themes, using nursery rhymes, folk tales, and myths, as sources of inspiration.

Length: 29:51



A Mischief of Magpies (6:06)

Lyrically and thematically built around the different magpie rhymes used around the world and in different parts of the UK. Seeded exemplars used as a starting point for compositional process included 'Go Tell Aunt Rhody', composed for the Resident Evil 7 video game soundtrack, which reimagines a simple folk song or child's nursery rhyme with horror themes.

False Alive, False Dead (2:21)

Composed using irrational time signature / metric modulation. Timing of the piece was conceived as an irrational time signature of 8/12: two groups of eighth note triplets follow by a final group of just two eighth note triples (1 + a, 2 + a, 3 +) repeating. To program it into the DAW, I had to translate it into a metric modulation of interleaved bars of 80bpm and 120bpm to maintain the feel. Uses Bartok's Romanian Folk Dances sz. 56: III, Pe-loc (Stamping Dance) as jumping off point for main melody. Uses a tihai (randomly suggested by The Composition Engine) as a basis for the rhythm.

These Silent Bones (2:30)

Unstable tempo. Similar to the last piece in how the tempo feels as though it is speeding up and slowing down throughout. I arrived at this from a graphical score approach – drawing a rising and falling line at the suggestion of the Composition Engine. The tempo is never stable, moving from 97bpm to 175bpm and back again on a continuous cycle for the duration of the piece. Again, lyrically it is focused on folk tales laced with horror.

The Unkindness of Ravens (6:17)

Makes use of my own version the French Cryptogram system for mapping letters of the alphabet to notes of a musical scale ('raven' was the starting point here). Explores the Hungarian minor scale, influenced by Bartok. There's also morse code used for encoding rhythmic elements later in the piece. Lyrically it takes inspiration from Nick Cave's *Murder Ballads* and is a narrative piece that makes use of references and nods to various Corvidae family birds and their presence in literature and myth (from Norse mythology to Poe's poem).

The Old Witch Comes (2:20)

Explores dissonance and a meter that adds a slight lop-sidedness in the verses due to the meter of 9/4. The B section harmony makes use of C Lydian #2 as lyrically it again draws upon folk stories and themes. Introduction uses a bowed acoustic guitar and some sound design, which came late into the composition thanks to a prompt from The Composition Engine.

The Bleeding Tree (4:46)

This piece makes use of quarter-tuned strings on the guitar and other microtones throughout to increase the sense of dissonance. The throat-singing in the intro, for example, is sung as a note halfway between G and G#. The guitar is tuned: D | A half flat | D | G half sharp | G # | D. Prompt suggested bridge form ABCBA. Scordatura was another prompt based on the seeded exemplar of Fernyhough's 'Kurze Schatten II' for guitar.

Sineater (2:47)

Title and lyrical themes based on Fiona MacLeod poetry and novel 'The Sin-Eater'. Musically focuses on dissonance and a meter with an uneven accent pattern, 9/8 in this case.

Composition Engine suggested some random chords from G# Persian scale and I reworked them into something that I liked. Berio's 'Black is the Colour' from *Folk Songs* (1964) provided the seeded exemplar for the intro viola theme.

Doctor Fell (2:40)

Tribal rhythmic piece that makes use of the hurdy-gurdy and tagelharpa as the basis for its texture as well as an acoustic guitar modified to have a passerelle bridge that allows it to sound a little like a Japanese Koto, based on prompt to explore the extended affordances of the instrument. Makes use of a nursery rhyme as the basis of its lyrical content.