Unlocking the unconventional: investigating the multifaceted role of the contemporary violinist with new perspectives on style, collaboration and innovation.

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A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD by Published Work

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Link to online folder with recordings:

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Abstract

Over the past twenty-five years, I have accumulated a significant body of internationally acclaimed work, in the form of performances, broadcasts and recordings of contemporary music featuring the violin. In this project, I focus on six of my CD recordings to illustrate how my unique playing style has been influential in the creation of new compositions and in the realisation of innovative interpretations of existing works.

I trace how I have forged my musical and technical approaches from a combination of influences ranging from baroque to Irish traditional music and how my contact with seminal figures such as Paul Zukofsky and John Tilbury has shaped my views on interpretation of contemporary music across a range of genres.

In my recording of Morton Feldman's *For John Cage*, I demonstrate how my use of a baroque bow brings a new sense of lightness and stillness to the violin music. My recording of Donnacha Dennehy's *Elastic Harmonic* demonstrates how application of the technical approaches to bowing and fingering I have developed in many performances of minimalist music, facilitates a highly vivid, colourful and original interpretation.

Intensive collaboration with composers, reflected in the works, *Opera* by Morgan Hayes, *Seven States of Rain* by Richard Causton, *thirty-nine pages* by Paul Whitty and *Some of Its Parts* by Jonty Harrison has led to the co-creation of innovative performance techniques which realises and brings to life some of their original ideas.

The substantive collaborative relationship I have developed with composer Michael Finnissy, has informed interpretations in recordings of three significant works: *Seterjentens fridag, Mississippi Hornpipes* and the *Violin Sonata.* In my discussion of these compositions, I demonstrate how the Irish traditional music influences in my style accentuates the folk-influence which underpins Finnissy's complex musical language.

Chapter One: Introduction

Approach to the body of work

Through a focused investigation, exploration and evaluation of seminal works on six of my recordings of contemporary music (the body of work), I will highlight the significance of these documents as essential primary source material for future generations of composers, performers and musicologists. Apart from Feldman, all are world premiere recordings prepared in consultation with the composers, who endorse these recordings as definitive interpretations of their works wherein I capture their creative intentions with accuracy and insight.

These recordings have all achieved national and international critical acclaim. This study is significant in bringing a rigorous approach to understanding the role of the violinist in the collaborative process with the composers and how this has influenced how they write for the violin in solo and ensemble settings.

Aims of the investigation

The project sets out to investigate the influence my unique playing style (as a violinist who specialises in contemporary music) has had in the creation of new repertoire and in the realisation of associated performance and recording projects.

I aim to show how I developed musical and performative traits which appeal to a large number of contemporary composers and which allow me to contribute meaningfully to collaborative creative decision making, bringing unique insights to my interpretation of new works.

I will also trace how my formative experiences in Irish traditional music and in period instrument performance practice inform the collaborative process with composers and demonstrate how my recordings reflect the collaborative decisions made in pursuit of what the composers regard as definitive interpretations.

Research questions

The following research questions were devised to guide the investigative process:

- What has been the impact of my artistic involvement in the creation of the repertoire and recordings under discussion?
- How has my sound, technical approach and musical personality influenced the collaborative process with the composer?
- How important is the workshop/rehearsal process to the creative decisions arrived at?
- How do the recordings present what may be regarded as definitive interpretations of the works under discussion?

Methodology

To interrogate these research questions, I developed a methodology based on critical reflection on:

- the evolution of my unique playing style in terms of influence and musical and technical development;
- working methods developed in collaboration with composers;
- personal experiences which have influenced compositional decisions;
- interpretation of composers' ideas;
- interpretative decisions taken during performance and recording.

I will illustrate how the discipline of my artistic, practice-led research as a violinist, playing contemporary music which places the performer as central to the exploration and development of repertoire, as well as performing and recording that repertoire, creates authenticity.[1]

The reflections consider music from the following composers on six key recordings on which I am featured:

- Morton Feldman *For John Cage*
  Darragh Morgan (Violin), John Tilbury (Piano)
  Diatribe Records DIACD025
  Recorded September 2018 City University, London
  Morton Feldman "For John Cage"
  © Copyright 1982 by Universal Edition (London) Ltd., London

- Donnacha Dennehy *Elastic Harmonic*
  Darragh Morgan (Violin), RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, Gavin Maloney Conductor
  NMC D133
  Live recording 30 January 2007 National Concert Hall, Dublin

- Morgan Hayes *Opera*
  Darragh Morgan (Violin), Mary Dullea (Piano)
  NMC D108
  Recorded December 2002 – March 2003 Gateway Studios, Kingston
  Morgan Hayes: Opera for Violin and Piano
  © Copyright 2004 Stainer & Bell Ltd, London, www.stainer.co.uk Used by permission

- Richard Causton *Seven States of Rain*
  Darragh Morgan (Violin), Mary Dullea (Piano)
  NMC D108
  Recorded December 2002 – March 2003 Gateway Studios, Kingston
  Seven States of Rain by Richard Causton © Oxford University Press 2003. All rights reserved

- Paul Whitty *thirty-nine pages*
  Darragh Morgan (Violin), Mary Dullea (Piano)
  Metier Records MSV28509
  Recorded August 2007 Old Granary, Suffolk

- Jonty Harrison *Some of its Parts*
  Darragh Morgan (Violin)
  Diatribe Records DIACD021
  Recorded December 2013 Elgar Concert Hall, University of Birmingham

- Michael Finnissy *Seterjentens fridag*, Mississippi Hornpipes, Violin Sonata*
  Darragh Morgan (Violin), Mary Dullea (Piano), Michael Finnissy* (Second Keyboard)
  Metier Records MSV28545
  Recorded June 2008 The Harty Room, Queens' University, Belfast
  Violin Sonata by Michael Finnissy © Oxford University Press 2009. All rights reserved.

[1] The perception of 'authentic performance practice' relates almost entirely to music from the 17th to the 19th centuries, and recreating how music would have been played and heard at that time. My 'authenticity', that underpinning element in the creative process, is **perceived in** organic realisations of the composers' thoughts through my performances and recordings of these works and is achieved as a result of the nature of our collaborative experiences.

Seterjentes Fridag by Michael Finnissy © Oxford University Press 2005. All rights reserved.

Contextual background: situating myself as performer-collaborator

How have I arrived at this position in my career where I am regarded as the creative catalyst for some of the most significant and influential recent works composed for solo violin, violin with electronics or violin and piano? As I will illustrate, the key for me has been the collaborative approaches cultivated to allow composers with whom I work to draw on aspects of my unique style formed from a variety of influences and to incorporate them in their compositions. I will further demonstrate how I then work together with composers to develop, elaborate and fine tune until there is mutual satisfaction with the creative output in terms of performance and recording.

Already as a 15-year-old violinist in my native city of Belfast, I was working closely with living composers, experiences which sparked my passion for contemporary music. I believe it is important for a musician to have an enquiring mindset, to challenge their thinking and negotiate the material they are presented with fresh ideas. From a performer's perspective, current studies focus on the interpretation and performance of new works.[2] Most commonly the violinist receives a new work, studies, interprets, performs and disseminates from a position many steps removed from the actual creative process of the composer.

I frequently reflect on whether my creative practice and intellectual prowess evolved primarily through the great art of the aural tradition in knowledge transfer, that heritage of learning and developing through the passing of ideas and musical anecdotes from senior musical figures including, for example, my piano chamber music partner John Tilbury who worked closely with Morton Feldman and from my musical encounters with violinist Paul Zukofsky for whom Feldman's *For John Cage* was written.

Additionally, I believe my formative experiences in period performance practice as a member of European Union Baroque Orchestra and later working closely with John Eliot Gardiner, the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and throughout 2004 as Director of Baroque 2000, South Africa's leading period performance ensemble, shaped my approach to the use of a baroque bow in new music.

The music of our time has such a broad stylistic range; to develop my own unique sonic palate, motivated by the artistic ideal of engaging creatively at the highest level of integrity, continuously renewing musical dialogues with living composers has demanded creative flexibility from me as the performer.

The concept of six degrees of separation does not exist in the music world; in fact, relationships and musical connections are even more interconnected than that. For example, in addition to the traditional Irish music experiences referred to above, my own musical lineage through my teacher Detlef Hahn is as follows; Hahn studied with the Italian virtuoso Aldo Ferraresi, who in turn was a disciple of the great Belgian violinist and composer Eugene Ysaÿe. Cesar Franck's Violin Sonata was written as a wedding present for Ysaÿe, who also premiered Chausson's *Poème* and Debussy's *String Quartet*. This idea of musical lineage is essential in understanding what makes up my own musical DNA. I can easily trace a musical connection from many composers with whom I have worked to studies with Schoenberg or Messiaen and quickly back to the mainstream 19th century European musical traditions.

My musical mentor Paul Zukofsky premiered works by Carter, Babbitt, Feldman, Cage and Glass and I, in turn, have gone on to collaborate with many of these composers. It is difficult to quantify the huge importance this matrix of relationships has had on the shaping of my

[2] See for example PhD theses by Dullea, M. (2011), Nicholls, S. (2010) and Rosman, C. (2021)

musical personality, both consciously and sub-consciously. In addition to these influences and experiences, my ability to confidently undertake 'executive' decision making in my interpretations has evolved significantly through creative collaborations with living composers. The process of collaborative development through a long workshop period is shown to be pivotal in shaping the creation of new works and informed interpretations for performance and recording.

Developing a performer's 'voice' and its influence upon the composer-performer relationship

I have been fortunate to work with a diverse range of composers who have been influenced by my 'sound' and been inspired by my musical 'voice'. I will demonstrate how my 'sound' can impact the direction and style of the composition and will critically examine my own creative practice in the continuous development of my technical facility and evolution of my understanding of the ergonomics of string playing. I believe there is a need for a study such as this, that examines the position of the violinist at the centre of the creative process from the outset. I discuss the rehearsal process, both with the composer and in my individual practice as a key function of this research study and interrogate the influence and effect of my artistic involvement in the creation of the new works under discussion.

I critically examine the wide variety of playing styles and techniques I have cultivated in my creative practice, focussing on how these have evolved in my playing over the course of time and how I have arrived at a position of definitive interpretations of new works through the creative decisions I have made. I will explore how this trajectory has evolved through my study of classical violin repertoire and particularly through my early experiences in Irish traditional music, examining how learning to play 'by ear' in traditional Irish music has influenced my approach to my playing style in contemporary music with examples from my work with composer Michael Finnissy who uses folk elements in his compositions. From a technical perspective I focus on how the range of bowing styles I have discovered through Irish traditional music are put to effective use in my creative practice in contemporary music. To illustrate my pursuit of authenticity and ownership in performance of new work, I document self-reflective case studies from my viewpoint as the performing creative practitioner, examining the impact of rehearsal process with a composer. I reveal details of my unique artistic collaboration with Michael Finnissy through documenting the co-creation of material and the recording of his Nordic-inspired folk work *Seterjerntens Fridag*.

Thesis structure and content

Following the Introduction, the five main chapters of this thesis provide reflection and analysis on specific recorded works. Chapter Two investigates how my practical knowledge and experience in using a baroque bow in period performance repertoire has helped cultivate a unique perspective on how I perform the violin works of Morton Feldman. I consider questions of weight, attack, bow speed and tactility, the honing of these techniques plus their connection with sound and timbre. I argue that application of these techniques uncovers particular sonic and interpretative meanings in Feldman's music. Chapter Three deals with the playing style I have developed in minimalist repertoire with key reference to Donnacha Dennehy's violin concerto, *Elastic Harmonic.* I consider the impact on the music of how I employ a range of bowing styles, the building of physical stamina and what I describe as '*controlled precision'*. Chapter Four explores four notable case studies that interrogate the nature of the musical relationships developed with four composers, Paul Whitty, Morgan Hayes, Richard Causton and Jonty Harrison and the impact of collaboration on the resultant works. Chapter Five reveals how my formative experiences learning and participating in Irish traditional music enhanced my understanding of the complex musical language of Michael Finnissy and my ability to interpret his music in an original way. Chapter Six concludes, presenting the main findings of the investigation and detailing the significance of the original contribution to knowledge made by this body of work.

Chapter Two: Importance of the baroque bow in Morton Feldman's *For John Cage*

In August 1992, I participated in the Menuhin Festival, Gstaad, Switzerland. It was the month John Cage died and I was intrigued to read Schoenberg's description of Cage in a New York Times article as an 'inventor' rather than a composer or a musical creative.[3] Unfortunately, I am slightly too young to have ever met John Cage. However, like his close friend, composer Morton Feldman, I feel through my work on their music that I know them both. Many years later whilst in New York performing at Carnegie Hall with London Sinfonietta I was delighted to look out of my hotel room on 7th Avenue to view a huge picture-poster of Feldman and Cage together for a forthcoming retrospective.

Developing my bow hold

From 1992-96 I studied as a violinist at Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Detlef Hahn who immediately introduced to me the idea that the left hand should not steal all our focus. He helped me to question how the bow arm interacts with the instrument and to develop a focus on how the bow is integrally connected to the sound.

I had a brief introduction to ideas of authentic performance practice in the summer of 1992, leading a performance of Monteverdi's *Beatus Vir* with St George's Choir and Orchestra as part of the City of Belfast Proms. This authentic playing style,[4] though seemingly at odds with some of my prior formal training, seemed to be an almost instantaneous natural fit. At Guildhall, my first educative experiences in performance practice were with Micaela Comberti, long time member with Simon Standage of the period instrument Salomon Quartet and one of the first champions in the UK of early music string performance aesthetics. Although my interaction with Mica was primarily reflective study and performance of solo string works of J.S. Bach along with stylistic performance concepts, she introduced to me deeper consideration of baroque dance forms, their choreography, gesture and tempi. These concepts were hugely beneficial to me in developing an organic approach to tempi, particularly in the dance movements of Bach's solo violin Partitas. Mica encouraged me to explore holding my bow further away from the heel (the frog/heel being the heaviest part of the bow) so I could experience more of the feeling and tactility involved of using an actual baroque bow.

Though I was yet to acquire a replica or actual baroque bow, I was invigorated by the touch and freedom this bow hold provided, excited by the lightness of feel facilitated by holding my modern violin bow further up the stick away from the frog. By not holding the bow in its modern playing position right at the heel, I created conflict with my conventional approach, where weight, contact point and bow distribution, were all key features of traditional bowing design and practice. By holding the bow further away from the heel and thus re-positioning and redistributing my perceptions of weight, balance and contact, I introduced greater potential for variation of dynamics, tone and colour. This bow grip afforded me the opportunity to ease into each bow stroke, each new articulation, a feeling of caressing or gently stroking the string rather than landing on it, where the point of contact between horse hair and metal string actually meet, in my thinking releasing the glowing natural beauty of violin sonorities. I was able to execute a smoother, more rounded and gentle landing angle on to the string with my

[3] A Kozinn, 'John Cage, 79, a Minimalist Enchanted With Sound, Dies', August 13th 1992
New York Times, P.1

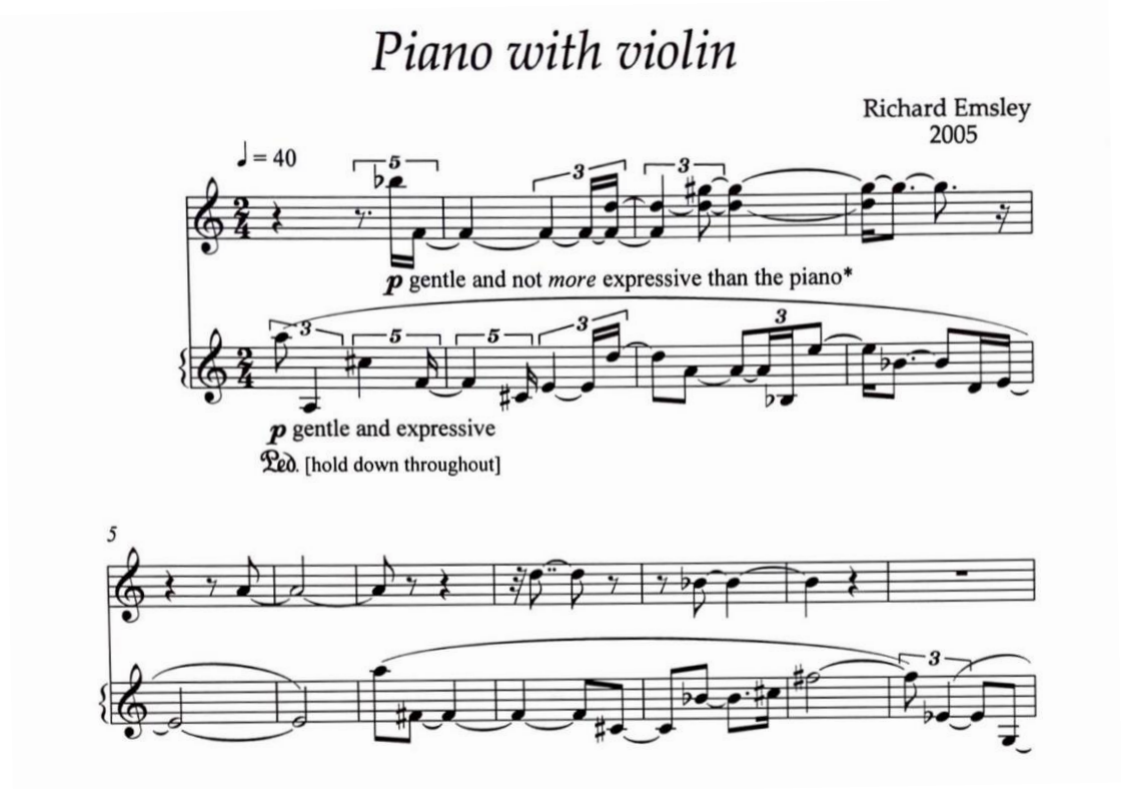
[4] Comprehensive and influential analysis of the theory and practice of "historical performance" can be seen in the work of Richard Taruskin, developed in numerous essays spanning more than a decade. See, for example, Taruskin's essay on authenticity in: Taruskin, R., 1995. Text and act: Essays on music and performance. Oxford University Press, USA.

bow hair, yet still be in complete control of the amount of weight (tenuto) needed to apply to the contact point.

I began experimenting using this bow hold with contemporary works that required the player to execute passages in a very quiet, still, almost fragile manner. The dynamic and timbral combinations of such works makes bow control extremely difficult and thus it made sense to explore a creative approach to address these timbral challenges. I decided to experiment with this bow hold for a complete recital I gave with pianist Mary Dullea at The Great Hall in Kings College London in 2005. Works included John Cage's *Eight Whiskus*[5], eight beautiful haiku fragments that require almost circular bowing to successfully achieve the subtle but extreme gradients of *sul tasto* and *sul ponticello* demanded by the composer. Cage is unusually ultra-precise in his indications of bow pressures for *flautando* to *marcato* playing. This particular work revealed opportunities to explore nuances in circular bowing that helped me develop a freer approach which ran contrary to the most traditionally conceived idea that bowing on a string instrument is accomplished only by a parallel to the bridge angle. This fresh alternative to a conventional bowing approach opened up new sound worlds, through an increased awareness of the how subtle and varied the musical outcomes could be by utilising the various parts of my bowing arm.

Another very quiet work I explored with this alternative bow hold and performed in this concert was Richard Emsley's *Piano with Violin.* In this relatively short contemplative work the composer specifically requests the violinist to be "*gentle and not more expressive than the piano…i.e., minimize devices such as vibrato and crescendo and instead aim to assimilate to the piano's sonority",* as shown in the example below.

Example 1[6]



[5] John Cage: *Eight Whiskus*, violin solos for Malcom Goldstein, 1985, Edition Peters.

[6] Page 1, Score, Richard Emsley, *Piano with violin*, 2005, Premiere by Darragh Morgan (Violin), Mary Dullea (Piano), The Great Hall, King's College London.
Emsley interestingly uses the same stave notation as Feldman's *For John Cage* with the piano part existing entirely on one stave beneath the violin part.

This idea of 'assimilating' or blending inside the piano's sonority was not new to me, as it fitted ideally with my own aesthetic interpretive viewpoint towards the work in the second half of this particular programme, Morton Feldman's *For John Cage,* in which I had long before decided to eschew all use of vibrato as an interpretative feature of the performance. The piece exists almost as a plateau of existential sound, *pianissimo* throughout with mostly still gestures. By abstaining from any use of vibrato I realised my vision for the types of nuances and timbral purity this piece requires. This vision was further enhanced by my particular bow hold and heavy practice mute, morphing the violin into a coloration within the pianistic sound world, creating the idea of conveying one overall tone colour in the listener's ear. Interestingly, my later duo partner in *For John Cage,* John Tilbury had this to add about vibrato, "From ancient China there is a description of a vibrato technique: the *ting-yin,* where the vacillating movement of the finger should be so subtle as to be hardly noticeable. Some handbooks say that one should not move the finger at all, but let timbre be influenced by the pulsation of the blood in the fingertips pressing the string down on the board a little more heavily than usual. Such extreme sensitivity of touch is of the essence in a performance of Feldman's music".[7]

This concert also featured Morton Feldman's *Spring of Chosroes* for violin and piano, completed in October 1977 and like much of Feldman's violin music, written for Paul Zukofsky, my former teacher. Feldman was fascinated by the symmetry and uniqueness of Persian tapestries and *Spring of Chosroes* is based around such a carpet, the 'spring carpet' woven with silk, gold, silver and rare stones, owned by Sassanian King *Chosroes II* of a dynasty that ruled the Persian Empire from AD 224-651. This image punctuates and grounds the work, which pinpoints beautiful jewels of sounds within harmonic textures, resonant timbres and a focus on the individual and collective qualities of this pair of instruments; a 'weave' of sounds, an involution and juxtaposition of, often subtly different threads and patterns of colour. Marked *ppp* throughout, it is a delicately fashioned work, an extremely quiet sonic tapestry, with patterns woven together, as in *For John Cage*, into the very fabric of the piece. It is relatively short, around 12 minutes in duration, by comparison with *For John Cage*. It employs a type of mean tone intonation where, for example, a Db is 22 cents higher than C#, and a B# is 22 cents lower than a C. This is a tuning system that I also applied to the notational variants in *For John Cage*, as discussed below.

Not only did each of these works inhabit a dynamic range of *piano* and below, but the quality of timbre required an intimacy of sonority, almost demanding the listener to feel drawn onto the actual stage for a proximity of aural connection to the performer. Cornelius Cardew echoes this sentiment – "soft because softness is compelling…...our ears must strain to catch the music; they must become more sensitive before they perceive the world of sound in which Feldman's music takes place."[8]

By holding my bow in this playing position, it felt physically lighter and thus softer at the first moment of contact between bow and string, creating a smoothness of articulation. Following this point of contact, I did not feel constricted by the lack of weight, inhibiting pronating my right arm into the string in order to produce a sustained projecting bowing style which is the norm in the majority of nineteenth century violin repertoire. My new lighter playing style could be thought of as similar to the feeling of the right arm holding a bow but dancing on a very thin tightrope knowing that the safety net is literally right beneath you, thus never in danger but feeling comfortable and relaxed whilst executing this subtle refined action.

Alongside this bow hold, I discovered I was able to flow through the string more easily with a faster bow stroke due to the bow's lightness. These elements of freedom and flexibility in bow speed and control hugely increased palette of timbral colour in approach to *flautando* (flute

[7] J. Tilbury, 'On Playing Feldman', https://www.cnvill.net/mftilb.htm Date accessed 11th December 2022.
[8] Ibid.

like, almost blowing of the bow hair) sonorities.[9] I found this discovery hugely rewarding as the results it uncovered were richly varied in timbre and yet I was still achieving these essentially with a 'modern' violin bow.

By experimenting with position of bow contact point between the bridge, *sul pont* and finger board, *sul tasto*, rotation of stick directed by my right-hand fingers, gently turning the angle of the wood towards and away from the bridge, parallel to my eye line, I was able to consider the variation in tonal and dynamic qualities in accordance with how much horsehair I was using to make contact with the string. Pressure of attack and where in the bow I touched the string also created further timbral variations and these permutations were being executed in the context of very soft dynamic gradients. Feldman often described to his performers that he was looking for the sounds to appear "source less…. tinting the air", and John Tilbury speaks of that "precious quality of transience…. free but not arbitrary, elusive but compelling".[10]

These subtle nuances were enlightened during my preparation of Morton Feldman's *Spring of Chosroes* for this performance at King's College London. The work requires the use of a practice mute, Feldman suggests the performer to use a leather practice mute, probably at the suggestion of the dedicatee violinist Paul Zukofsky. In the early 1980s practice mutes were generally still thought of as large, often cumbersome metal objects, densely heavy and potentially damaging to a violin bridge. Apart from composers such as Takemitsu (who specifically requests the colour of metal practice mutes) string playing has evolved to now almost exclusively using plastic practice mutes. With recent scientific developments, these are light, secure, easy and quiet to use, providing flexibility to facilitate the levels of subtlety required by the player. This can range from fully clamped down over the bridge, creating a deeply dark muffled tone, to lifted higher into a position more like sitting on top of the bridge, which though still having a *'con-sordino'* muted sound, is a more open natural violin tone but with a veiled quality. Combining the innovation of holding a modern violin bow in the manner described and utilising a plastic practice mute, I was able to significantly expand the range of tonal qualities at my disposal.

The challenges of performing works of extended duration

Pianist, Mary Dullea and I had already experienced the intensity of performing a work of extended listening duration in the form of Chris Newman's *Compassion* (October Gallery, London, 2003). However, no musician can mentally and physically prepare for what the experience will be like to perform for the first time a 75-minute piece of chamber music like Feldman's *For John Cage*, which grows organically across its extended structure and is played almost *pianissimo* throughout. In addition to battling exhaustive physical fatigue, huge mental focus is required for constant alertness to both concentrate and focus on the smallest of transformative nuances required to perform such material full of repeated patterns.

Another challenge is the intense emotional engagement required to translate material from the score to the listener's ear. All this, presented by just two musicians either standing or sitting very still on a stage, in empathy with each other's artistic engagement in the process, though embracing its length can be an incredibly challenging artistic experience. Of course, orchestral players will have experienced the feeling of ecstatic musical rapture in the epic symphonic music of Mahler, Bruckner and Shostakovich but it is almost impossible to truly prepare for the challenges in exposed chamber music of such refined intimacy of architecture and repose that Feldman presents.

[9] 'Using a high-arched Baroque bow, Morgan drew out Feldman's most exiguous threads of argument as if with confident charcoal strokes on a bare canvas'. P.Quantrill, 'Darragh Morgan (violin) John Tilbury (piano) Kings Place, 25 April 2018', *The Strad,* July 2018, Vol. 129 No. 1539, pp. 84-85.

[10] J. Tilbury, 'On Playing Feldman', https://www.cnvill.net/mftilb.htm Date accessed 11th December 2022.

That King's College concert, after a first half of shorter quiet pieces, afforded me my first public opportunity to perform this work of such an extended duration, heavily muted and with my recently developed, further away from the heel, bow hold. A eureka breakthrough moment in my confidence in the compatibility of these two approaches, bow hold and mute, came during our performance of Feldman's *For John Cage* in this concert. The music making and execution of material felt entirely sincere and organic. No physical issues such as excess stress or muscular tension were encountered, particularly satisfying given the intimate and exposed nature of the music presented. Most importantly I knew even before we reached the final fermata of *For John Cage* (and heard the incredibly enthusiastic audience applause), that I had uncovered something uniquely ethereal, fragile, almost otherworldly within my timbral palette on violin that I could now convincingly take forward and further develop.

The influence of baroque performance practice

Throughout 1999, I performed as the first ever Irish member of the European Union Baroque Orchestra (EUBO), a fantastic initiative for young musicians setting out on professional careers specialising in authentic period performance practice. The philosophy of the ensemble is to study and present repertoire which requires careful preparation and research, an approach not often afforded the required time in professional musical contexts. I had already become an enthusiast of this playing style and sought out this opportunity as an educative experience to become better informed in the stylistic performance practice of music from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to achieve the best playing results using an actual baroque bow and gut stringed violin, playing at a lower concert pitch than I had been previously used to (A415 as opposed to A440). During tours that year to Croatia, Bosnia, Malta and France performing imaginative programmes, from Muffat to Biber, Roman to Telemann with inspired directing from leading period instrument authorities, Lars Ulrik Mortensen and Roy Goodman, I was introduced to new methods and concepts of performance that I had not previously been aware of.

Some of these ideas would now be considered part of the period performance 'rule book'; for example, down-bow retakes as a rule on notes/beats of more importance and stress, and the fascinating *inégale* bowing where you play the strong down-bow notes slightly longer than the up bows that follow, even if all the notes are of similar value. These constructs felt natural, almost intuitively already known to me. Now, without the restrictions of my longer, heavier, fuller horse-haired modern bow, my right arm and hand felt free, providing more fluidity and flexibility in how I could approach and navigate the string, the type of articulations I could achieve and more extreme colours than I could generate with my modern bow, even with my recently discovered bow hold. I realised that with a baroque bow, lightness of weight and the relaxed suppleness of how I used my right-hand finger joints to land on the string, I could now pursue a unique style of playing with a wide range of sonorities that could be applied across much of the slow, quiet twentieth and twenty-first century repertoire I perform. I only bought an actual baroque bow in 2005, however, in the interim, it seems that this individual playing style naturally evolved and became one of my defining traits.

The bow pressure I used with a baroque bow complemented my systematic approach to performing artificial harmonics in this transparent modern repertoire. I quickly discovered in touch fourth harmonics that, by having my left-hand first finger very round firmly pressed arched at 90 degrees on the fingerboard and my left-hand fourth finger placed very lightly touching the string at an interval of a fourth higher, I could with a generous amount of bow pressure on the baroque bow execute harmonics of crystal-clear, razor-sharp tonal centre. This reliability of result meant that I immediately created a wider range of timbral approaches to playing of harmonics, opening up new gradations of dynamic variation and colour. Often the issue for string players is trying to simply achieve a pure clear harmonic in the first instance but I realised I had already bypassed this issue and could experiment with a wider range of sonorities using harmonics with this technical approach.

Baroque performance practice in Feldman

In 2006, the new Artistic Director of Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, Graham McKenzie, invited me as a member of The Smith Quartet with pianist John Tilbury to perform Morton Feldman's complete late works for piano and strings over a period of ten concerts, which went on to be shortlisted for a Royal Philharmonic Society Award. We divided the repertoire equally amongst the two violinists of the quartet; my colleague Ian Humphries undertook all the shorter works for violin and piano and I (as I had previously performed it with Mary Dullea) took on *For John Cage,* this time with renowned Feldman exponent and all-round experimental music guru, John Tilbury at the piano. John and I had previously met when we both performed at the book launch of *Morton Feldman Says* edited by Chris Villars at Conway Hall, London.[11] I was excited to meet and work with John on this project as I already admired his landmark recording of Cage's *Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano*, and respected his status within the new music fraternity and his long-term close composer associations within the experimental music community. At our first meeting in John's rehearsal studio at the rear of his beautiful home in Deal, Kent, I was struck by John's sensitive pianistic touch. There seemed to be a velvet quality to his sound, so apparent on his beloved early twentieth century reconditioned Steinway piano, and the more we worked together I noticed how he seemed to exhale before every new gesture so his relaxed posture and free physicality created a comfortable sonic carpet on which my violin sound could sit.

One of the many interesting musical facets of Feldman's *For John Cage* is its sparse notation. The piano part exists entirely on one stave below the violin line and both instruments play from the same score throughout the work's entirety. As the musical landscape gently evolves, this process of both players reading of the same score (as opposed to the normal separate violin part) helps cultivate a meditative atmosphere. As you slowly turn pages together in this work, where one's performance metabolism is slowed down, it is comforting and reassuring to know your colleague is existing entirely within the same visual reference. I am reminded of Busoni's statement "What the composer's inspiration necessarily loses through notation; his interpreter should restore by his own",[12] something we took very much to heart.

Our performance at Huddersfield of *For John Cage* was quite an event. Not only was it our first Feldman programme of the festival but it was scheduled to begin at 11pm within the confines of St Paul's Hall, Huddersfield which has witnessed so many historic musical events and hosted legendary personalities within the contemporary classical music world. As footnote to all of this; as we left the venue around 1am post-concert, we realised there had been a huge car crash just outside the hall but in our transfixed performance state we had not even noticed this! Although I have gone on to perform this work with John throughout Europe, this first airing together will forever be favourably etched in my musical memories. Playing *For John Cage* requires a zen like state:[13] '*it's a little bit like one's metabolism slowing down or heart rate slowing down to just the edge of it still working, around about 40bpm'.*[14] St Paul's Hall helped us create this with its magical atmosphere helping us nuance our colours and articulations, combined on this occasion with the audience's almost palpable active deep listening experience.

The Smith Quartet had previously performed Feldman's epic five-and-a-half hour *Second String Quartet* and for our Huddersfield project I suggested we experiment with an approach using baroque bows. The *sotto voce* hairpin effect, rising and falling and Feldman's wish that every gesture should dissipate naturally are demands for the string instruments in almost all of his late music of extreme duration for piano and strings. This is similar to what we now deem

[11] Chris Villars ed., *Morton Feldman Says – Selected Interviews and Lectures 1964-1987,* 2008, Hyphen Press, London.
[12] F. Busoni, *A New Esthetic of Music*, 1911, G. Schirmer, New York, p. 16.
[13] 'a listening experience so like that of a meditation', P. Driver, 'magnificent Morton', *Sunday Times,* 26th November 2006.
[14] Darragh Morgan, Interview for *Pursuit of Beauty, Slow Art,* BBC Radio 4, first broadcast 7th June 2018.

to be natural swells in 'period performance' style playing of baroque eighteenth century repertoire. This ethereal *sotto voce* tone can be achieved with a higher degree of purity by using a baroque bow as they are lighter and shorter in length.[15] For the physical tactility of my right arm and hand, the curvature of these bows seemed an ideal and natural option for me to help convey the desired articulation and dissipation that occurs on every gesture in *For John Cage* and Feldman's other late piano and string works, helping evoke the magical still inner world of whispered secrets he creates in this late musical language. Of this series of Feldman performances Andrew Clements commented in The Guardian, "you could have heard a pin drop in the packed hall, as the audience was caught in its extraordinarily rarefied world".[16] These thoughts were unusually similarly echoed by Ivan Hewitt in The Daily Telegraph, "We all sat entranced, while Feldman's delicate skein of patterned chords unwound, revealing little by little a wonderfully subtle form"[17] and was further reflected in Tempo's criticism of the whole festival, "hushed and timeless…. imposing structures of translucent delicacy can cast a powerful spell in sympathetic hand…primordial stasis…. inducing a state of almost Zen-like meditation". [18]

Some years later in a pre-concert interview in the Austrian Tyrol when asked about my sound and approach using a baroque bow, John Tilbury enthused that he was so won over by this concept that he couldn't understand how other violinists had not yet taken up this playing approach and style for this type of repertoire.

Recalling John's thoughts in the context of this project, I sent him the following questions to which I received the eloquent responses which follow: [19]

DM:

1. I know you were already familiar with and had performed *For John Cage* before we worked on it together. Was there anything that struck you about my approach to timbre and sound in the violin part, and its relationship to the music of the piano writing?
2. What is the most interesting aspect for you in performing this work of epic duration sharing the stage with only one other performer?
3. Could you comment on Feldman's remarks on *For John Cage* "I had a very unique idea about a piano and violin piece, that they're both in the same space, no business of this one here that one there at all, of course it happens, but it's like one instrument in the same space, just a little echo of sorts. Very difficult thing to do"?
4. Do you think that we create an on-stage collaboration or are two performers working side by side? If a collaboration, what are the hallmarks in terms of processes and results?
5. What do you think is the significance of us working our way through this material together now for over a period of 15 years?
6. Have you any other observations on my playing of Feldman?

JT:

> "*Now, Darragh no longer just plays his part; he plays the score. He uses the piano resonances, dovetailing his violin part into the resonance of the piano, for example, creating a Utopian Feldmanesque sound. His softness has a remarkable, compelling quality, an ineffable beauty, which encourages attentiveness,*

[15] 'Darragh Morgan used a baroque bow which facilitated some magically feathered harmonics', P. Driver, 'magnificent Morton', *Sunday Times*, 26th November 2006.
[16] A. Clements, 'Smith Quartet/Tilbury St. Paul's Hall, Huddersfield', *The Guardian,* 22nd November 2006.
[17] I. Hewett, 'Pain and pleasure as noise collides with music', *The Daily Telegraph*, 22nd November 2006.
[18] P. Conway, 'Huddersfield: Contemporary Music Festival, 2006', *TEMPO,* April 2007, Vol. 61 No. 240, pp. 53-54.

[19] Interview with John Tilbury via email June 2021.

alertness, a quasi-transcendental listening. A softness which enhances the consciousness, for example, of the idiosyncrasies of the instrument and the listener becomes aware that the dynamic quality within softness creates an extraordinary variety. Darragh keeps his ears 'fantastically adrift'. Alert to the surroundings and open to the possibility of spontaneous action. With Darragh one feels a closeness to his instrument, an 'at-oneness' embodied in a radical commitment to the physical and essentially sensual qualities of performance of Feldman's music. Over the years Darragh has learnt that it is a misconception to attempt to predetermine and structure his interpretation of Feldman's music, for it unfolds organically, responding to the idiosyncrasies of the instrument, the shape and acoustic of the room, the general ambience. All are active components in the music-making. The music takes on a quasi-autonomous nature, as if the musician is 'tracking' rather than consciously, i.e., 'professionally', producing the sound; he steers a hazardous course in which, to a significant degree, phrasing, dynamics and rhythmic profile are 'situational'. I also think that his attitude towards 'pulse' has matured. Feldman prescribes a pulse but musicians should count like human beings, not like metronomes. A slavish adherence to pulse, tempting though it may seem, has to be jettisoned. The pulse should be just within reach, or just beyond reach of the music. The music floats above and beyond the pulse, we can feel it, and acknowledge its presence, indeed we need it, but it may not rule us." Feldman's music is about human vulnerability and fragility; that, paradoxically, is its strength. Perhaps it is the kinship of Feldman's music with nature which is able to generate deeply-felt responses in people. Significantly, Feldman wouldn't talk about compositional reality; in fact, he said there was no such thing; he preferred to talk about acoustical reality. Over the years, as one who has been privileged to share the platform with him, I feel Darragh Morgan has grasped this reality, which is why his impeccable playing of Feldman's music has become a benchmark."

The influence of Paul Zukofsky on my approach to contemporary music

My introduction to Paul Zukofsky was almost in parallel to my own uncovering of an ecology of baroque performance practice approaches with the bow and how these would benefit my evolution of a playing style suited to the music of Morton Feldman and other similar quiet music. As I stare at Feldman scores in my music studio and begin to muse about Paul Zukofsky, it's hard not to overestimate the impact of meeting him and his profound influence and effect on my artistic aspirations and musical trajectory as a young violinist entering the music world in the mid-1990s.

I first met Zukofsky in 1995 when he was invited as guest director of the Britten-Pears School for Advanced Musical Studies at Snape Maltings, Suffolk for their Contemporary Performance Course. Amongst all the music we studied and worked on intensely was Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony No 1.*[20] I was in awe of his violin virtuosity. "Paul is quicker than anybody I've ever collaborated with. He can read a fresh score, a piece he has not seen before, note-perfect the first time, regardless of what period the music is". [21] I had already become absorbed by many of his fantastic recordings, particularly Elliot Carter's *Duo,* but I was also attracted to his intellect, his huge network of musical and literary connections. The relevance of these threads had huge influence both consciously and sub-consciously in shaping my artistic personality.

What struck me most musically about Zukofsky was his incredible ear for detail. I have only experienced this acute level of aural accuracy and detail with a handful of musicians; Oliver

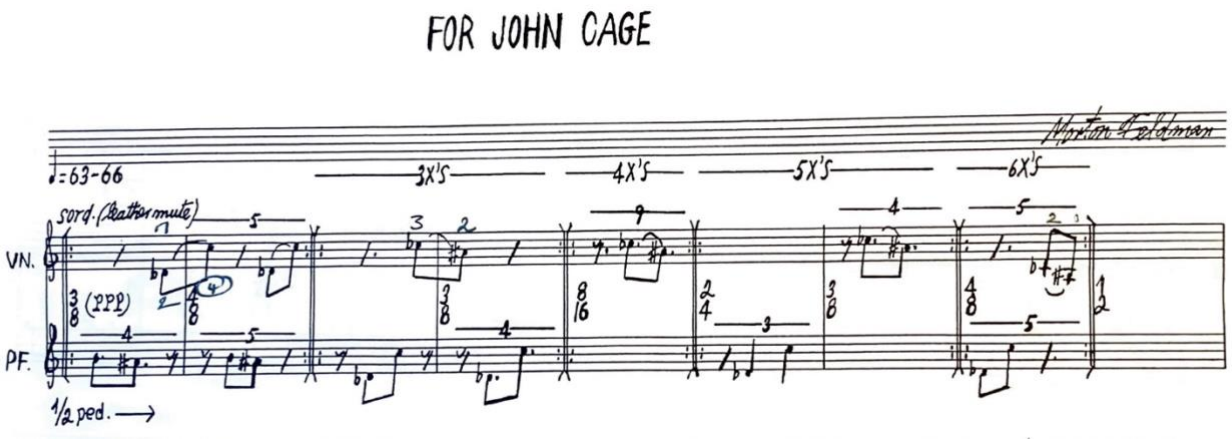
[20] Zukofsky was at that time Director of the Schoenberg Institute at U.S.C and involved in a protracted legal battle with the Schoenberg Estate.

[21] Attested by Zukofsky's duo partner Gilbert Kalish in R. Kostelanetz, 'Paul Zukofsky (1969)', *On Innovative Musicians,* 1989, Limelight Editions New York, p. 117.

Knussen, Heinz Holliger and probably most famously Pierre Boulez. Intonation was of huge importance to Zukofsky,[22] he described Feldman's music as putting a 'microscope to intonation and timbre'.[23] It was a subject we communicated lots on by fax, with particular regard to the music of Morton Feldman. In our work at Snape on Schoenberg's *Chamber Symphony No 1,* I remember us initially spending five days on rehearsals, slowly tuning chords of this work purely, one by one. His ultra-dry sense of humour combined with an uncompromising attitude to musical and artistic excellence appealed to my idealistic younger self. Similar to my own family background, he was the son of the existentialist poet Louis Zukofsky and I think this played a role in our developing friendship.[24] Zukofsky had premiered music by a whole range of composers of whom I was a fan in the early 1990s, some of whom including Philip Glass and Charles Wuorinen, I would go onto work with. Impressive premieres Paul gave included George Crumb *Four Nocturnes,* Philip Glass Violin Concerto No 1, Morton Feldman's *Spring of Chosroes, For John Cage* and *Violin and Orchestra,* in addition to music by Milton Babbitt and John Cage. In particular, the fact that Paul had premiered Feldman's *For John Cage* and his connection to Feldman's art form having been a 'creative associate' at the Center of the Creative and Performing Arts, SUNY, Buffalo, (where later in 1977 Feldman also lured John Tilbury as a "creative associate"), had a profound effect on me. I learnt so much from Zukofsky about Feldman's use of mean tone intonation and the obvious impact of this on the expressivity in his string writing. In correspondence with Zukofsky, he outlined his approach to interpreting Feldman's enharmonic notation, stating that it was to approximate mean tone and that in his reading, for example, Db should sound 22 cents higher than C# and B# should sound 22 cents lower than C natural.[25]

My musical encounters with him and in turn his relationship with Feldman hugely influenced my approach to these finer subtleties of expressive intonation; for example, decisions of which string and in which position I chose to play repeated passages in *For John Cage*, not only for musical variety but for the timbral differences that natural harmonics and stopped harmonics create on different strings in different positions.
Examples of mean tone intonation I discovered and considered for use in *For John Cage* are shown in Examples 2-4 below:

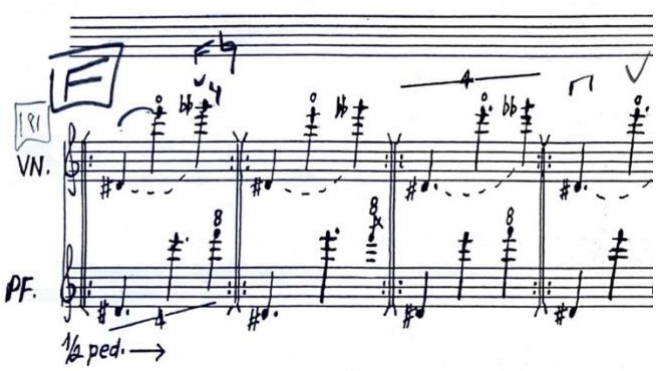
Example 2[26] (Audio Track 1, 0.00-1.12)



[22] Ivan Galamian 'He has one of the finest intonations I have ever known' in R. Kostelanetz, 'Paul Zukofsky (1969)', *On Innovative Musicians,* 1989, Limelight Editions New York, p. 117.
[23] Liner Notes, *Morton Feldman: For John Cage,* Zukofsky/Schroeder, CP2101, 1990 © Musical Observations, Inc.
[24] My father is Irish poet Tom Morgan.
[25] From Fax message between Paul Zukofsky and Darragh Morgan May 1998: Subject: Spring of Chosroes Question from Darragh 'Around 369-379, (for example) what does the enharmonic notation imply? Also 334??' Answer from Paul 'Sort of "mean tone" system, most important Db higher than C#; B# lower than C natural; difference = 22cents'.
[26] Page 1, Line 1, Score, Morton Feldman, *For John Cage.*

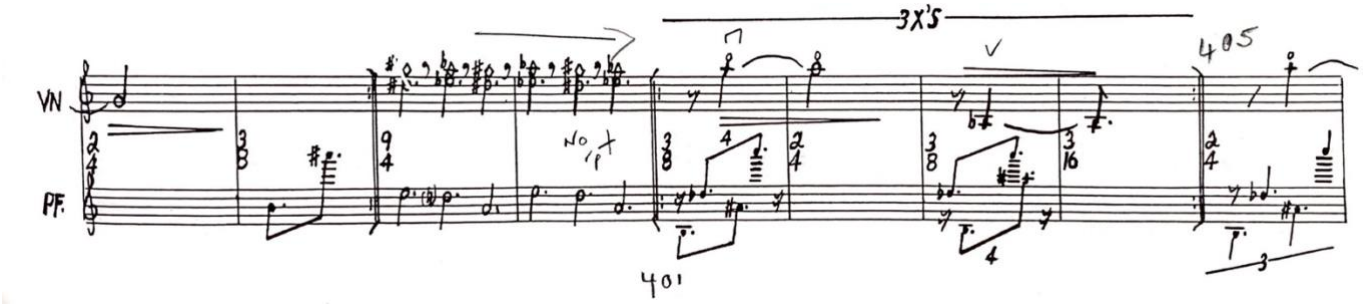
This shows the piano in bars 1 and 2 playing B-A# and the violin in bars 3 and 4 playing Cb-A#. I create tension in this initial exchange between the two instruments by purposely raising the Cb by the requisite 22 cents to approximate mean tone; these tiny variations and irregularities appear throughout *For John Cage.*

Example 3[27] (Audio Track 1, 16.27-16.46)



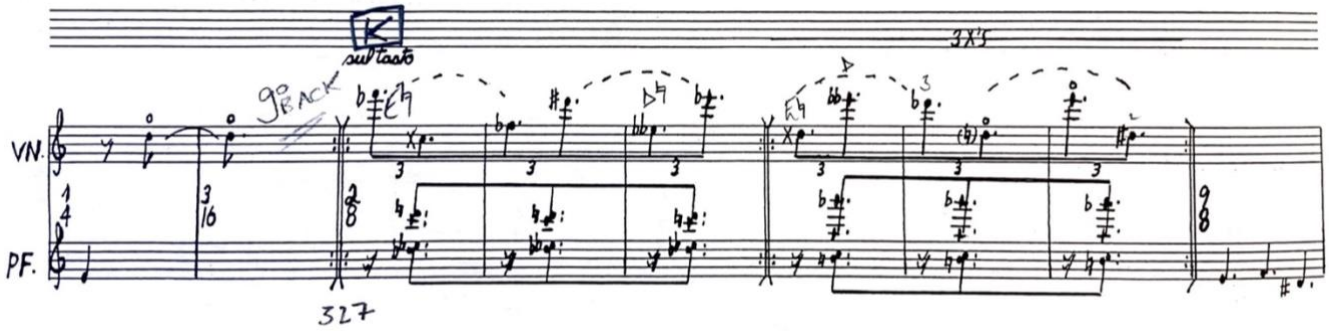
At bar 181 (pencilled Letter F) the violin is notated D#, E, Gbb, whereas the piano plays D#, E F; again, I tend towards a 22 cents higher Gbb in my execution of this note.

Example 4[28] (Audio Track 1, 32.42-33.21)



In the third bar of Example 4 in the violin part, the stopped harmonics D#-G# and Eb-Ab are ostensibly the same dyads but with a pure intonation approach, I sharpen the Eb-Ab harmonic providing colour and tension.

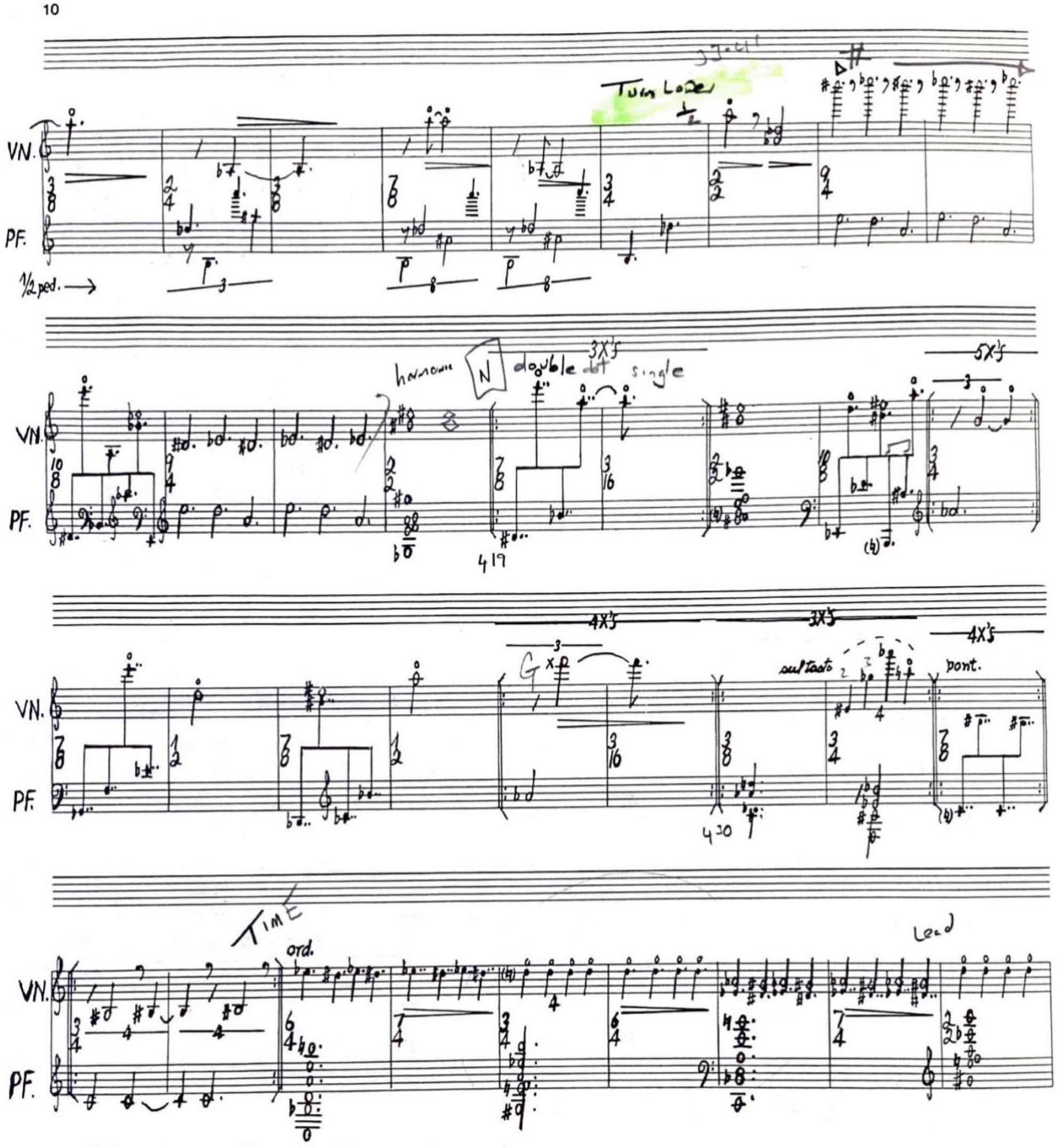
Example 5[29] (Audio Track 1, 28.50-29.17)



[27] Page 5, Line 1, Score, Morton Feldman, *For John Cage.*
[28] Page 9, Final Line, Score, Morton Feldman, *For John Cage.*
[29] Page 8, Line 2, Score, Morton Feldman, *For John Cage.*

At letter K, marked in pencil in the score, essentially the only pitches are E, D, D# and Db. However, when set in different inversions or played as natural harmonics as opposed to stopped notes, my interpretation of the enharmonic notation creates different artistic results.

Example 6[30] (Audio Track 1, 33.21-37.41)



In the 9/4 bar (three bars before pencilled letter N), for the D# to Eb I choose a fingering with all the D#s on string III and all Ebs on string IV to help define their subtle differences.

[30] Page 10, Lines 1-4, Score, Morton Feldman, *For John Cage.*

In the 3/4 bar (two bars after the pencil marking 'Time'), I finger the Ds as natural harmonics on string III and in the following bar with the marked decay I choose to finger the longer Ds again as natural harmonics this time on the more mellifluous string IV.

This process of always fingering passages and patterns in the same way became almost instinctive over the course of repeat performances, with many of the choices resulting from my increasing awareness of the sound world I wished to create. In addition to highlighting timbral differences, I wanted the listener to have an enhanced experience of the harmonic relationships, re-iteration or inversion Feldman is thinking of in the piano writing at any given point, creating varied auditory reactions to confound the expectations of the listener, which is important in music so full of extended repeated patterns and gestures.

Zukofsky's intellect and rigour made me consider intently not only my relationship historically through him directly to Feldman, but also my own responsibility in where I was taking this music as one of the next generation of performers. Zukofsky's uncompromising approach to music making, which on occasion could create extreme frustration to all of those around him, was part of his genius. For example, I know the notoriously difficult John Cage *Freeman Etudes* Books 1 and 2 are annotated with such precise performance instructions and requirements that it is almost impossible for a violinist of lesser skills than Zukofsky to realise. Part of this genius was his lack of regular violin practice.[31] On occasion he did demonstrate idiomatic violin passages, taking my instrument and playing something in front of the whole Britten-Pears Orchestra. He recommended some études I might consider looking at to polish certain technical aspects of my playing, but our relationship was much more personal and artistic than teacher and student. His recording of *For John Cage* in some ways couldn't be more different to mine; the incredible closeness of the microphones picking up much of his contorted heavy breathing, the looseness of his bow hair creating a sound melding wood and horsehair all makes for a chilling listening experience that whilst enthralling me, I felt that Feldman's string music should have a more ethereal tonal quality than this.

The fundamental difference in our approach to performing *For John Cage* relates to tone colours; in my own recording the microphones are also placed reasonably close to the violin but there is a very different quality of tonal purity in the violin sound, created through lightness of articulation. I create my expressive sonorities through stillness in my tonal palette combined with a bowing approach that creates the auditory feel of a velvet curtained resonance. I have uncovered through my wealth of experience in this performance style a world of sounds so timid, delicate and other worldly that I think Feldman would have appreciated. In my Feldman interpretations, I aim to make the music exhale naturally through each *sotto voce* bow stroke and hold on to the intimacy I am trying to achieve.

Paul Zukofsky's final email exchange with me in August 2016 began, for him, surprisingly positively; 'Good to hear from you' and finished unexpectedly positively with 'Be well' (instead of his preferred sign off, 'Grumpily'), as if he had a hidden message about what the future held for him.[32]

Like many of Ivan Galamian's violin prodigies, (Perlman and Zukerman included) Zukofsky had the most wonderful technical physical set up. His bow arm created a crystal-clear purity of tone on long notes. I observed how he achieved this using exactly the right amount of bow weight, bow hair, contact point and angle/distance between the bridge and finger board. This clarity of tone is something I have always sought to try and emulate in my own playing.

[31] Paul Zukofsky 'I almost never practice … I prefer to look at a score without a violin in hand, and I won't work at anything unless it looks technically hard.' In R. Kostelanetz, 'Paul Zukofsky (1969)', *On Innovative Musicians,* 1989, Limelight Editions New York, p. 109.
[32] Paul Zukofsky died of Non-Hodgkinson Lymphoma in Hong Kong, 6 June 2017.

Chapter summary

This chapter has provided important contextual information on how I have developed key aspects of my playing style, including my bow-hold, and how I approach muting and tonal variation, particularly in 'quiet' music of extended duration such as Feldman's *For John Cage*. Further insights have been provided to illustrate the influence of my experience of baroque performance practice and of my relationship with Paul Zukofsky on my Feldman interpretations including readings of mean tone notation.

Chapter Three: Approach to performance of minimalist repertoire with a focus on Donnacha Dennehy's *Elastic Harmonic*

My introduction to performing minimalist music was in 1997, when I gave one of the earliest UK performances of John Adams' *Road Movies* for violin and piano. When preparing this work, I quickly discovered that I needed to apply a very focused, contained and almost non-expressive style to my string technique which I describe as 'controlled precision', in order to achieve the most successful technical and musical results.[33] In minimalist string writing, patterns may appear to be very similar, yet they are, in fact changing slightly all the time. To achieve a high success rate in scores of this nature, in terms of accuracy as well as in the technical and musical results, with this 'controlled precision', I needed to develop a particular type of muscle memory to programme into my subconscious which allowed me to instantly recall each of the subtle shifts that can occur in the passage work. This particularly applies to the demands of the constant changes of left-hand shape, requiring a tailored approach to practice and preparation beyond that cultivated and fine-tuned in the standard lexicon of violin fingerings, scales and arpeggios which is built on the idiomatic ease of the intervals of thirds, fourths and sixths. I elaborated on this in a 2016 interview in *The Strad* magazine:

> *"As with anything in life it's about learning through experience. Take the left hand in Adams' Road Movies for violin and piano, from 1995. There are a lot of changing patterns. You rarely stay in the same octave or in the same hand shape constantly so you really have to build up familiarity in the left hand. Once you've got that secured you can start to become a little bit more confident with the music and impart your own style. You can take a little bit of time here or push a little bit there, or add a little accent that works with the style of the music...* "[34]

The insights and knowledge gleaned from my connection to Paul Zukofsky (see Chapter 2), an early collaborator of minimalist composers Steve Reich and Philip Glass, helped cultivate my individual playing style for this repertoire. My time as a member of The Smith Quartet from 2006 to 2011 further enhanced my perspective on bowing styles, in particular, articulations in *détaché* and *martelé*, which regularly feature in our performances and recordings of Reich's *Different Trains*. The Smith Quartet is particularly renowned for their work with Reich and Glass. Working with the group on this repertoire allowed me to work on building stamina through playing lengthy works of a repetitive minimalist nature and most significantly in this context, on my bow stroke. It became clear to me that a *détaché* stroke is one that is essential and used more often, with heavy *martelé* being used more specifically for pointing out features which led me to focus on evenness of stroke and timbre between up and down bows. Of course, any school of violin playing or technical method would demand that awareness and development of evenness of bowing but the fine calibration of bowing within this demanding musical aesthetic was an intensely focused process.

> *"When you're playing a piece such as Different Trains, détaché bowing is often called for. You're actually playing on the string so you need to create this absolute evenness of stroke, whether you're on a down or an up bow. Another versatile bow stroke that comes up a lot in Different Trains is martelé, and there are long passages when you're actually using a similar bow stroke nearly all the way through, despite all the tempo and dynamic shifts."*[35]

From 1999-2002 I was a member of *Icebreaker*, a new music ensemble influenced by the music of Dutch composer Louis Andriessen and the New York based *Bang on a Can* collective

[33] P. ap Siôn, 'Minimalism and Strings', *The Strad*, November 2016, p. 40. Vol 127 No.1519.
[34] Ibid.
[35] P. ap Siôn, 'Minimalism and Strings', *The Strad*, November 2016, p. 34. Vol 127 No.1519.

of composers. A seminal experience for me was learning, rehearsing and performing *Trance 1,* from Michael Gordon's work *Trance* (1995). This had a profound impact on cultivating my own style and perspective in performing music that appeared on paper as straight forward and incredibly similar in its repetitions. I quickly discovered this was not the case, with constant subtle rhythmic shifts reshaping the musical line. In this section I play only two consecutive notes alternating on one string, a tone from G to F, with constantly shifting rhythmic patterns but needing to stay rigidly in tempo (within the beat) and not disturb counter rhythms occurring simultaneously in other parts of the ensemble. I developed a deliberately anti-expressive string style to create a sonic tonal palette based on clarity and control which is free from traditional expressive, nineteenth century string playing traits such as use of *portamento*, *sotto voce* and other features of the over-romanticised playing style that can still inhabit modern string technique. I achieved this tone by using rigid, identical bowing, in terms of speed, weight and length, playing in the middle of the bow, without any bulging. I play into the string with a tauter forearm to create an evenness of stroke and thus uniformity of tone which is where the rhythmic energy is generated. What is of particular significance is that I would describe this stroke as a 'contained *détaché*' as I am not using the full opening and closing of the forearm for a full *détaché* stroke but more a 'boxed in' approach within a smaller bow length in the middle of the bow, creating a uniform body of sound.

By the time I was interviewed for *The Strad* article in 2016, my many experiences of performing demanding minimalist string material in high pressure environments had led me to cultivate an approach that was physically relaxed, fluid and supple, to accomplish absolute focus within the gruelling physical effort required. The sheer physicality involved in performing this music can be exhausting to sustain as the violinist often has to play long repetitive passages without any breaks. [36]
My deep understanding of the music convinced me that my approach must be almost sterile, void of traditional stylised string playing. I found that too many expressive inflections interrupted the flow of the musical line. Paradoxically, the music needs a vibrant quality of string tone, which is very focused, clear and convincing.

> *"One has to understand minimalism as this kind of "plateau of sound" rather than huge waves coming in and out. This "plateau" shouldn't get disturbed by any unevenness in bow movement."* [37]

Application of my musical approach to minimalist music in *Elastic Harmonic*
I first met Donnacha Dennehy when I was invited to give a recital as part of the 'Composers Ink' Festival held in the late 1990s at the former Bank of Ireland Arts Centre in Dublin. His gregarious and intuitive musical personality immediately struck a chord with me.

In 2005 my ensemble Fidelio Trio commissioned from Dennehy the piano trio *Bulb* with funding from Arts Council of Ireland. We recorded the work for NMC and have given over fifty performances of it to date.[38] Dennehy invited me to perform his work *Elastic Harmonic* for violin and orchestra with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra on 30th January 2007 which was recorded live for NMC[39] on an album of the same name. What marks this work out as such an individual piece for violin and orchestra is that the voice of the violin is a constantly present solo melodic line wavering and undulating high above and within the orchestral texture. It both responds to and confronts the orchestra. The violin part is characterised by beautiful melodic lines and a constant sense of appearing almost in different guises across

[36] For wider discussion of the physical demands of performing minimalist music see Keen, P.D. (2020) p30 and Harle, J. (2013) p382.
[37] Ibid. p. 33.
[38] Various, *Bulb,* Fidelio Trio, NMC D147, February 2008.
[39] Donnacha Dennehy, *Elastic Harmonic*, NMC D133, June 2007.

the 13-minute duration, even though the persistent G natural/G sharp interplay is not fully resolved even at the very end, where the music disappears into the ether. Challenges in Dennehy's string writing in this work include repetitive, subtly shifting motifs, both rhythmic and melodic, string crossings with stretches arising from extensions of left-hand shapes necessitated by his spacious derivation of notes from harmonic fundamentals and the spectral starting points that impact the timbre, tessitura and shape the harmony. *Elastic Harmonic* had previously received its world premiere in 2005.[40] In a Contemporary Music Centre Performer of the Month Interview March 2007, I recall the construction of the learning process:

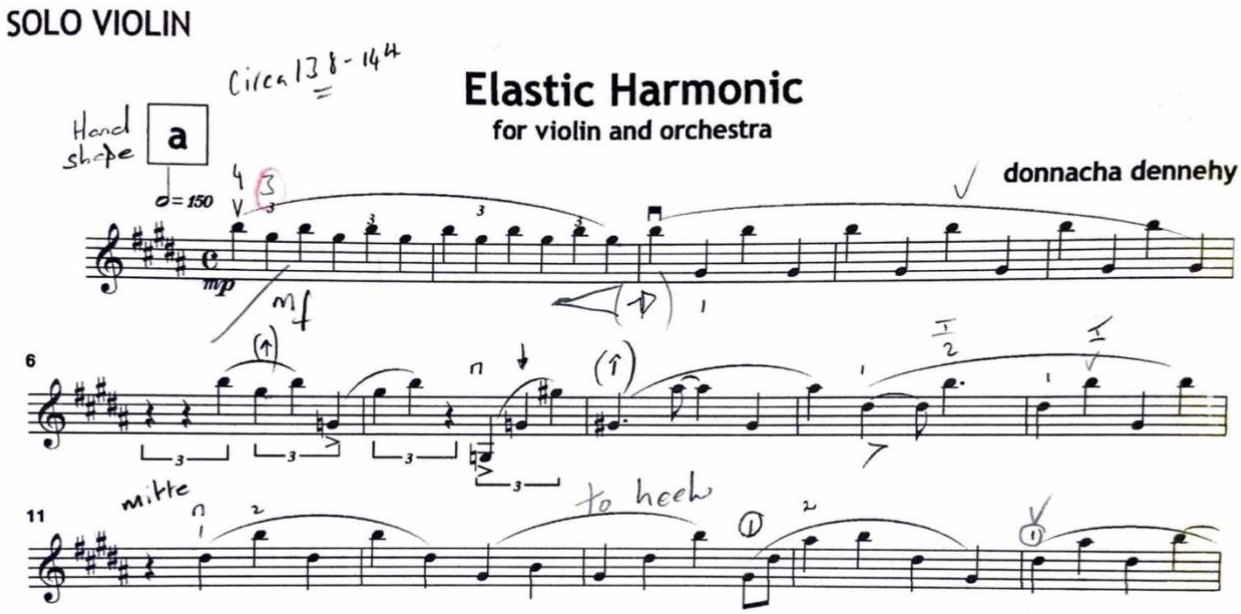
> *"I learnt it purely like I learn ALL pieces of contemporary music from looking at the notes on a piece of paper, not listening to recordings or MIDI files first of all. I learn it and put the whole piece together and then if the opportunity like in this case arose where I could refer to a recording, a CD recording I did occasionally for tempi, balance and articulations out of interest. But yeah, I learnt it purely as any piece of music I just go through work out bowings, fingerings, vibrato, you know all the technical side of things you need to know as a performer, and then I put it in to the context and then start creating an interpretation for the piece."* [41]

Fingering large interval stretches in melodic lines

The opening solo violin music of *Elastic Harmonic* is full of undulating melodic lines hovering above the orchestral texture. Much of the material appears within the interval of a tenth which is outside of the normal violin left-hand octave shape, presenting a left-hand fingering challenge. I needed to create an unorthodox fingering pattern to be able to play these large intervallic stretches, yet remain physically supple and relaxed in my left-hand wrist and fingers to sustain stamina. In bars 1 and 2 I play within the interval of a third but I am constrained in my available fingering choices. I use the traditionally weaker third and fourth fingers, as I need to have the extreme stretch of the interval of a minor tenth prepared from my first to fourth fingers for bars 3 to 5 (G# to B) which in bar 6 are stretched even further with the introduction of G to B, a major tenth above. Bars 13 and 14 are problematic as the violin is tuned in fifths, implying that the obvious solution for the final two quavers of bar 13 G # to D# and the opening crotchet of bar 14, A# would be to play these with the same finger. However, as the violin fingerboard (and indeed the bridge) is curved, rather than flat like a guitar, rolling one finger across these strings to smoothly secure the interval of a tenth at the speed required is idiomatically not possible. My solution was to play bar 13 G#/ to D # as a first finger double stop on both strings III and II, then quickly contort backwards my second finger on string I for bar 14 A#, essentially creating a left-hand violin construct similar to a guitar capo, almost simultaneously fingering the pitches.

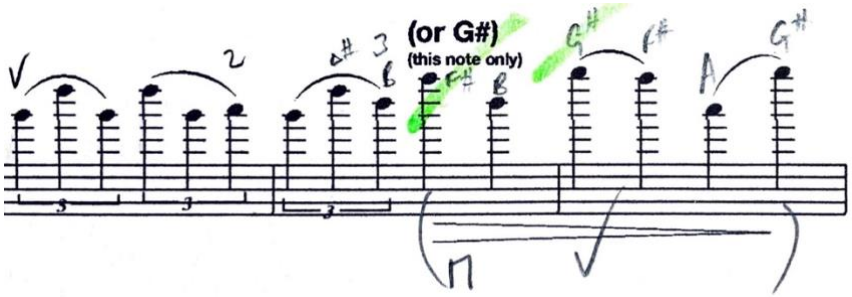
[40] Premiere on RTÉ television, Ioana Petcu-Colan (violin) and RTÉ NSO, 5th September 2005.
[41] CMC Performer of the Month March 2007, Contemporary Music Centre Dublin, 26 February 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrlMbFEUWcg, Date accessed 12th April 2022.

Example 7[42] (Audio Track 2, 0.00-0.14)



The final bars of this opening section from bar 93 to 102 exploit the extreme high registers of the violin. The pitches do not sit comfortably within the regular left-hand shape due to the prevalence of intervals of a fifth. In bar 101, Dennehy includes an *ossia* version to hold a G# to the end of bar 102. I suggested we revise the *ossia* to finish this passage by melodically resolving it harmonically from a high F# as written on the third beat of bar 101 to a resolved G# held for the entirety of bar 102. This helps create a luminous transcendental sonority and is how the material is presented in this recording.

Example 8[43] (Audio Track 2, 1.36-1.41)



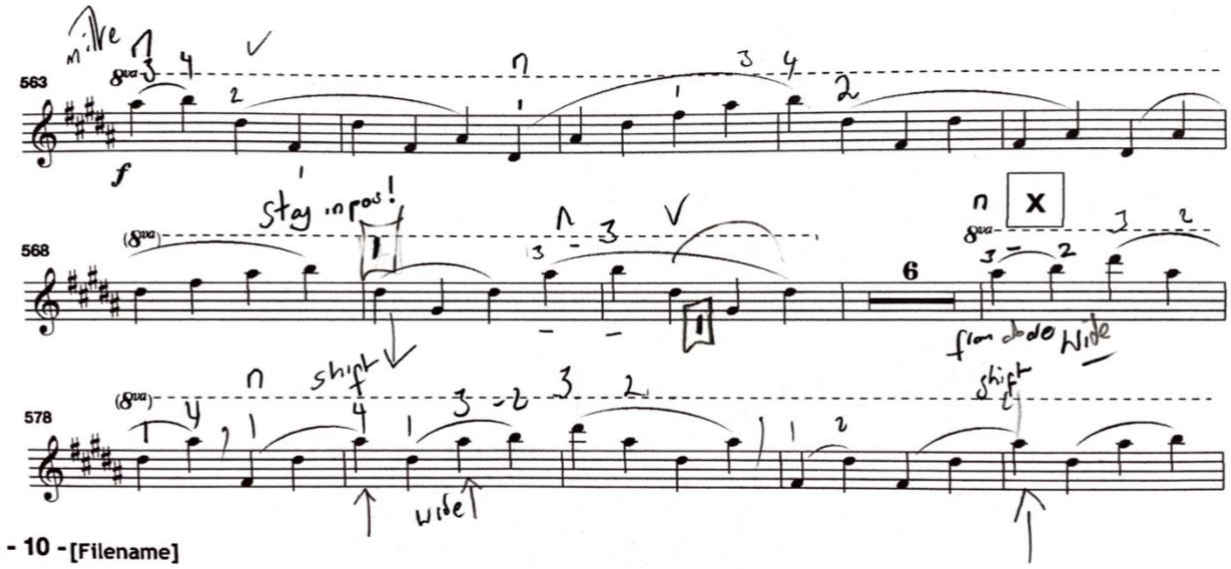
Much of *Elastic Harmonic* uses the key signature of B major. Playing in the key of B major always requires numerous extensions of fingering shapes as the open strings are all essentially of no use, apart from the E string. The passage beginning at bar 563 is most difficult to perform with the relaxed physicality required to produce an ideal mellifluous tone whilst maintaining secure intonation in a long-breathed line. The principal challenge here is the incredibly high tessitura which limits the choices of fingering in terms of hand shapes and positions. Much of the material here features large leaps and frequent intervals of a fifth. I chose to use my first finger, again like a guitar capo, as an option for covering two strings simultaneously. I had to execute this in sixth position, where the left-hand thumb is no longer securely cupped around the violin's neck but actually rolled underneath in order to stretch the

[42] Page 1, Lines 1-3, Original Violin Part, Donnacha Dennehy, *Elastic Harmonic.*
[43] Page 2, Line 9, Original Violin Part, Donnacha Dennehy, *Elastic Harmonic.*

left-hand fingers into sixth and higher positions. It was also more challenging to stabilise the first finger as a comfortable anchor firmly pressed across both strings given that, in this high register the I and II strings are elevated even further above the fingerboard.

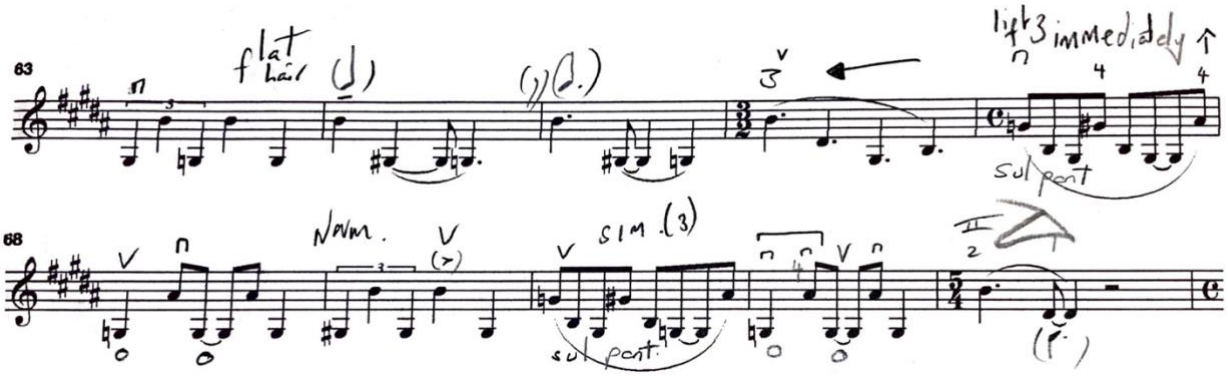
The example below from my own marked up part reveals notes regarding fine tuning; what needs to be sharper, or flatter in relation to surrounding pitches. At Letter X, bar 577 the interval of a major third, B to D# is more expanded than my natural handshape; I note the word *wide* in relation to this interval shape as I am using only two fingers, my second and third, their normal stretch being an interval of a tone, rather than this unnatural stretch of a major third.

Example 9[44] (Audio Track 2, 8.28-8.46)



Painting with the bow; navigating expressive nuances in vibrato and articulations
The tempo for *Elastic Harmonic* is a very fast, minim = 150, though Dennehy and I agreed a final performance tempo of minim = 144. With such a breathless tempo marking, I needed to consider carefully how best to achieve smooth string crossing, particularly within slurred passage work, as the overall feel of the violin music in the piece is of a slight stretching of material in contour and pitching, somehow accomplished within large leaps. Bars 67 and 70 are good examples of this type of gesture.

Example 10[45] (Audio Track 2, 0.59-1.08)

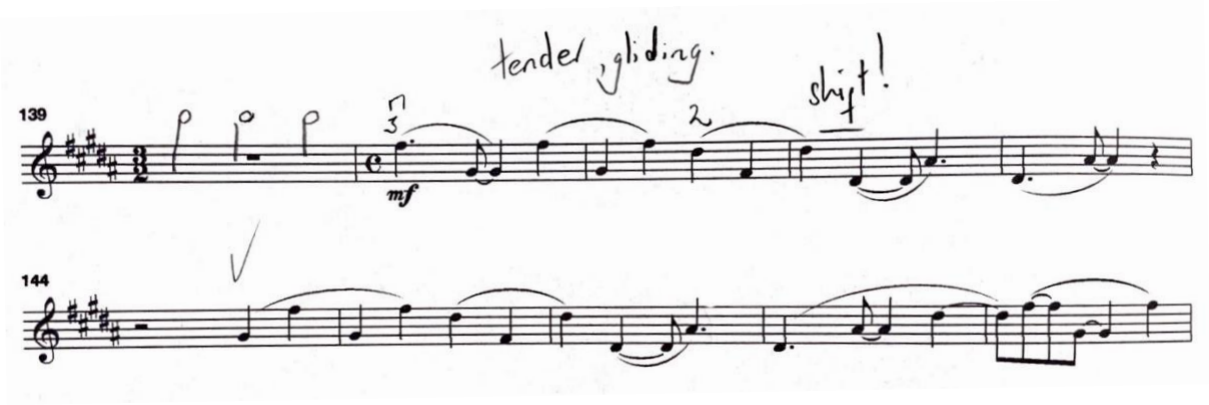


[44] Page 10, Lines 8-10, Original Violin Part, Donnacha Dennehy, *Elastic Harmonic.*
[45] Page 2, Lines 2-3, Original Violin Part, Donnacha Dennehy, *Elastic Harmonic.*

Being aware of the spectral qualities of Dennehy's musical aesthetic, along with this work's minimalist echoes, I suggested we treat both these bars with *sul ponticello* to maximise the presence of the low open G string, thinking of this almost as a fundamental, and to highlight the interplay in harmonic resonance over between the G and G#. The benefits of playing *sul pont* here were both technical and sonic. As the most successful *sul pont* timbre is achieved with a lighter bow weight near the bridge, by not playing so connected bow to string, I was able to cross strings more easily within this fast tempo marking. In addition, the *sul pont* created high spectral harmonics which added to the overall sonic effect. *Darragh Morgan, skittering and dreaming over the infinite greys of the RTÉ Symphony Orchestra.*[46]

The section beginning at bar 140 plays with the idea of lyrically combining contrasting rhythmic units of two and three; in this instance crotchets and dotted crotchets. In rehearsal Dennehy remarked that I should create as much sonic ebb and flow within these shapes. I realised by exploring a softer, sweeter sonority than I had presented in the introductory music of *Elastic Harmonic* that this would help define the gliding timbral quality I wished to produce with these textures.

Example 11[47] (Audio Track 2, 2.15-2.23)



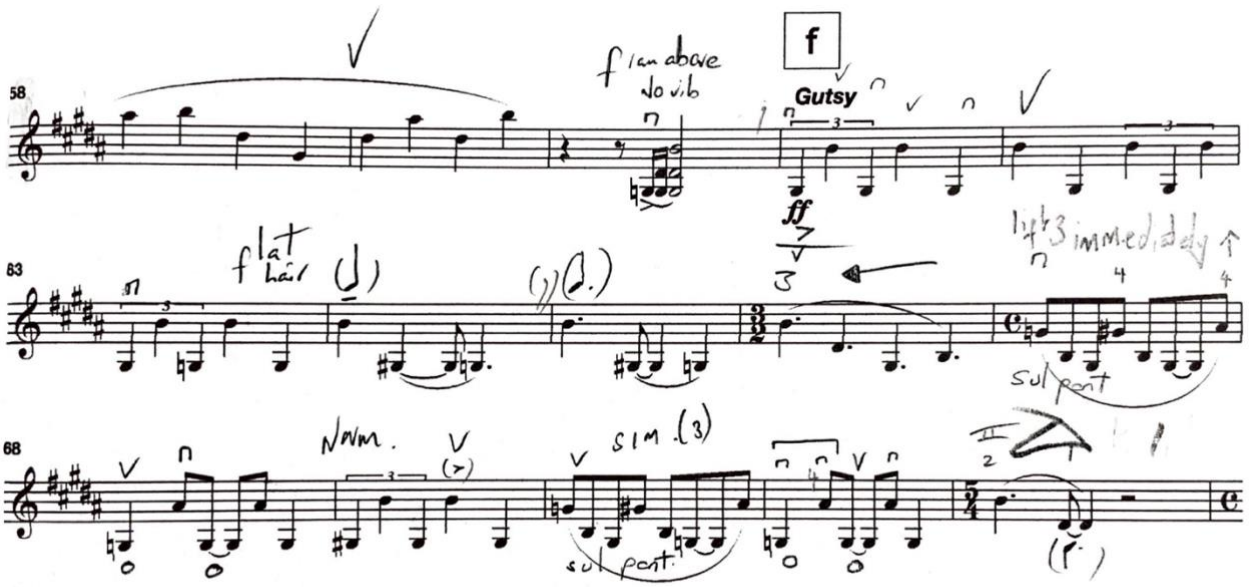
Throughout *Elastic Harmonic* I carefully considered where to utilise a full, rich, traditional vibrato. I discovered by unveiling this timbral quality judiciously and only very occasionally that it had greater aural impact. Bar 261 is a strong example of this; I highlight the G as the resolution of the end of the phrase by approaching the note with an expressive slide from the preceding B flat on the G string, helping create a dark rich timbral colour.

Example 12[48] (Audio Track 2, 4.02)

[46] P. Griffiths, *www.disgwylfa.com*, Record Reviews 'Donnacha DENNEHY: Elastic Harmonic, 2007', http://www.disgwylfa.com/record-reviews.html, Date accessed 12th April 2022.
[47] Page 3, Lines 1-2, Original Violin Part, Donnacha Dennehy, *Elastic Harmonic.*
[48] Page 5, Line 4, Original Violin Part, Donnacha Dennehy, *Elastic Harmonic.*

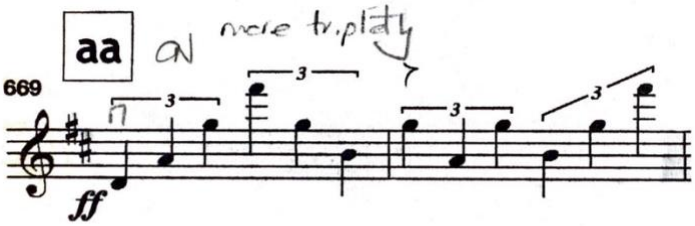
The technical innovations I developed in my bow stroke through my Smith Quartet tenure, as discussed above, provided me with the option to use the *martelé* bow stroke interpretatively in a *marcato* style in *Elastic Harmonic, seen* at bar 61, 63 and 69, where I rapidly shift energy levels in the opening and closing of my forearm, where Dennehy uses the direction, *Gutsy*.

Example 13[49] (Audio Track 2, 0.54-1.08)



At bar 669, I use the *détaché* with an evenness of sonority on both up and down bows providing clarity of each stroke within the *fortissimo* dynamic to enhance projection to cut through the thicker orchestral texture at this point.

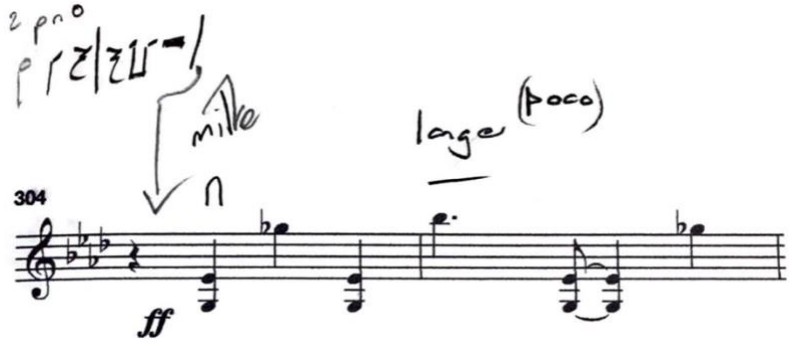
Example 14[50] (Audio Track 2, 10.00)



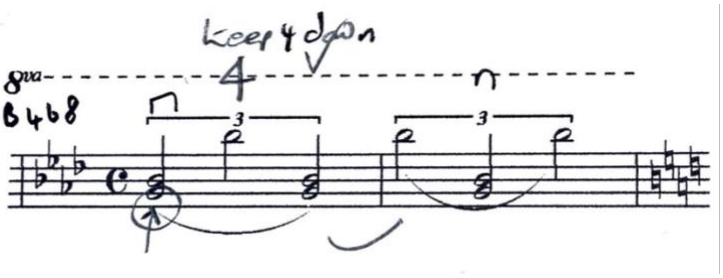
Other examples of using these bow strokes effectively include the patterns that occur at bar 304, which is a particularly 'dug-in' *marcato* with a *martélé* bite to the stroke on the lower strings and at bar 468 which I would describe as a heavier, more weighted *detaché*.

[49] Page 2, Lines 1-3, Original Violin Part, Donnacha Dennehy, *Elastic Harmonic.*
[50] Page 12, Line 6, Original Violin Part, Donnacha Dennehy, *Elastic Harmonic.*

Example 15a[51] (Audio Track 2, 4.41)



Example 15b[52] (Audio Track 2, 7.03)



Chapter summary

In this chapter I have outlined key elements of how I have developed an individual approach to performing minimalist music, featuring subtle variations of *detaché* and *martelé* bowing and technical devices deployed to ensure clarity and evenness of tone. In *Elastic Harmonic*, I have illustrated how I present the violin in a traditional concerto guise as a solo melodic voice above the orchestra as well as a more organic element within the orchestral texture. I have discussed how my innovative solutions to technical challenges such as large interval stretches in *Elastic Harmonic* result in an individual and original interpretation.

[51] Page 6, Line 1, Original Violin Part, Donnacha Dennehy, *Elastic Harmonic.*
[52] Page 9, Line 2, Original Violin Part, Donnacha Dennehy, *Elastic Harmonic.*

Chapter Four: Collaboration and the development of new work: *Opera* (Morgan Hayes), *Seven States of Rain* (Richard Causton), *thirty-nine pages (*Paul Whitty), and *Some of its Parts* (Jonty Harrison)

The composer Sam Hayden writes that: "*Everyone is dependent on everyone else to produce sound resulting in a truly collaborative situation*."[53]
In this chapter I explore aspects of the musical relationships that I have developed with four composers and how in various ways these have influenced the nature of my collaboration with them in developing new work, and on making interpretative decisions in the performance and recording of those works.

> *'We find ourselves talking a lot more, then, about the quality of the relationship between the collaborators than about the precise nature of the practice they develop together, or indeed about the nature or quality of what they produce together.' [54]*

Building on singer Juliet Fraser's discussion on the nature of these relationships, I identify my role as one of sharing my expertise and insights with the composer, tailored to be appropriate depending on the stage of the collaboration in question. As reflected in the case studies below, this can be at any stage from inception and development of initial ideas, through notational choices and preparation of performing editions to interpretative decisions in performance and editing of recordings of the works.

Opera by Morgan Hayes

Morgan Hayes is the composer I have known longest within this body of work. We met in the early 1990s as fellow students at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. '*What was also useful about being at the Guildhall was my contact with other students. It was very enriching, and I'm still professionally in contact with some of them: the violinist Darragh Morgan.'*[55] One of my earliest experiences in new music was conducting the premiere of a new ensemble work by Hayes with the Guildhall New Music Ensemble which included Robert Saxton as viola deputy in that performance.

Before *Opera* (2003) came into existence I had already performed many works by Hayes, for example as Leader of the Brunel Ensemble with conductor Chris Austin not only a flatmate of Hayes but also a long-time musical champion of his. As violinist in the group Topologies, which I founded with pianist Ian Pace, another enthusiast of Hayes' music, we premiered his *Trio for Piano, Violin and Bass Clarinet* in 2000. Since *Opera*, I led BCMG[56] in the world premiere of Hayes' *Violin Concerto* in 2006. In 2009 with The Smith Quartet, we premiered Hayes' string quartet *Dances on a Ground* and in 2012 our Fidelio Trio gave the world premiere of his piano trio *Völklinger Hütte* and two solo works written for me; *Lucky's Speech and Lucky's Dream in* 2006. The title refers to a pivotal moment in Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*, when the hitherto silent character Lucky suddenly pours forth a torrential stream of gibberish.[57] In 2014, to celebrate my 40th birthday, Hayes arrived at my party with a special new one-minute work for violin and piano *Happy Birthday* which ends quoting that theme. I premiered it that year with Michael Finnissy as pianist at the CoMA Summer School. My relationship with Hayes

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[53] S. Hayden and L. Windsor, 'Collaboration and the Composer: case studies from the end of the 20th century', *TEMPO*, April 2007, Vol. x, Issue 240, p. 36.
[54] 'The voice that calls the hand to write: exploring the adventure of agency and authorship within collaborative partnerships'
https://www.julietfraser.co.uk/app/download/10551980/The+voice+that+calls+the+hand+to+write+ANTWERP.pdf Date last accessed 11th December 2022.
[55] A. Palmer, 'Morgan Hayes', *Encounters with British Composers,* 2015, Boydell Press Suffolk, p. 241.
[56] BCMG – Birmingham Contemporary Music Group.
[57] M. Hayes, *Lucky's Speech* for Solo Violin, Programme Note, 2015, Stainer & Bell.

is a long term and ongoing musical friendship based on values of respect and trust, reflected in an interview where he referred to *Lucky's Speech;*

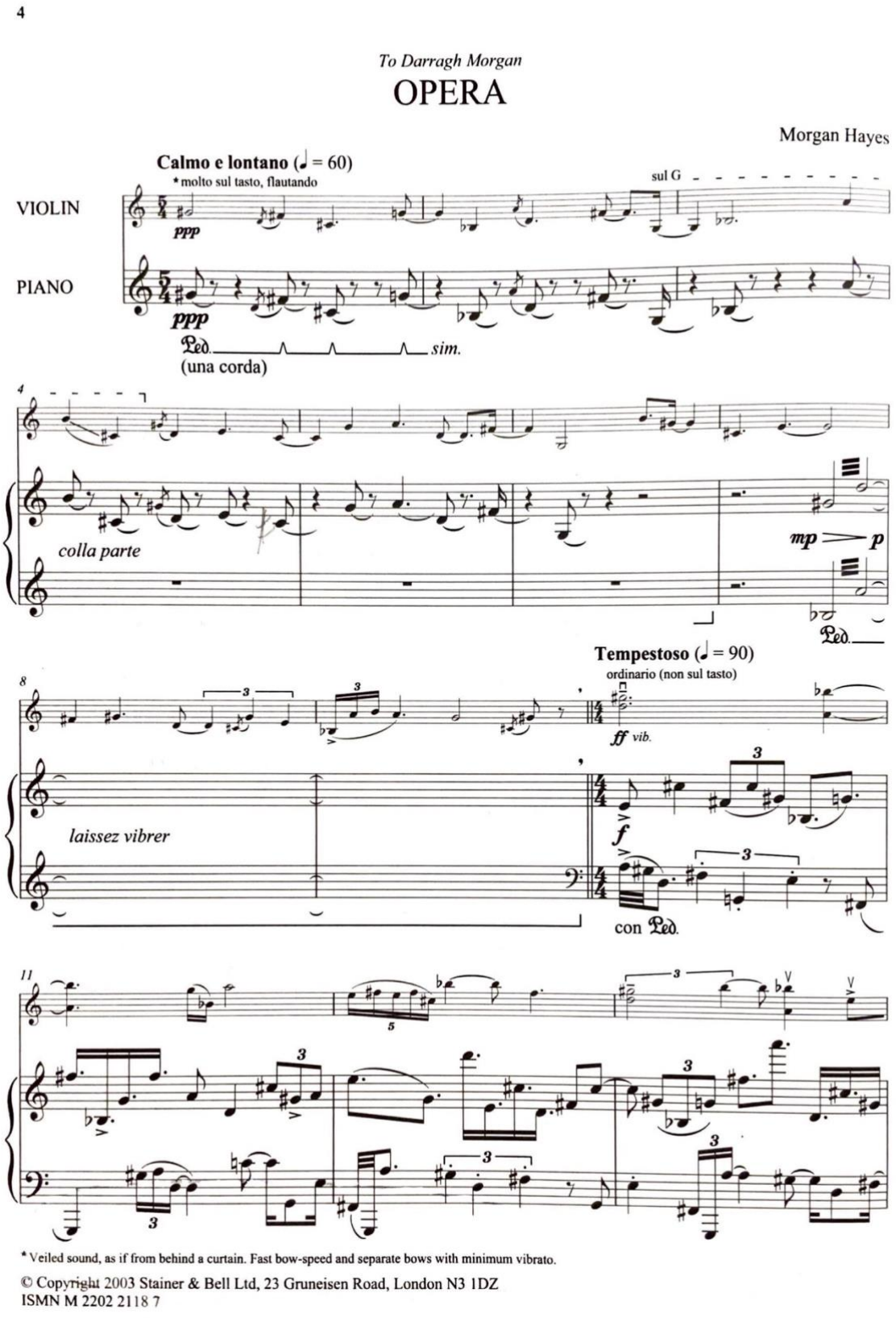
> "*when Darragh Morgan was playing a particular section of a violin solo that I'd written all in double stops, with a repeat mark. He suggested, 'Why don't you have a single line the first time, and then double stops the second time?' Again, it was a brilliant idea because it allowed the material to breathe, and so I included it in the piece. That could only have come from collaborating with a musician whom I've worked with for years and whose musicality I trust."* [58]

This nature of our working together on *Opera*, from its inception, is further detailed by Hayes here in an interview with me from 2005:
DM: *Your violin writing in Opera and other pieces I have performed by you is very idiomatic. Was this something you consciously considered whilst writing Opera?*
MH: *I was very aware of the timbre of the violin while working on Opera....in this respect, I found our early read through of some of the drafts very useful for orientating myself. Unlike Richard Barrett who once said in an interview that he didn't find a dialogue with the performer useful, I actually find it quite liberating even if in the end I don't take on board any suggestions!*[59]

Hayes borrowing from Bach
I vividly recall picking up Hayes at Woolwich Arsenal train station on a cold January day to begin our first workshop on material that would eventually evolve into *Opera.* Hayes began the session by playing the 'Sarabande' from J S Bach's *Fifth French Suite BWV 816*. He began by demonstrating in the right hand of his piano playing the type of wild, virtuosic, music he was interested in producing, whilst continuing in the left hand with Bach's bass line. He then asked me to improvise in reaction to this music, an approach I found invigorating and certainly different to how I had improvised in classical music to that point. It provided a degree of improvisatory freedom but was grounded in the more familiar architectural structure of a baroque form, so deeply embedded within my musical studies and heritage particularly given the prominence of Bach's Sonatas and Partitas in our repertoire. Gradually Hayes distilled from my improvisations a sound world he wished to explore and though much of this material didn't make the final cut in *Opera,* I recognised the impact of these sessions and their creative influence in the work. This is particularly evident in Hayes' writing in the piano, left hand from bar 10, in the ground bass with the rising and falling seventh intervals that contrast with the more boisterous material in the violin line at that moment.[60]

[58] A. Palmer, 'Morgan Hayes', *Encounters with British Composers,* 2015, Boydell Press Suffolk, p. 244.
[59] Interview Darragh Morgan with Morgan Hayes, 2005, from https://www.darraghmorgan.com/composer-profiles Date last accessed 10th December 2022.
[60] 'Violin and piano dart in and out of each other's patterns like children on speed playing hopscotch. It makes an exhilarating conclusion to a disc.' P. Quantrill, 'OPERA Works by Joe Cutler, Richard Causton, Joseph Phibbs, Bryn Harrison, Jonathan Powell & Morgan Hayes', *The Strad*, July 2006, p. 88.

Example 16[61] (Audio Track 8, 0.00-1.26)



[61] Page 2, Score, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*

DM: *When you and I were working through early drafts of this piece you kept referring to sections of music from J.S. Bach's French Suites (I think!) Is his music particularly influential on you?*
MH: *One of the early drafts of the piece did involve the Sarabande from Bach's Fifth French Suite coupled with a freshly composed violin part by me. The violin soaring above the piano part and slightly at a tangent, though not completely, as is the case with the recent Finnissy piece for violin and piano. I'm particularly wary about the combination of violin and piano having made a miscalculation in a Trio for clarinet, violin and piano and the Bach experiment was a case of 'what happens if I do this?'.*

This is further reflected upon in more recent correspondence.[62]

> *'I liked the results but sadly it never reached the final piece! I came to Bach via the quirky interpretations of Glenn Gould which always seemed to get bad write-ups in the Penguin Record Guide so naturally there was a certain exoticism associated with him! It sounded so modern and fresh! More specifically, I like the preference in Baroque music to stick to one mood in a particular section, then move onto something different. Opera is a good example of this.*[63]

Upon the arrival of the score of the complete work, I recognised within the opening of *Opera,* the appropriateness of my adopting an approach to violin colour as if I were using a baroque bow, seeking to achieve a shadowed, almost timid timbre.[64] As detailed in Chapter Two, by 2002, I had already accumulated much experience of baroque performance practice so I was developing a unique outlook on how to apply elements of this practice within the technical set up of a modern bow and violin. Although not using a baroque bow in this case, as there would not be time to change back to the heavier modern bow necessary for the explosive and passionate material that begins from Bar 10, I hold my bow further away from the heel to redistribute the weight in my right hand and arm. By playing with very little bow hair, rotating the bow outwards, far over the finger board *sul tasto*, and by moving the bow consistently fast without the use of vibrato, the sound world produced is similar to that of a Viol Consort. I wanted to create a fragile, otherworldly atmosphere, highlighting each pitch echoed in the piano part.
The title *Opera* is at once an evocation of, and deviation from, the 'baroque', coming from the Latin meaning 'body of work', and being inspired by Dario Argento's sophisticated Italian melodrama of the same name. Hayes' music captures something of the abrupt jump-cutting, heightened awareness of Argento's film-making.

DM: *A piece with a title like Opera doesn't instantly suggest instrumental music for violin and piano. Where did this originate from and is the title very important to you in terms of how it might reflect the type of piece this word suggests to the general public?*
MH: *While working on the piece for violin and piano I went down to Brighton to visit Antony Bye (editor of the musical Times) and one of his enthusiasms was the film maker Dario Argento....I was absolutely mesmerized by the film 'Opera' which we watched together.... it's not a regular occurrence to find oneself in this situation.... usually it's a case of seeing/hearing things which you might like to a greater or lesser extent but the experience goes no further... I realised at once that the abrupt cutting/prowling camerawork/surreal atmosphere bore a*

[62] '..it was a fascinating process…informed a little bit by the piece which preceded it (Trio) where i didn't quite get the relationship between violin and piano…I felt like i needed to take a step back..' Morgan Hayes-Darragh Morgan, Private Email correspondence, 20/01/22.
[63] Interview Darragh Morgan with Morgan Hayes, 2005, from https://www.darraghmorgan.com/composer-profiles Date last accessed 10th December 2022.
[64] 'Morgan and Dullea are musicians who plainly cherish the diverse gifts placed in their hands; their performances are consistently alert and alive across the breadth of styles…. *Opera*…. has its own vein of melody, moving through unisons in which the instruments shadow one another.' Paul Griffiths http://www.disgwylfa.com/ July 2006, Date last accessed 10th December 2022.

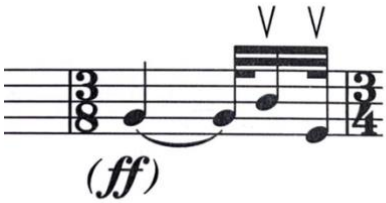
relationship with my musical interests. I also relished the title 'Opera' having not come up with a suitable libretto for a request from the Almeida Theatre. This was like a temporary substitute, a way of compacting an opera into a short time span and for such modest forces! Preferable to the other way round of stretching something which is essentially small vision onto a big canvas.[65]
I subsequently chose *Opera* as the title of my NMC Artist Series debut album NMC D108.[66]

Editorial contribution for the Stainer and Bell publication
Through our collaboration, Hayes' own understanding of the technical aspects of the violin writing was enhanced with many of our agreed solutions and notational ideas presented in his manuscript score. I was subsequently deeply involved in the preparation of *Opera* for publication by Stainer and Bell and my experience of the collaboration with Hayes and my performances of the piece were critical in the realisation of the edition. The value of the multi-stage collaboration between performer and composer is particularly important in that the Stainer and Bell edition presents not just the technical solutions agree but also the music as imagined by Hayes, with the document being of immense benefit to musicians who wish to study and perform the piece. The following examples are taken from the published Stainer and Bell edition.

Technical and musical solutions: bowing and articulations
The angular aggressive qualities of the music in bars 64-80 are emphasised as follows:

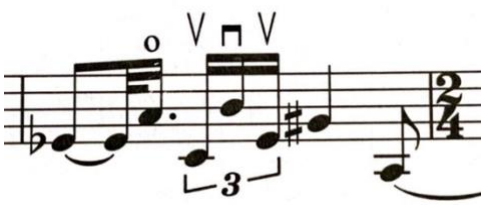
In bar 64, Example 17, the two successive up bows create a rhythmic, hooked bow effect.

Example 17[67] (Audio Track 8, 4.03)



In bar 66, Example 18, up-down-up bowing is only possible in the lower half of the bow coming from the previous A; the score confirms this bowing articulation.

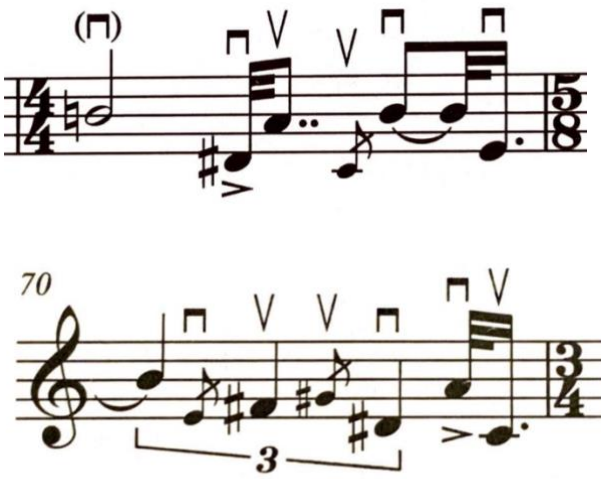
Example 18[68] (Audio Track 8, 4.06)



[65] Interview Darragh Morgan with Morgan Hayes, 2005, from https://www.darraghmorgan.com/composer-profiles Date last accessed 10th December 2022.
[66] 'Hayes' *Opera* finishes off the CD in style. It stands out even among this fine set. It is clear that Morgan and Dullea are already and will continue to be vital catalysts in the expansion and re-examination of the violin and piano repertoire.' J. McLachlan, 'Neighbour relations', *Journal of Music in Ireland*, November/December 2006, Vol. 6, No. 6. https://journalofmusic.com/focus/neighbour-relations Date last accessed 9th December 2022.
[67] Page 4, Line 2, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[68] Page 4, Line 3, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*

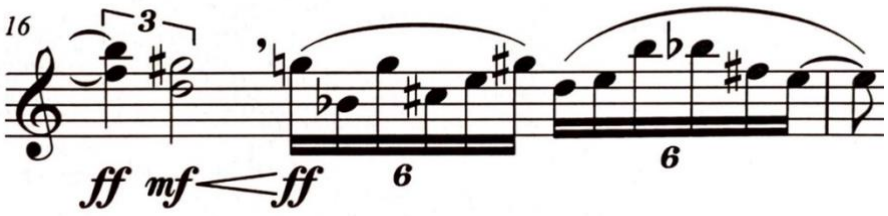
Bar 68, Example 19a, begins with a repeated down bow followed by two up bows with similar bowing in bar 70, Example 19b. This 'hooked' approach that I developed is related to the *martelé* (pinched) articulation, designed to generate a gritty, heavy in the string point of contact. The heightened tension and tug in the bow is produced by this approach as bow length is restricted by my using more than one articulation in the same stroke.

Example 19a and b[69] (Audio Track 8, 4.10 & 4.13)



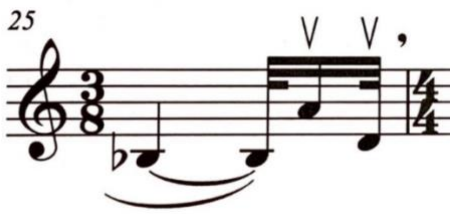
Articulation and phrasing
In order to articulate phrase ending in the midst of the fairly frenzied lines, we decided to indicate 'breaths' by using apostrophe markings in the score, as seen in the examples below from bars 16, 25, 28, 47, 52.

Example 20a[70] (Audio Track 8, Bar 16, 1.32)

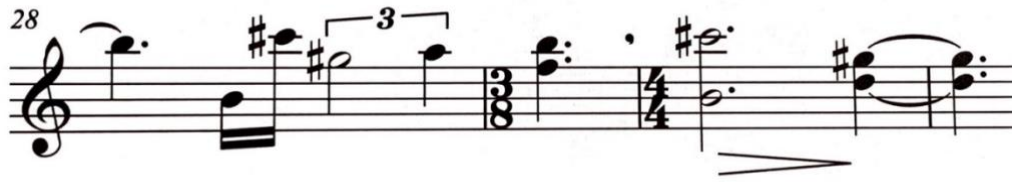


[69] Page 4, Line 3, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[70] Page 2, Line 5, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*

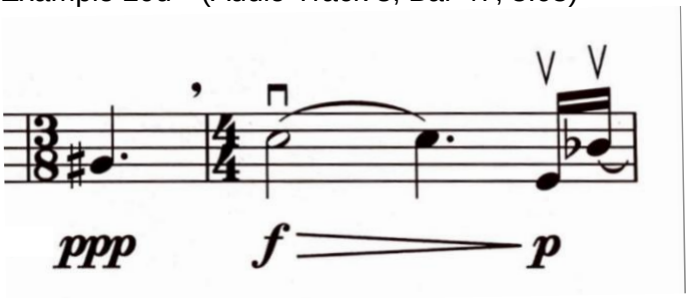
Example 20b[71] (Audio Track 8, Bar 25, 1.57)



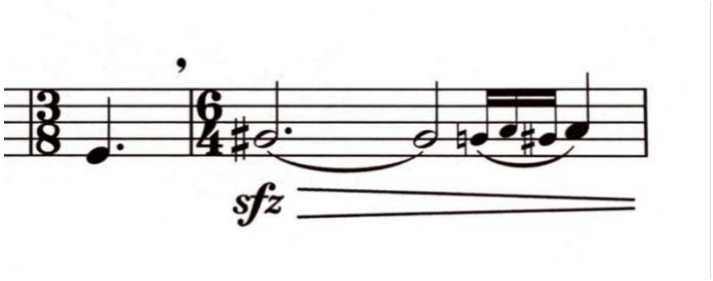
Example 20c[72] (Audio Track 8, Bar 28, 2.05)



Example 20d[73] (Audio Track 8, Bar 47, 3.03)



Example 20e[74] (Audio Track 8, Bar 52, 3.22)

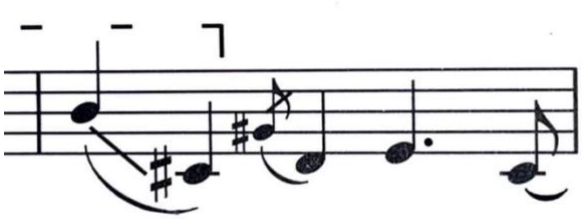


Legato slurs

I suggested we include additional actual legato slurring of two or more notes within one bow stroke as my experience showed they were comfortable and natural to play and they enhanced the musical shape of certain sections of the work. Example 21 shows use of this legato notation such as the B-C# in Bar 4, creating a more sinuous musical line.

[71] Page 3, Line 1, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[72] Page 3, Line 2, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[73] Page 3, Line 6, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[74] Page 3, Line 7, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*

Example 21[75] (Audio Track 8, 0.24)

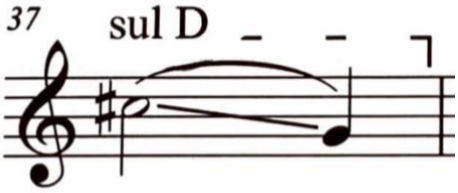


In Example 22, by playing this passage from bar 9 in second position, crossing three strings can be avoided to provide a smoother bowing style for the required intimate and ethereal sound quality.

Example 22[76] (Audio Track 8, 1.05)

This legato notation is specified in Example 23 at bar 37 to create the necessary closure of a phrase.

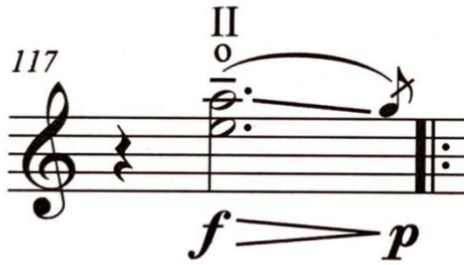
Example 23[77] (Audio Track 8, 2.29)



[75] Page 2, Line 1, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[76] Page 2, Line 3, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[77] Page 3, Line 4, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*

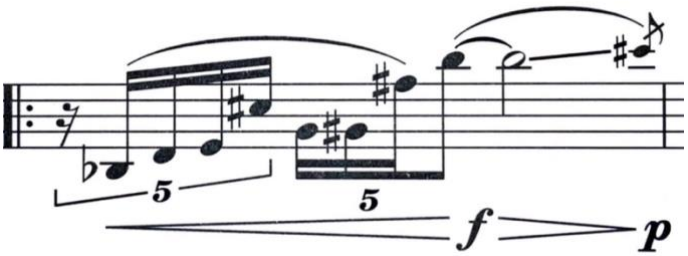
The legato slur at Bar 117, Example 24, emphasises the requested dynamic contour.

Example 24[78] (Audio Track 8, 6.14)



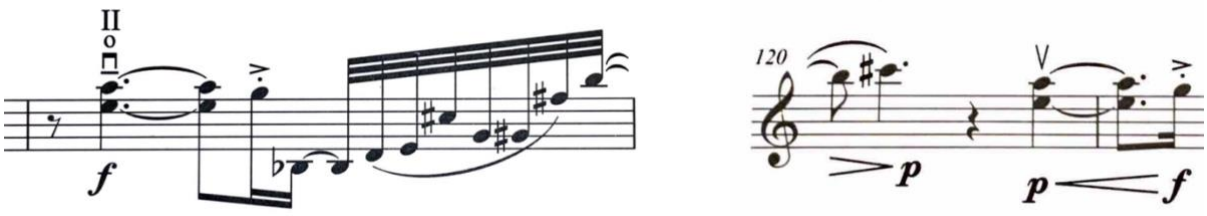
The slur at bar 118, Example 25, amplifies the rising contour of the line and highlights the increasing dynamic.

Example 25[79] (Audio Track 8, 6.16)



In bars 119-120, Example 26, I decided to break this slur into two bows with a new slur marked on the last note B of 119 as the violinist already has considerable string crossing to navigate in the previous shape within that bar. I adjusted the slurred bowing in bar 120 to finish on a down bow (at the tip of the bow), the lightest and quietest part of the bow to accommodate the decrease in dynamic.

Example 26[80] (Audio Track 8, 6.18-6.22)



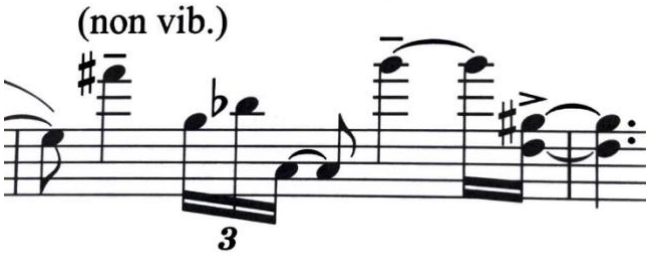
[78] Page 5, Line 6, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[79] Page 5, Line 6, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[80] Page 5, Lines 6-7, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*

Editing left hand shapes
In bar 74 the F# was originally an octave lower however at my suggestion, Hayes agreed it would be more idiomatic to have it in the same tessitura as the surrounding notes.
In bar 75 the double stop was originally two independent notes which would have necessitated three string crossings during the slurred opening of this bar. This did not achieve such clear articulation, so at my suggestion Hayes agreed to make the B/D# a double stop.

Example 27[81] (Audio Track 8, 4.22-4.26)

Expressive markings and fingerings
At the opening of *Opera,* I aimed to create a similar lightness of feel in my bow hold to how I perform the music of Morton Feldman, as discussed previously. At my prompting, Hayes agreed to insert the following descriptive remarks to guide players: '*veiled sound, as if from behind a curtain. Fast bow-speed and separate bows with minimum vibrato.*'[82]
The more vibrant, impassioned music that is first introduced at bar 10 contrasts so strongly with the opening material that I suggested we annotate the use of vibrato in the score from this point.[83] After workshopping various types of vibrato, we decided to add a note at bar 17 to the high F#, marking it as 'non-vibrato' in order that the violin sound cuts piercingly through the textures.

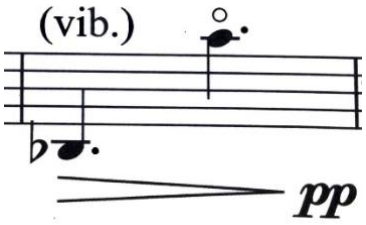
Example 28[84] (Audio Track 8, 1.35)



[81] Page 4, Line 5, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[82] See Example 16, Violin part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera,* p. 2.
[83] See Example 16, Bar 10, Violin part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera,* p. 2.
[84] Page 2, Line 5, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*

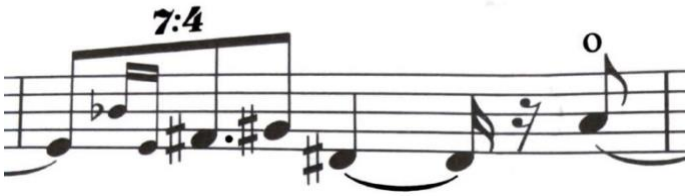
Beginning to apply vibrato on the Bb in bar 40 animates the note to counteract the loss of energy with the decreased dynamic. It offers a contrasting sonority to the next note which we agreed to notate as a vibrato-free natural harmonic.

Example 29[85] (Audio Track 8, 2.35)



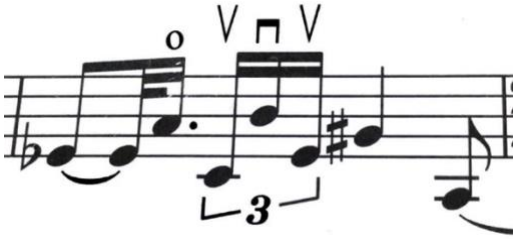
In bars 59, 62 and 66 I elected to utilise the open A string, essentially creating an extra finger in my left hand, providing more options for how I use my other fingers. I also wanted to present a consistent tone across these three A notes as they all appear *sempre ff*.

Example 30[86] (Audio Track 8, 3.51)



Example 31[87] (Audio Track 8, 3.59)

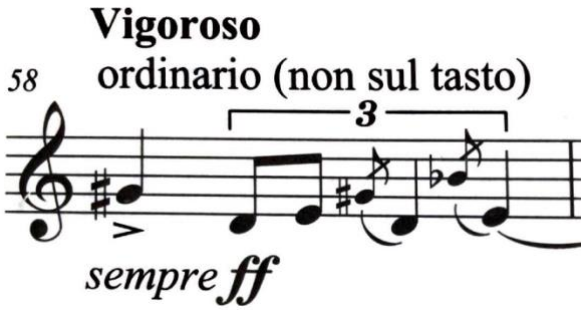
Example 32[88] (Audio Track 8, 4.06)



[85] Page 3, Line 4, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[86] Page 4, Line 1, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[87] Page 4, Line 2, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[88] Page 4, Line 3, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*

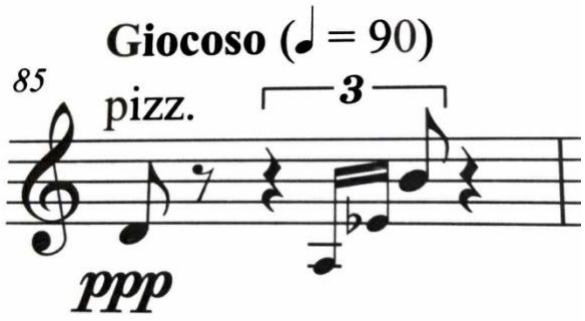
Whilst rehearsing with Hayes in preparation to record *Opera*, we discussed additional expressive markings to guide future performers' interpretation of his ideas in the score. This discussion prompted Hayes to add further expressive markings as follows. In bar 58, he added *Vigoroso* to articulate the forceful, almost arrogant approach to this virtuosic epicentre of *Opera* highlighting the tension and struggle between the violin and piano reacting to each other.

Example 33[89] (Audio Track 8, 3.49)



In bar 85 he added *Giocoso*[90] as during this extended *pizzicato* passage I wanted to hint at a playing gesture alluding towards free jazz improvisation, with the musical shape constantly falling forwards never sitting backwards on the beat.

Example 34[91] (Audio Track 8, 4.50)



[89] Page 4, Line 1, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*
[90] Hayes interestingly also uses *Giocoso* – playful as the opening expressive marking in his 2000 Trio for Piano, Violin and Bass Clarinet that I also premiered with Ian Pace, piano and Guy Cowley, clarinet.
[91] Page 4, Line 7, Violin Part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera.*

Figure 1[92]

My collaboration with Hayes brought to the surface other individual characteristics in his approach to string writing, including *sfz* stabs[93] and scalic grace note runs[94] which are juxtaposed with longer melody notes.

DM: *Every time I hear or perform your music, I'm immediately struck by the parallels to composers like Gerald Barry and Michael Finnissy[95]. Without trying to offend, yours can be a music of a certain 'manic nature'. What do you think about this?*
MH: *I agree, my music has a manic quality and it's certainly what has always come most naturally to me though not necessarily in music. When I was very young, I loved drawing highly detailed/violent medieval battle scenes, teeming with incident and activity. Though technically primitive I won a prize once for one of these pictures! It's a shame that with the passing of time they've all gone missing.[96]*

Pianist and Hayes enthusiast Jonathan Powell commented on the fact that much of his music seems to derive from a sense of the purely physical.[97] This idea I fully recognise, embodied in in the early 1990s Hayes' handwritten scores I experienced. I hugely miss reading scores in composers' own handwriting. They offer so much to us in the way of musical character and ultimately are more realistic authentic artistic documents. I still vividly recall Hayes' skittish[98], almost chaotic, visceral, exciting penmanship.

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[92] Friends Morgan Hayes, Simon Holt, Darragh Morgan Photo © Malcom Crowthers.
[93] See Example 20e, Bar 53, Violin part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera,* p. 3.
[94] See Example 26, Bar 119, Violin part, Morgan Hayes, *Opera,* p. 5.
[95] The *glissandi* in the violin part of *Opera* at Bars 54 & 56 are reminiscent of the 'cartoon like' music from Michael Finnissy's *Mississippi Hornpipes* Chapter 5.
[96] Interview Darragh Morgan with Morgan Hayes, 2005, from https://www.darraghmorgan.com/composer-profiles Date last accessed 10th December 2022.
[97] © Stephen Pettitt, Morgan Hayes Full Biography, 2016, www.morganhayes.com Date last accessed 1st December 2022.
[98] 'A sinister-comic fascination in Morgan Hayes' *Opera..'* I. Hewett, 'Opera: Works by Cutler, Causton, Phibbs, Harrison, Powell & Hayes', *BBC Music Magazine,* August 2006.

***Seven States of Rain* by Richard Causton**

In this case study I focus on the opening *pizzicato* material on the violin and how the workshop collaboration between Causton and me was vital in developing the clear, yet sophisticated performance indications and articulations. This collaborative approach, I believe led to an accurate realisation of Causton's music that is optimal in terms of violin performance. Before the world premiere performance, I was asked to describe the demands of this work in a magazine interview with Cecilia Wee:

> "*The most challenging work in this programme is Richard Causton 'Seven States of Rain', which evolved over a number of workshops last year. Richard created a sound world where fiddle and piano sound almost identical in a long pizzicato passage for violin where by using just the right amount of blue tack (sic) on certain notes inside the keyboard the same effect is achieved. This timbre took a long time for us to get just right!"*[99]

I first met composer Richard Causton when we were fellow students attending the Britten-Pears Contemporary Composition and Performance Course in 1994, sharing our accommodation with another composer, Joseph Phibbs who also featured on my NMC debut album *Opera.* The following year Causton, Phibbs and I, along with a number of new music luminaries (Anton Lukoszevieze, Ian Pace and Thomas Adès) founded the contemporary music group *Ensemble Corrente* with whom we performed an early incarnation of Causton's *The Persistence of Memory.* At that time, Causton had a particular interest in Javanese Gamelan music, which manifests in this work through the inclusion of a vividly colouristic microtonal bell tuning. This approach, I believe, influenced the piano preparations he uses in this later work, *Seven States of Rain* which he completed for Mary Dullea and me in 2002. Both works sonically explore the use of traditional classical instruments in a non-western way. Causton himself highlights the importance of exploring new timbres in his compositional processes in an interview I conducted with him in 2005:

DM: *Richard; I remember from many years ago when we were both involved with Ensemble Corrente, that your work, 'The Persistence of Memory', involved you building an actual instrument for the piece. Bearing this and the type of blu-tac preparation for the piano in 'Seven States of Rain' in mind, are new timbres vital at the inception of a new composition?* ***RC:*** *Yes – very often. New timbres can be a source of real fascination when I find them – they seem to create a musical context for themselves and perhaps even a poetic association (such as rain!). But this process can happen in reverse as well, i.e. I find that I need to create a specific timbre for a specific, existing musical purpose.*[100]

Dedicated to Mary Dullea and me on the occasion of our first wedding anniversary, we premiered *Seven States of Rain* at Bush Hall London on 26th June 2003, having already made the studio recording the previous December. The work invokes 'the poetry of rain in its various moods…teasing interplay of the first, sporadic drops' and is conceived as a 'dialogue between equals'.[101] The piano part is 'tuned' with a specified series of pitches prepared with blu tac which are used almost as an independent set of materials in terms of pitch and timbre by Causton. As observed by John McLachlan; '*One remarkable aspect of the piece is the targeted use of prepared piano …. To bring the timbres of piano and pizzicato violin together.'* [102]
The piece itself journeys through seven 'states' of rain. The opening 'state' is actually a three-and-a-half-minute movement exclusively using *pizzicato*, which then transitions into the

[99] C. Wee, 'Interview with Cecilia Wee', *Counterpoints BMIC Friends Newsletter*, May/June 2003.
[100] Interview Darragh Morgan with Richard Causton, 2005, from https://www.darraghmorgan.com/composer-profiles Date accessed 10th December 2022.
[101] R. Causton, Liner Notes, *Opera* NMC D108, p. 6, 2006.
[102] J. McLachlan, 'Neighbour relations', *Journal of Music in Ireland*, November/December 2006, Vol. 6, No. 6. https://journalofmusic.com/focus/neighbour-relations

opening of the second 'state' before the violinist takes up the bow. Almost half of that time is taken up by the opening cadenza for solo violin.

> *'It moves from an arresting pizzicato study through five more 'states of rain' …. Endless grey rain (to quote the composer) has never sounded more comforting.* [103]

The lengthy duration of non-stop *pizzicato* demanded that I develop a specific preparation and practice regime, which in turn provided significant new musical and technical ideas which I fed into the collaborative work with Causton on this section. When recording this music, I decided it best to schedule this section at the end of the session, as this amount of *pizzicato* playing in a pressured studio environment, where the artist is aiming to repeat the highest quality performance in every take, would be extremely physically demanding on my right-hand fingers. I remember the morning after the session waking up with huge blisters on the pads of my right-hand fingertips, something I never had to physically deal with before as a violinist.
The final published score of *Seven States of Rain* is the culmination of much experimentation between myself and the composer in workshops, resulting in a considerable number of additions and revisions to Causton's original ideas. This is particularly evident in the extensive opening *pizzicato* section where we built into the music a type of *pizzicato* shorthand notation, as detailed below. In order to execute this section with maximum efficiency, I place my bow on a chair next to me on the stage, quickly lifting it before the *arco third* section begins. This frees up my right hand making it feel lighter and more flexible with access to all areas of my fingers and arm. An additional consideration is that my strings have already had three and a half minutes of extensive *pizzicato* work and thus a far greater amount of finger sweat on them than in a 'regular' setting. I realised in the early stages that when I begin to play *arco*, the bow had a tendency to slip across the strings, so in performance, I now execute the quick rotation of the bow hair backwards and forwards across all four strings (re-coating the strings with resin) before beginning the *arco* material, giving the bow a more cohesive contact resulting in a fuller sound.

Pizzicato **performance practice**

Pizzicato is a fundamental technique associated with the bowed string family. I am surprised by the lack of creative dialogue between players of bowed strings and players of plucked strings on the subject of *pizzicato,* given the potential learning for the bowed string community from instrumentalists for whom this is their primary manner of producing sound. Our colleagues create a variety of colour, sonority and timbre plucking with nails, fingers and plectra on harp, guitar, lute, jazz double bass and many other instruments. Yet we, within the bowed string world, rarely ask for advice as to how they imagine and execute these sounds. Indeed, I don't recall a moment in my violin training where any of my teachers discussed *pizzicato* in depth in this wider context.
I find it of particular interest that many players do not explore how to play expressively with only one's right-hand fingers without the bow. Playing *pizzicato* without holding the bow is effectively a completely different alignment of the right arm, right-hand and right-hand fingers, with the strings. Playing *pizzicato* presents particular challenges which include:

- understanding the vast array of colours and timbres available dependent on the exact area of the pad of the finger and amount of flesh used
- co-ordinating fast *pizzicato* string-crossing
- playing *pizzicato* very loud
- the miscalculation of many composers about the arc shape of the violin bridge meaning moving between strings is not on a level plane as it is for the guitar-like strumming they often ask for
- the greater tension of the strings at the bridge, again in direct contrast to the guitar.

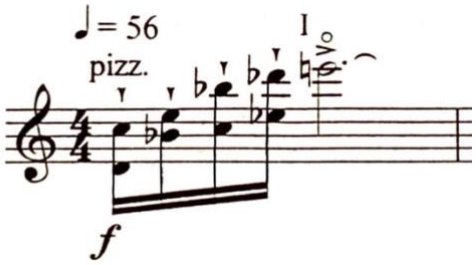
[103] P. Quantrill, 'OPERA: Works by Joe Cutler, Richard Causton, Joseph Phibbs, Bryn Harrison, Jonathan Powell & Morgan Hayes',*The Strad*, July 2006, p. 88.

Types of *pizzicato* required in *Seven States of Rain*

In order to facilitate successfully the rich tapestry of 'rain' colours that Causton intended me to present in the opening section of *Seven States of Rain* I undertook a special study of *pizzicato* playing, creating a library of timbres that complement the piano sonorities prepared with blu tac. Detailed examples of the range of techniques and timbres I developed for the the opening section are presented below.

Example 35[104] (Audio Track 4, 0.00)

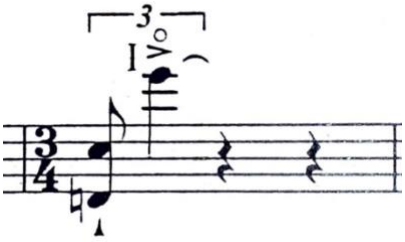
*Double-stop pizzicato b*ar 1



Rather than the traditional manner of using one finger, (normally our right-hand first finger), to produce a double-stop pizz, I have developed an approach to executing these using my first and second right-hand fingers simultaneously. This takes specific practice and right-hand finger pad muscle development with the benefit of this technique being that both notes can be articulated at exactly the same moment. Normally when using just one finger to pizz a double-stop there is generally a micro-second gap between the strings sounding, accentuated due to the curved architecture of the violin bridge. However, I discovered during researching and developing this technique of using two right-hand finger pads simultaneously to pluck the strings, that both notes can resonate identically with weight and volume equally distributed between them. Causton and I agreed the passages of music best suited for this technique.

Example 36[105] (Audio Track 4, 0.09)

Performing natural harmonics



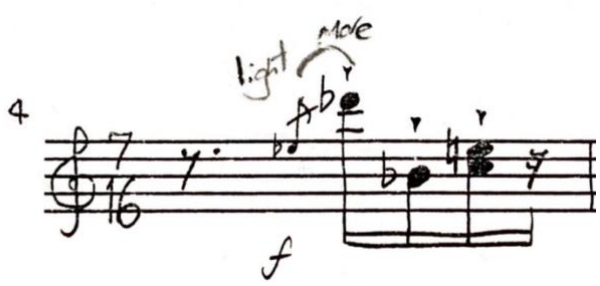
By observing how classical guitarists and harpists play natural harmonics I have developed an approach to playing the four natural harmonics, one octave higher than the four open strings of the violin G on IV, D on III, A on II and E on I, in a *laissez vibrer* (letting it ring) manner. By placing my left-hand fourth finger on the string at the point where the harmonic note is played, then *pizzicato* in *forte* near the bridge where the string is most taut and synchronising the quick lifting of the left-hand finger off the finger board at exactly the same

[104] Page 2, Line 1, Violin Part, Richard Causton, *Seven States of Rain.*
[105] Page 2, Line 1, Violin Part, Richard Causton, *Seven States of Rain.*

moment as the *pizzicato* in the right-hand, a clear ringing note of longer duration is produced. Causton and I agreed the clearest way to notate the three elements of this technique was:

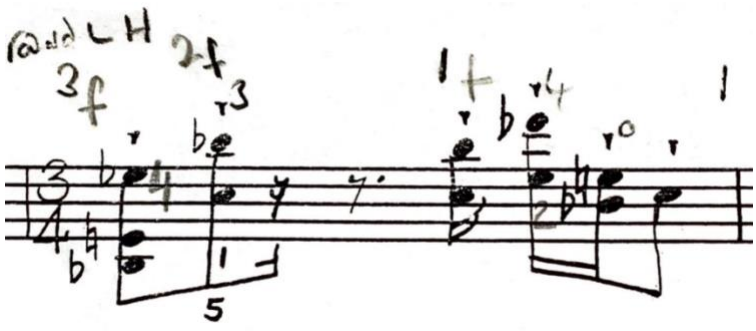
- as a natural harmonic with a circle above the note
- clearly stating which string, it should be played on using Roman numeral symbols I-IV
- a tie indicating the sounding note should ring for as long as possible.

Example 37[106] (Audio Track 4, 0.14)
Legato pizzicato



I discovered that, rather than using two separate *pizzicato* attacks on the grace note Eb and the Db semiquaver, by rolling my right-hand first finger across the two parallel strings on which these notes are pitched by my left-hand, I produced a *legato*, almost *arco*-sounding effect with a more idiomatic gesture. I annotated this in the original manuscript in bar 4 with a slur connecting the Eb grace note to the Db semiquaver.

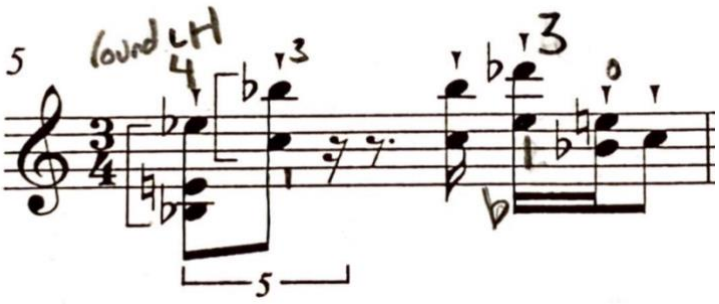
Example 38[107] (Audio Track 4, 0.15)
Triple-stop *pizzicato*



To provide further options for the composer, I extended my research and development of new *pizzicato* techniques to include use of my three right-hand fingertip pads simultaneously to create a triple stop *pizzicato*, not strummed but with a precise synchronised attack which maintained the *forte* dynamic. I addressed the challenge of distributing energy and force across the three fingers by plucking the strings considerably closer to the bridge than my conventional *pizzicato* position. With the strings at their tightest there, presenting most resistance, this physicality helped me create a louder *forte* articulation. I recommended that both the three-finger and two-finger pizzicato be notated in the published score, represented with a square bracket as seen in Example 39 below.

[106] Page 1, Line 2, Original Manuscript, Richard Causton, *Seven States of Rain.*
[107] Page 1, Line 2, Original Manuscript, Richard Causton, *Seven States of Rain.*

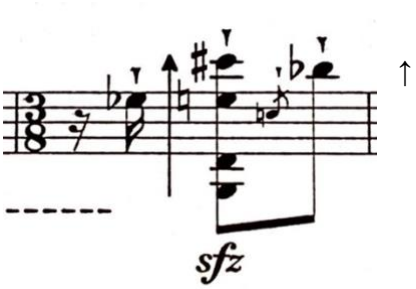
Example 39[108] (Audio Track 4, 0.15)



This bar is noteworthy in its presentation of three-, two- and one-finger *pizzicato* approaches within a single musical gesture. The musical contour in this bar rises, meaning that ergonomically I end up fingering material on the E string which, being the thinnest of the four strings when combined with double-stops on the A string is most easily achievable with a traditional one-finger *pizzicato*.

Example 40[109] (Audio Track 4, 0.40)

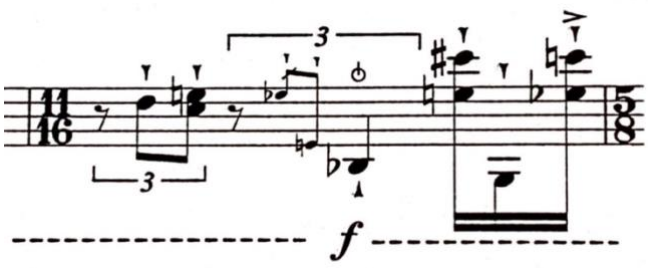
Spread *pizzicato* chords



In Example 40 above, I added an upward-pointing solid arrow preceding the four-note chord to indicate the notes are spread using a fast one-finger *pizzicato*, played more over the finger board where the strings are less tightly taut, using the outer right-hand side of the first finger pad.

Example 41[110] (Audio Track 4, 0.42)

Bartók *pizzicato*

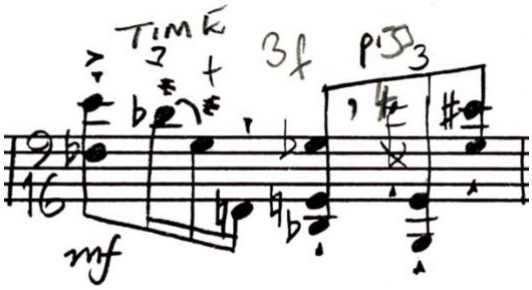


[108] Page 2, Line 2, Violin Part, Richard Causton, *Seven States of Rain.*
[109] Page 2, Line 4, Violin Part, Richard Causton, *Seven States of Rain.*
[110] Page 2, Line 4, Violin Part, Richard Causton, *Seven States of Rain.*

By pulling the G string (Bb) vertically upwards and releasing it rapidly, the string rebounds, slapping the fingerboard once, to create the percussive effect known as Bartók or slap *pizzicato* in bar 15, Example 41. The challenge here is that it comes immediately after two *pizzicato* grace notes. I found that by playing the grace notes lightly in terms of dynamic but again nearer the bridge where the strings are at their most taut and, by executing them extremely quickly, I could arrive at the Bartók *pizzicato* in a timely manner providing adequate preparation time. In this way I highlight the Bartók *pizzicato* as the principal gesture.

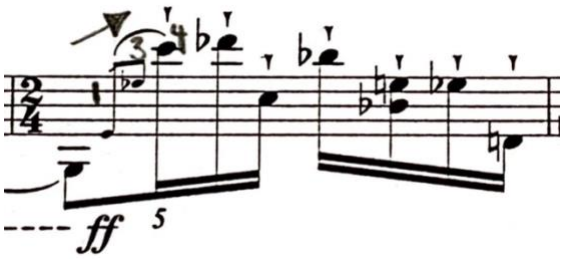
Example 42[111] (Audio Track 4, 0.58)

Legato pizzicato using open strings.



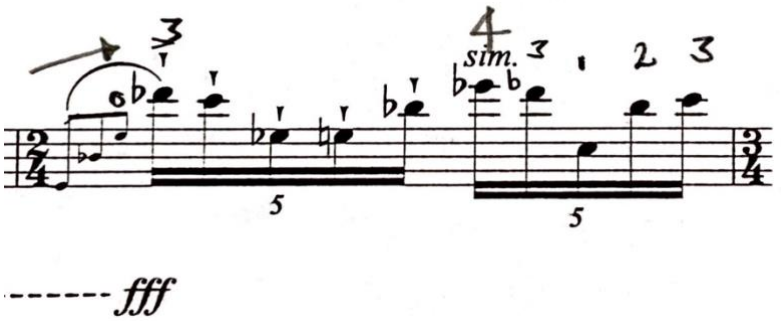
In Example 42, to create the effect of a legato slur between two notes when playing *pizzicato*, I discovered that if I played the second note on an open string (the E string on this occasion) I could articulate a *pizzicato* on the preceding Bb with my right-hand first finger, then with my left hand third finger execute the *pizzicato* on the open E string. This alternation of right and left hands minimises space between the resonating pitches. I had previously researched this technique when studying George Crumb's *Notturno II* from his *Four Nocturnes* which is entirely *pizzicato* for the violin and has numerous slurred gestures which I then repurposed for application in Causton's music such as those in Examples 43 a and b below.

Example 43a[112] (Audio Track 4, 1.06)



[111] Page 1, Line 7, Original Manuscript, Richard Causton, *Seven States of Rain.*
[112] Page 2, Line 7, Violin Part, Richard Causton, *Seven States of Rain.*

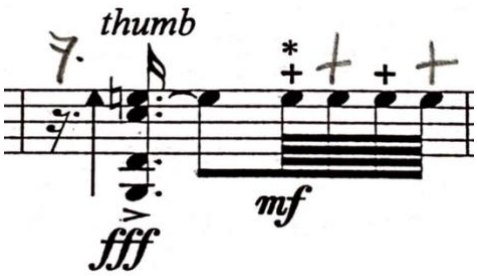
Example 43b[113] (Audio Track 4, 1.15)



Using a large amount of flesh of the outside of my right-hand thumb I created a strumming effect similar to that used by guitarists and harpists as shown in Example 44 below.

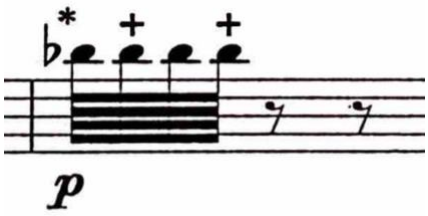
Example 44[114] (Audio Track 4, 2.23)

Combining left-hand and right-hand alternating *pizzicato*



The examples above and below show how I combine left and right hand *pizzicato* to execute fast passages. Faced with hemi-demi-semiquavers which would be impossible to execute at the given crotchet = 56 tempo if played with one right-hand finger, I applied a method of left-hand pizzicato which I had studied when previously working on Paganini's *Caprices*. We marked bar 52 as a relatively strong *mezzo forte* and used the open E string which resonates well to achieve that dynamic. The B flats in Example 45 below, though not an open string is given a softer *piano* dynamic which helps me achieve this fast repetition. This necessitates an approach that is more like a 'flick' of the third finger of the left-hand across the top of the string rather than the need for a full pulling gesture required in more traditional left-hand *pizzicato* at higher dynamic levels.

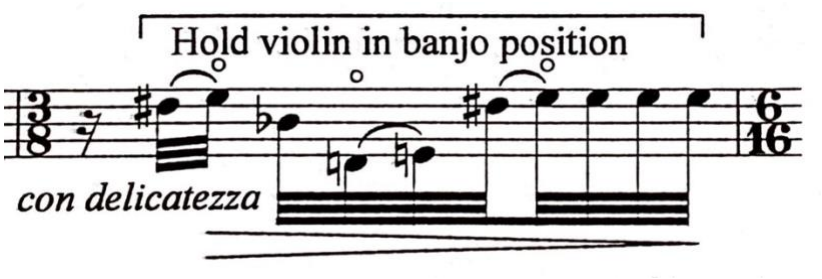
Example 45[115] (Audio Track 4, 2.28)



[113] Page 2, Final Line, Violin Part ,Richard Causton, *Seven States of Rain.*
[114] Page 3, Line 7, Violin Part, Richard Causton, *Seven States of Rain.*
[115] Page 3, Line 8, Violin Part Richard Causton *Seven States of Rain.*

Example 46[116] (Audio Track 4, 2.30)

Banjo (or guitar) position



Causton specified the term *con delicatezza* for this material; 'with delicacy'. In holding my violin in a banjo (or guitar position) I used my right-hand thumb as a type of fleshy plectrum. I inserted some slurs within the phrase D# to E, D to E, which provided a more fluid sound than if I used *pizzicato* articulation on every note. I suggested limiting the dynamic to *piano* with a slight *diminuendo* through the phrase. This passage would have been considerably more cumbersome if I had tried to play holding the violin in its normal position. The performance instruction 'hold violin in banjo position' was what I suggested to Causton and Oxford University Press to add to the performance edition.

My study of the art of *pizzicato* playing and development and application of new and adapted techniques had a unique impact on the opening of *Seven States of Rain*. As a result of my discussions and experimentations with Causton, he was able to clarify and express in detail his creative intentions in the final published score for the benefit of those who wish to study and perform the work. As observed by Christopher Ballantine in *International Record Review*:

> '*Asymmetrical pizzicatos – solo at first, then in combination with prepared piano, percussively treated – give rise to marvellously conceived and executed 'raindrop' timbres, in textural combinations that are wonderfully coloured.'*[117]

***thirty-nine pages* by Paul Whitty**

I first came across Paul Whitty in the early 2000s through the BMIC's New Voices composition scheme and related Cutting-Edge Series.[118] He co-directed the new music group, [rout] with Sam Hayden and Paul Newland, two other composers with whom I have gone on to forge musical relationships. I was intrigued to learn from Whitty's biography that he had been born in Lisburn, Co. Down and given we were both from the same region, I decided to explore the potential for collaboration with him. Not long after our first meeting at a concert at The Warehouse (the inimitable home of new music in London in those days) Mary Dullea and I were invited by Whitty to give a series of composition workshops for students at Oxford Brookes University where he was then Reader in Composition. Getting to know the composer during these meetings, we felt it would be interesting to ask for a new work for violin and piano for our duo. He agreed, however, his response was intriguing as it included the question; 'what is your favourite violin sonata?' We informed him that, above all others, Cesar Franck's *Violin Sonata in A Major* held a very special place in our musical hearts. He asked if he could borrow our BBC studio recording in order for him to get a feel for our interpretation of the Franck and

[116] Ibid.
[117] C. Ballantine, 'Chamber, *Opera* New Works for Violin and Piano', *International Record Review*, October 2006, p. 64.
[118] British Music Information Centre.

to highlight any particularly striking features of how we approached such a substantial, well established repertoire piece. In 2006, when Whitty began work on *thirty-nine pages,* he had been engaged in a series of compositional interventions achieved by re-reading, re-distributing, re-categorising, re-organising and transforming music from pre-existing scores, filtering and distilling material using a range of compositional techniques. Whitty used my own preferred performance edition of the Franck Sonata, the Henle Urtext, as his source material; this is thirty-eight pages long, to which he added a coda which uses isolated music from throughout the score, thus the title *thirty-nine pages* with each of the page numbers referred to as the titles of movements, page 5, page 6 etc., referring to the page numbers in the Henle Edition. Whitty told me this working concept came from an 'obsession with the provenance of musical materials' and though some of his interventions are more oblique than others it is possible to detect nineteenth century rhetorical romanticism through the bleached extreme sparseness of the results of his 'distillation' processes. For our final album track placement Whitty reminded me recently "I chose the order by shuffling a mini-disc with 38 tracks on. Always a good 'random' number generator - that's what I remember anyway!" This resulted in 38 movements that can be played in any order.

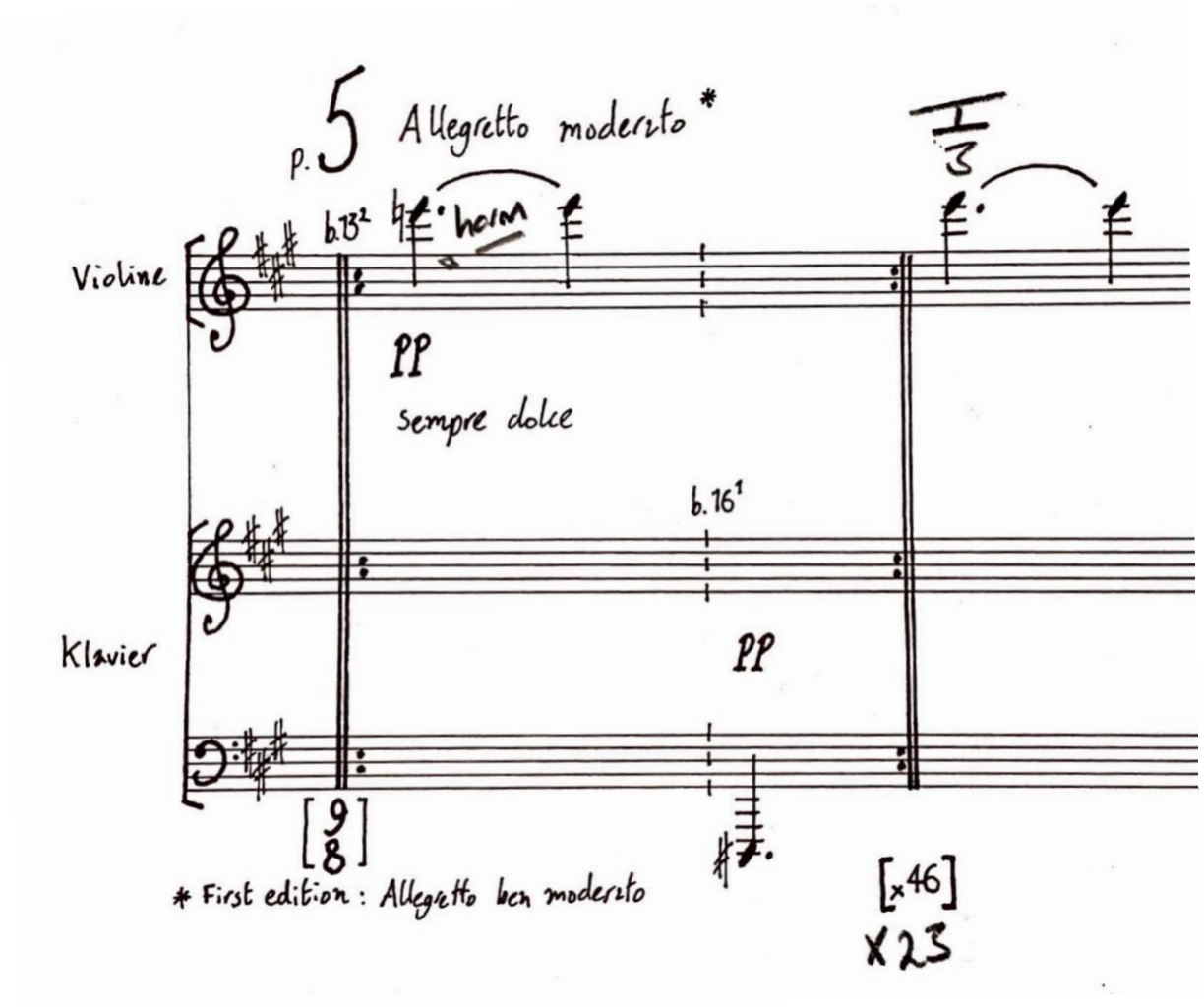
Whitty's *thirty-nine pages* is music of extreme naked purity and stillness that demands a precise clear playing style, yet with vibrant tone colouring. Writing in 'The Wire' magazine Philip Clark commented on our recording *"Whitty is playing games with our memories, both our assumptions about what we think nineteenth century music might sound like, and about how his music restructures the debris"*. The Strad reflected, *"Whitty's mix of fragmentary phrases and mechanistic gestures with the care of uncovering precious artefacts millimetre by millimetre".*

Mary Dullea and I had performed the Franck *Sonata* many times in the preceding ten years to 2006 when Whitty began work on *thirty-nine pages*. We suspected that Whitty's compositional processes would generate a distilled version of the Cesar Franck material but we were keen to retain an interpretative connection to our approach in the original Sonata, particularly to prompt the listener to consider questions on performance practice in the late nineteenth century after having heard the distilled version. With our track record of concert performances and fastidiously worked out details of expressions, articulations and fingerings we had a huge bank of performative information to call upon during our initial explorations of *thirty-nine pages.*

I also quickly realised how my experiences of performing intensely quiet, poised music of eloquence, particularly Feldman and Cage, would inform my approach to this work. The approach demands a quiet type of inner-virtuosity and an ability to work through the material independently, so as to not react to each other's subtly nuanced gestures, yet in a Feldmanesque manner, to co-exist in the same stage presence. In addition, it is important not to overreact to the 'original' Cesar Franck expressive marks (for example '*dolce, cantabile'*) and yet still appreciate them. I interrogated how best to achieve serious meaning, sincerity and poise when playing softly, void of traditional string expression in pages of music often containing just one pitch. For example, with regard to vibrato, I collaborated with Whitty to develop an approach where on long, high-pitched notes with a crescendo marking, I would add a little vibrato later in the note to help coax out the expressiveness. Also, by referencing my original approach to the Franck *Sonata*, for example in the Third Movement *Recitativo* opening, I felt my perspective on the use of and how much vibrato should naturally be cross referenced to my interpretation of both works.

Interpretative considerations in *thirty-nine pages*

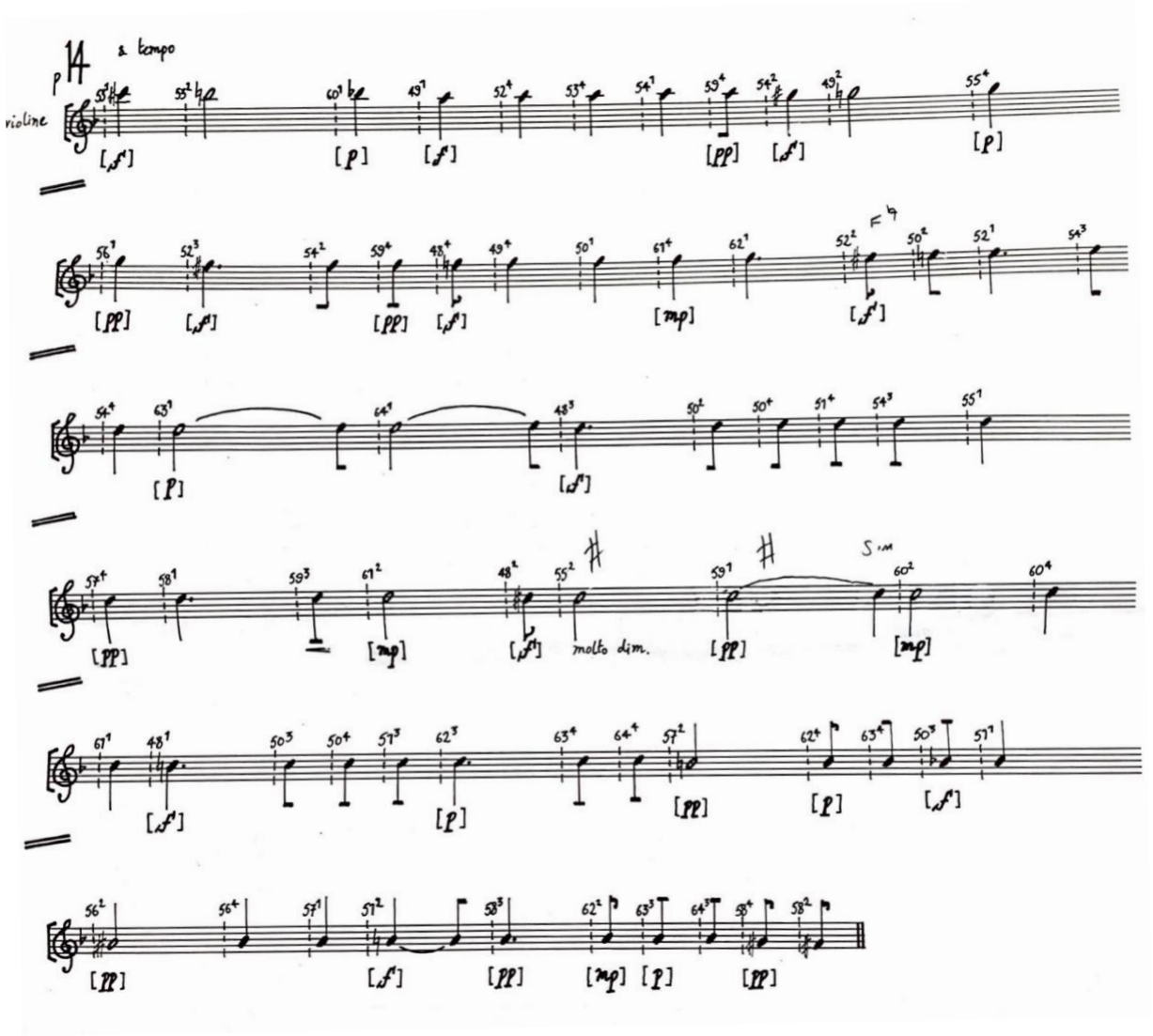
Example 47[119] (Audio Track 9, 0.00-2.52)



p 5: an image in my mind of a door subtly opening and closing in a constant loop reflects the stillness of my approach to the repetition of this material in which the piano bass note comes increasingly like a Gerald Barry(esque) 'frog sounding' figure.

[119] Page 1, Line 1, Score, Paul Whitty, *thirty-nine pages.*

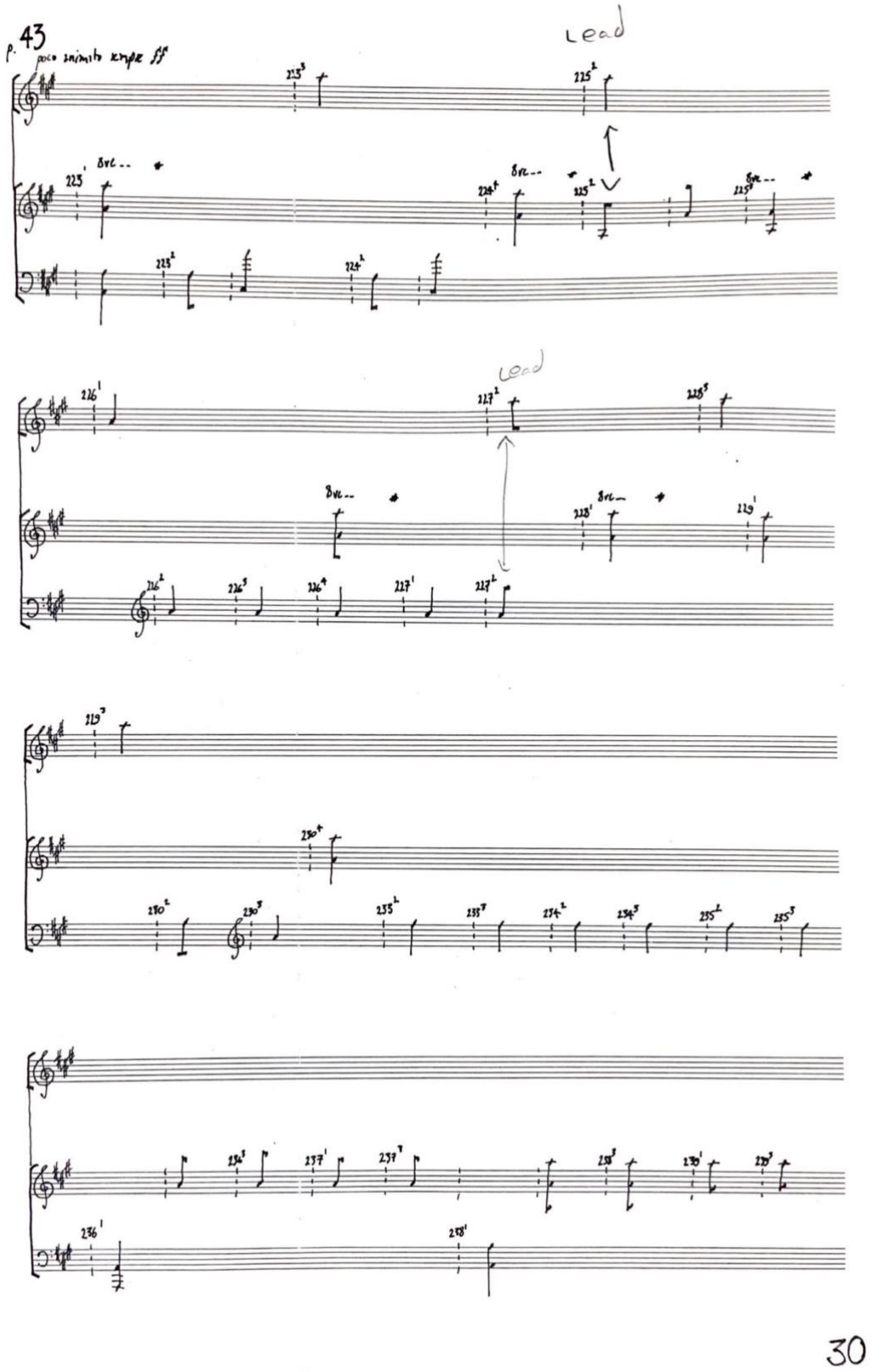
Example 48[120] (Audio Track 10, 0.00-3.46)



p 14: a piercing *forte* attack moving to a light *tenuto* to the very end of each note creates a clear focused sonic tone. Contrasted with the *pp-mp* Feldmanesque, tender and veiled quality of tone.

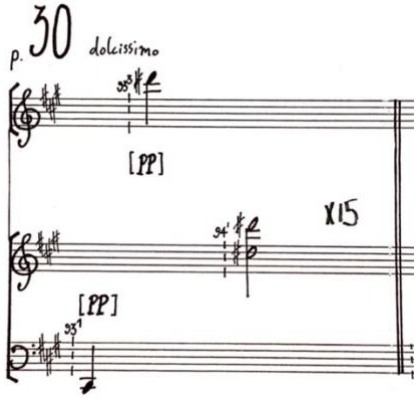
Example 49[121] (Audio Track 14, 0.00-1.07)

[120] Page 8, Lines 1-6, Score, Paul Whitty, *thirty-nine pages.*
[121] Page 30, Lines 1-4, Score, Paul Whitty, *thirty-nine pages.*



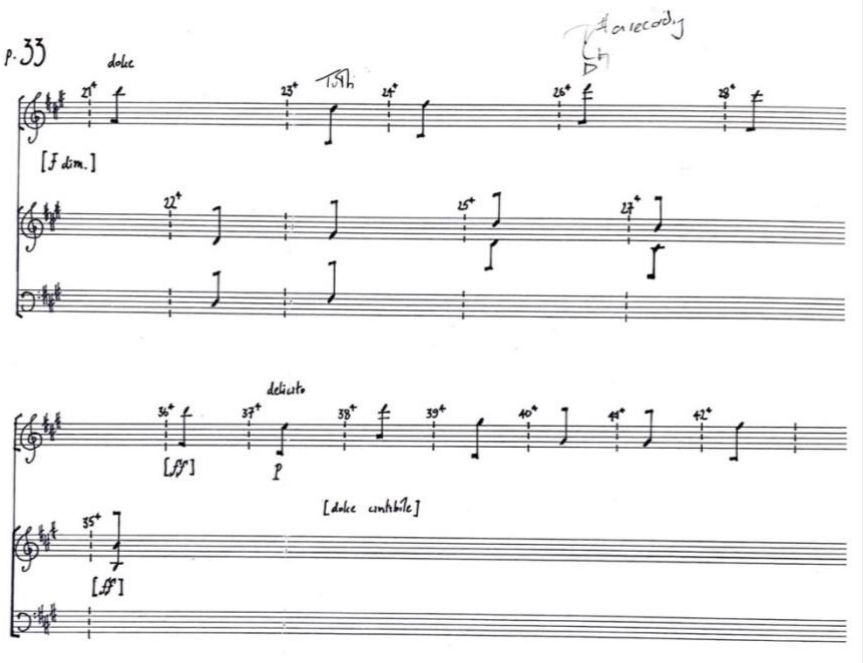
p 43: high A *forte*, non-vibrato pitches. The attack at the beginning of my articulation with the following sustained bow length my intention for this listener is to be drawn into a violin sound world of searing intense character.

Example 50[122] (Audio Track 30, 0.00-4.09)



p 30: distilled music that exists in the moment, drawn out and stretched. My physical awareness of the weight of pianist Mary Dullea's fingers landing on the piano keys and my reaction or non-reaction to these pitches, always considering the moment the friction of my bow hair makes contact with the string is an essential component to focus on in this zen like material.

Example 51[123] (Audio Track 16, 0.00-0.36)

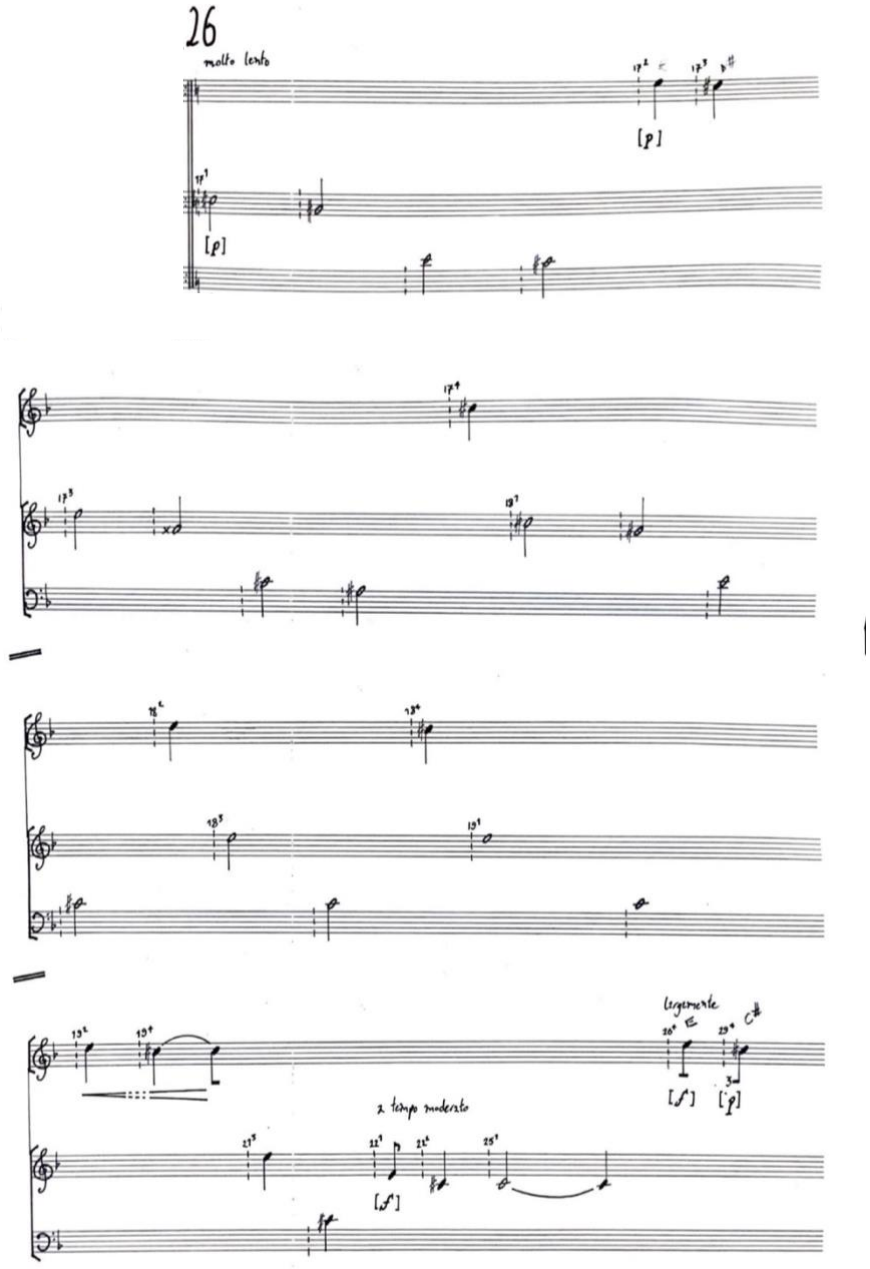


p 33: a striking change in the work's sonic environment is created through my introduction of a medium to fast vibrato. I came to this decision by contemplating Whitty's use of Cesar Franck's notated expressive quotation '*dolce'.* Later, in the same extract Whitty employs a further Franck expressive quotation '*delicato'.* This in turn affected my decision for which type of bowing articulation I would use for the rest of the music in this extract. As all the remaining violin pitches Whitty presented me with had a *piano* dynamic and duration of a quaver, I

[122] Page 19, Line 1, Score, Paul Whitty, *thirty-nine pages.*
[123] Page 20, Lines 2-3, Score, Paul Whitty, *thirty-nine pages.*

decided always to use an up-bow stroke creating consistent verve like quality that only the *collé* violin bow stroke can produce. I begin initially with the bow hair fully on the violin string and then utilising my right-hand finger joints rapidly release the bow from the string which creates the effect of sound carrying on much after I have executed the initial attack of this bow stroke.

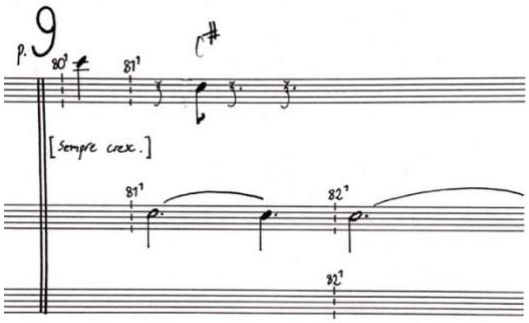
Example 52[124] (Audio Track 17, 0.00-1.59)



p 26: Dullea's deft pianistic touch creates a feeling of longing at the opening of this passage, magnified by the lengthy duration of the minim notes. Here, I explore a simple violin colour to complement this piano clarity but still am influenced by Whitty's inclusion of Franck's marking *'molto lento'* which affects how I physically slowly approach the string for each individual bow stroke.

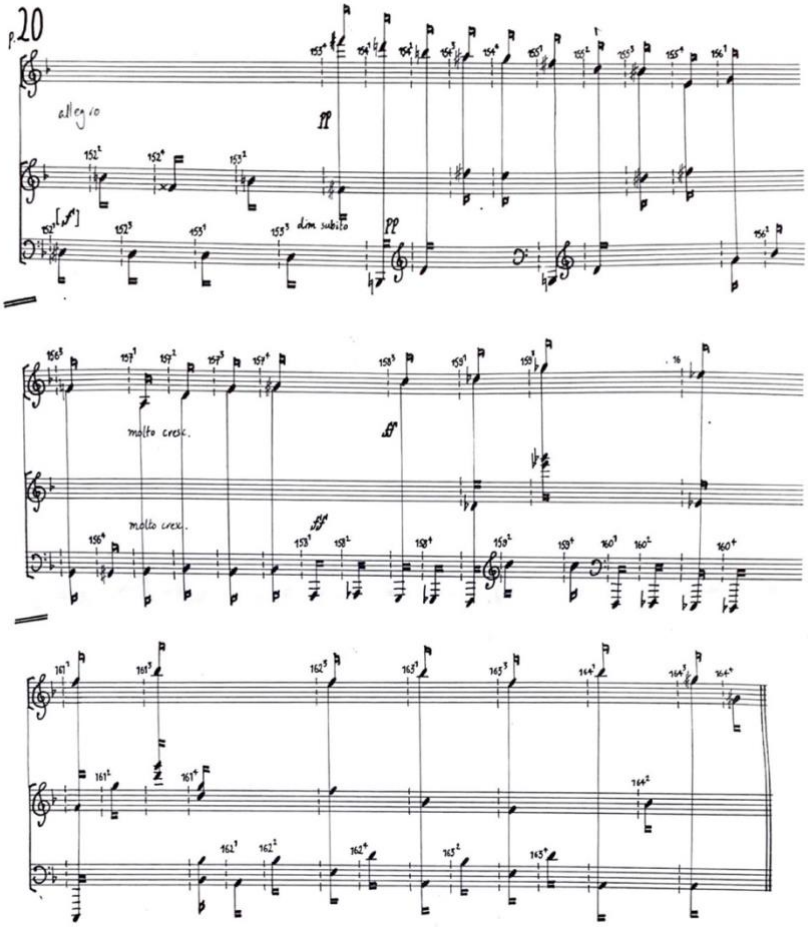
[124] Page 17, Lines 1-4, Score, Paul Whitty, *thirty-nine pages.*

Example 53[125] (Audio Track 21, 0.00-0.09)



p 9: With relentless C#'s as the only note used here, I aimed to produce a guttural tone quality to emphasise the impact of this single pitch.

Example 54[126] (Audio Track 32, 0.00-1.40)



p 20: My primary focus in the pointillistic nature of this material was to explore a short sharp articulation, with a consistent attack and identical note length (semi-quaver) throughout. In

[125] Page 3, Line 4, Score, Paul Whitty, *thirty-nine pages.*
[126] Page 14, Lines 1-3, Score, Paul Whitty, *thirty-nine pages.*

Franck's original music, this section is marked *'Allegro'*, so even with each of the singular crisp gestures I still intended to evoke the personality, character and feel of Franck's music.

My approach to developing an interpretation in *thirty-nine pages* was influenced by my conversations and social interaction with the composer, Paul Whitty. By developing distinctive relationships with composers, I learn more about their nature, character and creative priorities which consciously and sub-consciously can positively influence how I approach their music. This social relationship directly influenced the very visual approach I adopted in my interpretation of *thirty-nine pages*.

Some of Its Parts **by Jonty Harrison**

My early exploration of electroacoustic music

I have forged a long and fruitful career collaborating in the creation of new work with composers in the genre of electroacoustic music. During my formative studies in Belfast, I was lucky enough to experience Sonorities Festival at Queen's University which was a prominent fixture in the international contemporary music calendar. I had the opportunity to attend countless 'tape' concerts, the term then relevant, at The Harty Room in Queen's and at a young age learned much about different strands and styles that existed within electroacoustic/acousmatic music. As leading figures in this field, Simon Emmerson and Jonty Harrison, with whom I would later collaborate, both featured regularly in this festival.

The first work in this vein that I commissioned was *Crossing the Threshold* by Michael Alcorn in 2001 with funds from Arts Council of Northern Ireland. This work proved to be the creative catalyst for my trajectory into a deeper understanding of these sound worlds, working with relevant technologies and considering the potential for dialogue between my violin voice and soundscapes generated by real time and fixed media. Alcorn decided to write a work for Violin and Max/MSP at a time when this software programme was becoming more accessible, flexible and reliable. In *Crossing the Threshold,* Alcorn cleverly combined virtuosic yet idiomatic violin writing with an electronic sound world derived exclusively from live processing of my violin sound combined with triggered pre-recorded samples. In the first collaborative sessions, Alcorn recorded me creating sounds of every type from open strings, *legato*, *staccato*, harmonics, *col legno battuto/tratto* (using the wood of the bow to hit the string or be pulled along it), a thrown *ricochet* (a run of all down-bow, fast staccato notes). He also recorded a range of extended techniques; my breath blowing through the violin's F-holes, playing behind the bridge, twisting the hair of the bow on the back of the violin to make crunching noises, creating white noise textures bowing on the purfling wood next to the waist of the violin. Using my instrument as a tool, acting as the protagonist to motivate the development of these new sounds, I found liberating and revelatory. In 2004, I was invited to perform *Crossing the Threshold* at the opening by Karlheinz Stockhausen of the Sonic Arts Research Centre in Belfast.[127]

These compelling interactions helped inspire my future quest to develop a repertoire of new works for violin and electronics, creating a canon in its own right. They opened a portal, enhancing my awareness of the vast sonic ocean in which I could be immersed in developing and performing new works and providing opportunities to explore a new and emerging space. Significant partnerships leading the premieres, multiple performances and recordings of new work in this genre have since included those with, Rolf Gehlhaar, Alwynne Pritchard, Frank Lyons, Donnacha Dennehy, Annie Gosfield, Zack Browning, Linda Buckley, Mira Calix, Shiva Feshareki, Robin Rimbaud, Ed Bennett, Jürgen Bräuninger, Eric Moe, Michael Gordon, Arshia Samsaminia and Charles Nichols, amongst many others.

[127] Michael Alcorn *Crossing the Threshold* https://soundcloud.com/michael-alcorn/crossing-the-threshold

Through composer collaborations I have also become involved with a number of globally important research centres which focus on electroacoustic work, including with Ricardo Climent at MANTIS[128] and Scott Wilson at BEAST[129]. My track record of working in this area was acknowledged by Phil Freeman: '*he's carved out a significant patch of territory'*.[130] Eventually in 2006 through Wilson, I was introduced to the renowned electroacoustic composer and then BEAST Director, Jonty Harrison. We began to discuss the idea of him writing a new work for me, and *Some of its Parts* for violin and fixed sounds was composed during 2011-12, receiving its world premiere at Sounds New Contemporary Music Festival in Canterbury on 12th May 2012 and recorded for release on Diatribe Records DIACD021 *For Violin And Electronics* at The Elgar Concert Hall, University of Birmingham in December 2014.

> *'For Violin and Electronics is exactly the kind of startling, thought-provoking album that can draw in listeners unfamiliar with classical music, old or new, but open to adventurous sounds…the album as a whole is an unearthly experience, and presents and entirely new side of Morgan…'*[131]

> *'Unsettling and thrilling in equal measure, this fascinating collection from a foremost interpreter of new music exudes a mood of technological uncertainty*.'[132]

The integration of extended violin techniques in an electroacoustic work

> *"This project began conventionally enough, when violinist Darragh Morgan asked me to write him a piece. Whilst developing material for this work, I became increasingly aware of the noisy, percussive nature of some of the material"*[133]

Some of its Parts presents an unusually integrated role for the violin within the sonic environment due to Harrison's desire to foreground extended techniques in the live part and as source material for the soundtrack. For the first stage of the process Harrison invited me to record on the violin an array of source material at his home studio in Birmingham. He recorded me performing a wide range of extended techniques, many of which he would also use in the live violin part of this work. Some of the extended techniques we recorded and how Harrison utilised them in *Some of its Parts* are discussed below.

Extreme bow pressure

One of these extended techniques was extreme bow pressure, achieved by drawing the bow very slowly with heavy right-hand pressure over the thicker, lower G and D strings. The crenelations in the horsehair of the bow act as microscopic teeth, pulling on the string, creating friction, and producing a range of heavy distorted crunch and croak-like sounds.

I had begun to develop the facility to produce the '*knackern' (extreme bow pressure causing iteration)*[134] effect which Harrison asks for beginning in September 2000 when I gave the UK premiere of Rebecca Saunders *Duo*[135] with pianist Ian Pace as part of the BMIC[136] Cutting Edge Series. During rehearsals Saunders had taken my violin to demonstrate exactly which type of timbres she hoped I could achieve with extreme bow pressure within a range of *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* dynamics. This unlocked in me a fascination with these gritty raw

[128] Manchester Theatre in Sound.
[129] Birmingham ElectroAcoustic Sound Theatre.
[130] P. Freeman, *The Unorthodox Violin Work of Darragh Morgan*, Bandcamp Daily Feature, 26th May 2017, https://daily.bandcamp.com/features/darragh-morgan-feature, last accessed 8th May 2022.
[131] Ibid.
[132] K Ames, 'Darragh Morgan For Violin And Electronics' *The Musician*, Summer 2017, p. 44.
[133] Jonty Harrison, Programme Note for *Some of its Parts*, Sounds New Contemporary Music Festival, 2012.
[134] Jonty Harrison, Directions for Performance for *Some of its Parts*, 2012, p. i.
[135] Rebecca Saunders *Duo* Edition Peters, 1997 rev. 1999.
[136] British Music Information Centre.

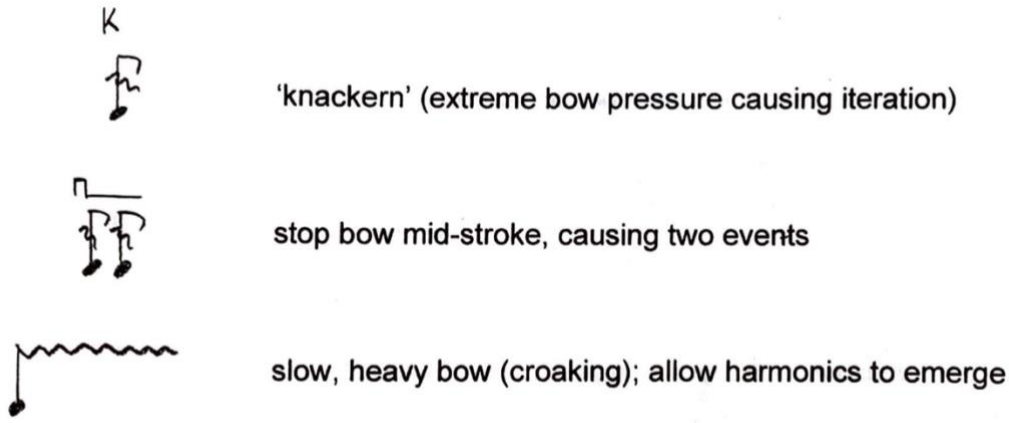
colours that the bow could produce. Performing Saunders' *Duo* revealed to me that I could create a vast range of timbral distortions dominated by overtones according to the minimum/maximum pressure I applied with the bow.

This conceptualization was further enhanced by experiences working with the pioneering composer Helmut Lachenmann, widely lauded for his laboratory style approach to redefining the tonal palettes of every orchestral instrument. Lachenmann's music is full of prescriptive definitions pursuing meticulous accuracy for the colours and techniques he requests performers to use. Performing his works with Ensemble Modern, in particular *Nun* and *Kontra-Kadenz*, exposed me to the vast scope of tonal variants available sonically within the span of clenched/distorted bow pressures; ranging from those containing traces of pitch to absolutely detectable pitch within the timbral alternatives. In one workshop, Lachenmann explained how nuances of dynamic could be achieved additionally through variations of bow speed. By holding the bow with the fist, placing the extended index finger along the top of the wood of the bow and playing pressed into the string in the lower half of the bow near the frog, a range of perforated timbres could be successfully realised.
Building on this bank of knowledge, for *Some of its Parts* I used my carbon fibre bow. When extreme pressure is applied it is less vulnerable to warp or damage than my wooden bows and thus, I could go to the furthest extremes. This approach plays an integral role in the sonic landscape of much of this work, in both the live violin and soundtrack parts. Harrison describes it as such:

> *"..the material, in the tape/computer/electronics part is primarily drawn from non-standard ways of playing strings…together with a selection of materials (springs, creaking doors and shutters, wooden floors, curtain rings sliding along a wooden pole) related to the live instrument – by sound and/or by the elements used to build the instrument concerned (wood, metal etc) and/or by the physical principles contributing to their character (tension, friction, pressure, etc).The resulting sound world is thus hybridised, unreal place – but it is hopefully also 'more than the sum of its parts."*[137]

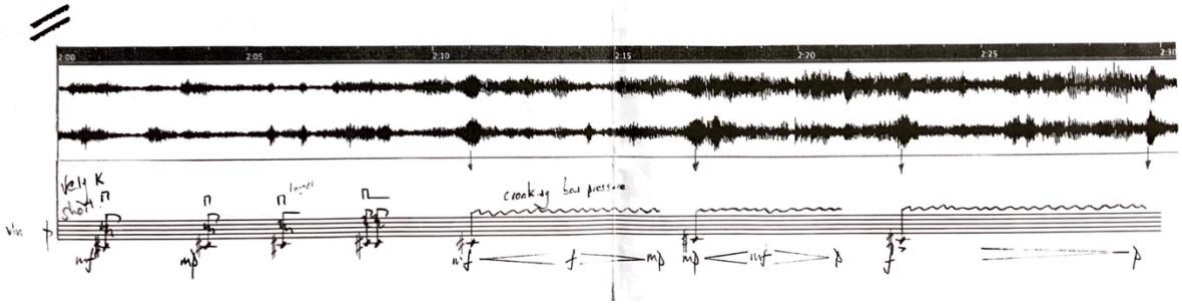
In *Some of its Parts* Harrison notates three versions of extreme bow pressure as shown below:

Example 55[138]



[137] Jonty Harrison, Programme Note for *Some of its Parts,* Sounds New Contemporary Music Festival, 2012.
[138] P. I, Directions for Performance, Score, Jonty Harrison, *Some of its Parts.*

Example 56[139] (Audio Track 48, 2.00-2.30)



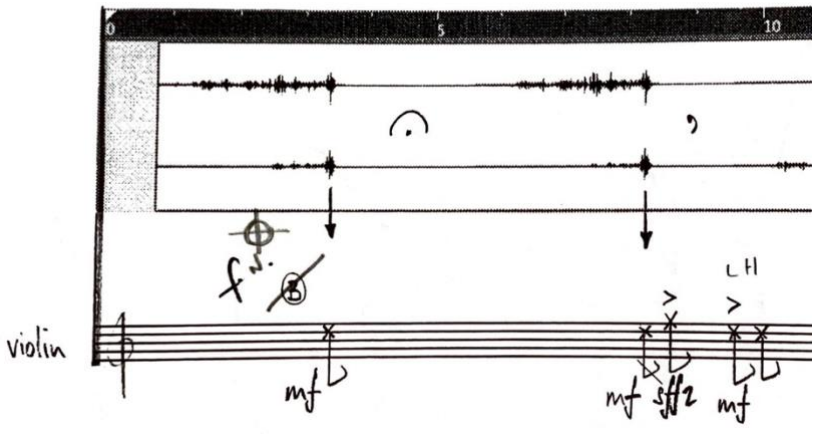
The section of the work shown here required me to use these three variations of extreme bow pressure in succession:

- the first *'knackern'* is a single gesture iterated quickly and abruptly stopped with the bow staying on the string
- the second calls for two simultaneous gestures, interrupted by stopping the bow suddenly on the string, and then carrying on the bow stroke in the same direction
- the third is utterances of longer duration and in this example, is further detailed with three dynamic variations applied.

All these extreme bow pressure techniques are performed on a down bow near the frog without pitch, working with the optimal use of gravity and the torsion that results. The notated C# is the position where Harrison and I discovered that lightly muting and half-stopping on the G string using my third finger in first position, where this pitch normally sounds, decreases the length of the string available to vibrate. This meant I could continually achieve a consistent sound in the repetition of the material without any tonal fluctuation. Once this effect had been mastered, I could successfully reproduce it throughout *Some of its Parts.*

Fingernail
Fn – fingernail[140]

Example 57[141] (Audio Track 48, 0.00-0.10)



[139] Page 2, Line 3, Score, Jonty Harrison, *Some of its Parts.*
[140] P. I, Directions for Performance, Score, Jonty Harrison, *Some of its Parts.*
[141] Page 1, Line 1, Score, Jonty Harrison, *Some of its Parts.*

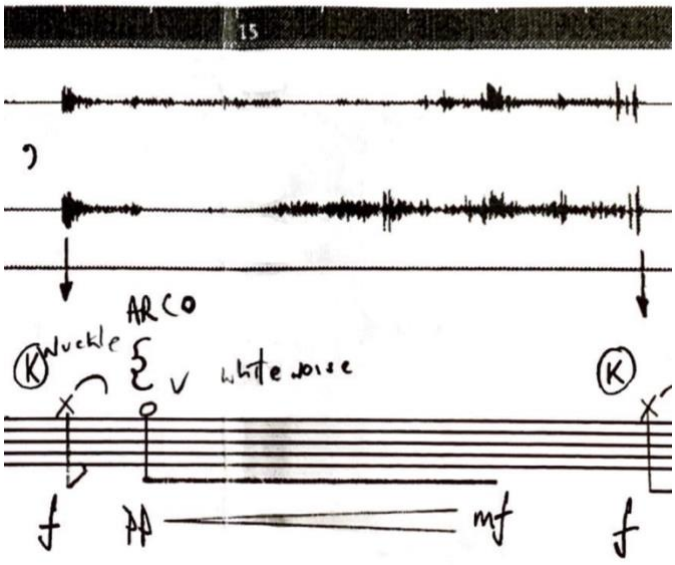
The five initial gestures in *Some of its Parts* all feature this fingernail technique. Originally Harrison had intended this sonority to be produced by a tap on the body of the violin with the screw of the bow; however, this potentially could damage the instrument's varnish/wood. I suggested an alternative; flicking my right-hand index fingernail onto the table of the violin body, which sonically resulted in greater resonance. It was also more efficient in co-ordinating the closest possible integration of these 'fingernail flicks' with the electroacoustic material.

Tapping the body of the violin
K - tap the body of violin with knuckles[142]

I have spent many years regularly checking the back of my violin to test if the glued seams were 'open', by gently knocking its edges with my right-hand index finger knuckle and listening for a resonating pure and hollow tone. If the violin is 'open' then it does not resonate naturally, indicating it needs re-gluing. This '*K'* technique was a natural extension of this physical test; I gently knock with my knuckle on the centre of the back of the violin's belly, where the wood vibrates most, generating a reverberant without damaging the instrument.

Bowing the body of the violin
Bow body of violin[143]

Example 58[144] (Audio Track 48, 0.10-0.20)



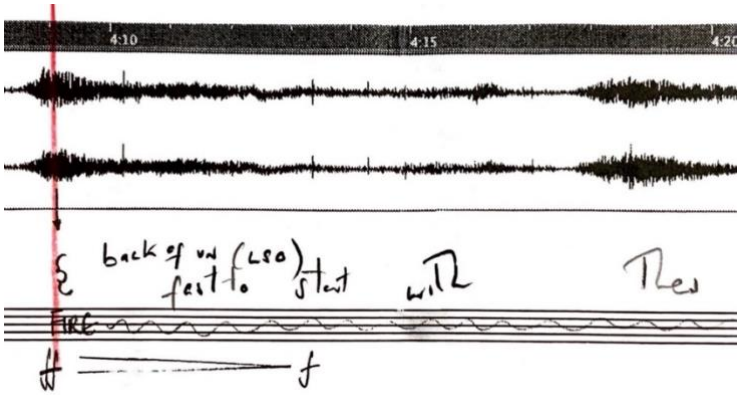
Harrison was interested in me producing a toneless sonic texture of white noise. I demonstrated to him a number of possibilities, including muting my left hand on the strings and playing *arco* very lightly on the bridge over the G string. We subsequently decided that the strongest result was produced by bowing vertically on the corner of the wood purfling

[142] P. I, Directions for Performance, Score, Jonty Harrison, *Some of its Parts.*
[143] Ibid.
[144] Page 1, Line 1, Score, Jonty Harrison, *Some of its Parts.*

beyond the F-hole next to the G string, holding the bow in my fist with an extended index finger sitting on top of the wood as Lachenmann had suggested when demonstrating dynamic nuances. Producing this technique near the F-hole meant that even with the overall sound being relatively soft, the violin's natural resonators helped increase the sonority of the timbres, and by avoiding proximity to the string there is no risk of unwanted pitches sounding. To achieve as audible a crescendo as possible in the resultant quiet white noise, I used bow speed to control the dynamic variance. By moving the bow very slowly for the majority of the duration of this note, increasing its momentum only at the end of the note's duration, I discovered that rather than creating a traditional sounding exponential crescendo, I was able to draw the listeners' ear to the increase in volume of a non-conventional timbre that was not pitch related and the inherent changes in the timbre within that crescendo.

Fire
'fire'[145]

Example 59[146] (Audio Track 48, 4.09-4.20)



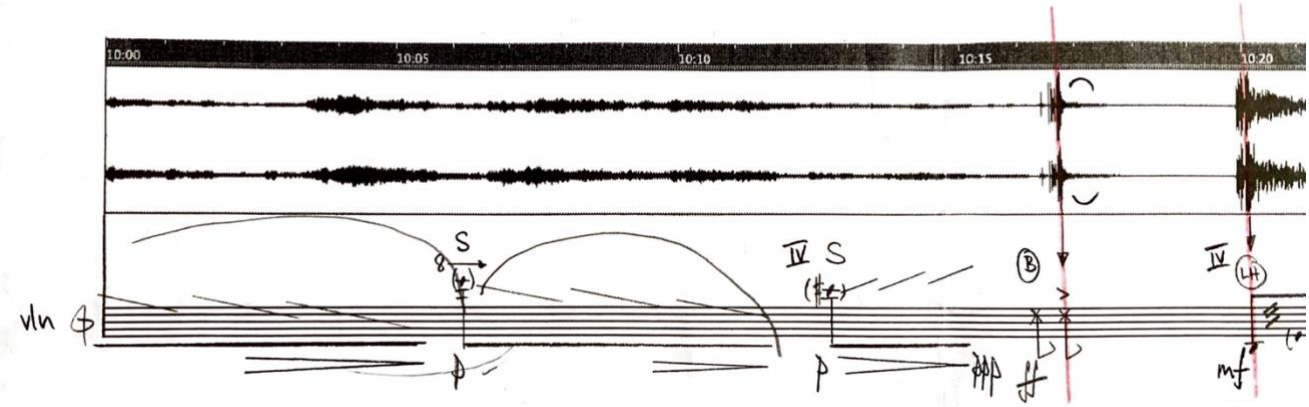
At 4.09 Harrison adds this term to the notation within the score. During our source recording session, I demonstrated this technique to Harrison. Again, holding the bow in my fist for security and control of tightness, I placed my bow on the middle of the back of the violin, perpendicular to the wood of the belly. By rotating the wood of the bow very slowly through 180 degrees, pressing the horsehair into the back of the violin, the horse hair's crenelations create a crackling timbre as they make contact and activate the wood of the violin.

Harrison was fascinated by how 'fire'-like this crackling sound was, inspiring the musical symbiosis that Harrison speaks of in his programme notes between the percussive sounds the violin can produce and nature of the material he was creating in the electroacoustic component. This extreme sonority expands perspectives of the range of timbral qualities that can be achieved on the violin.

[145] P. I, Directions for Performance, Score, Jonty Harrison, *Some of its Parts.*
[146] Page 4, Line 1, Score, Jonty Harrison, *Some of its Parts.*

Seagull
'seagull'[147]

Example 60[148] (Audio Track 48, 10.00-10.20)



To generate this sound, I place my fingers high on the G string with my first fully depressed and the third extended and lightly touching the string, producing the tone of a false harmonic on no exact pitch. The same pitch of false harmonics can in fact be played on different parts of the string, with different spacing between the fingers. I then *glissando* slowly downwards, decreasing the size of the interval between my first and third fingers though continually treating the third finger as a lightly touching harmonic. The resultant effect produced in this *glissando* slide is a sound similar to the call seagulls make. I suggested to Harrison, we employ it on the G string of the violin where the technique works best due to it being the thickest string with the largest surface area for the skin of my left-hand fingers to cover.

Co-ordination and synchronisation

> *'In the case of Jonty Harrison…the composer of "Some of its Parts", the use of tapes requires Morgan to coordinate perfectly or fall out of sync. "Some of its Parts" features scraping, rumbling, and percussive sounds, like someone rolling fist-size iron balls around inside a piano as it's wheeled back and forth across the stereo field.'*[149]

Synchronisation between the live violin material and the fixed media soundtrack is critical in defining the musical architecture of this work. The full performance score presents the live violin line in proportional notation, with time references noted in five second chunks, set against a graphic reproduction of the waveform of the soundtrack.

To synchronize confidently with this soundtrack which is, of course fixed, I firstly needed to undertake an in-depth aural study and memorization of as much of this material as possible. Learning a sonic language like this for a classical instrumentalist is illuminating but complex due to lack of familiarity with the sound world. On initial listening, many of the textures sound very similar (with the previously discussed *'knackern'* effect regularly quoted even in the fixed media part). Only after multiple listening's does it filter into one's sub-conscious aural memory; granular scrapes or crunches of percussive creaks start to make sense in terms of architecture and compositional approach allowing me to anticipate their appearances, aiding my technical

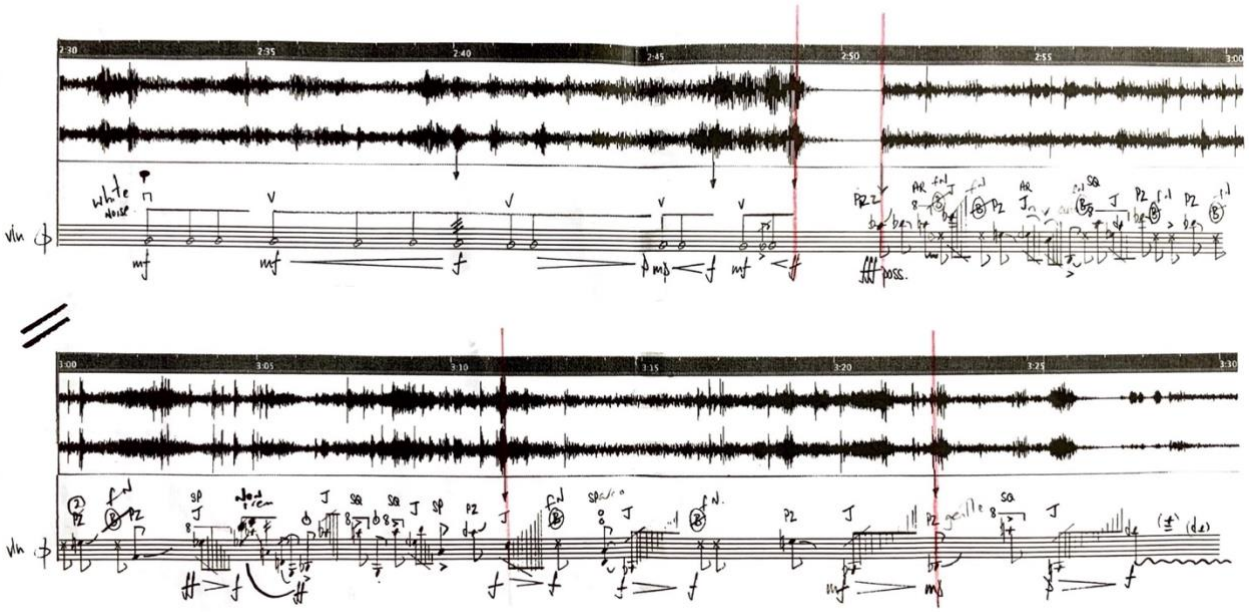
[147] P. I, Directions for Performance, Score, Jonty Harrison, *Some of its Parts.*
[148] Page 8, Line 1, Score, Jonty Harrison, *Some of its Parts.*
[149] P. Freeman, *The Unorthodox Violin Work of Darragh Morgan*, Bandcamp Daily Feature, 26th May 2017, https://daily.bandcamp.com/features/darragh-morgan-feature, last accessed 8th May 2022.

preparation. Slowly, over a period of two weeks I embedded this fixed media material into my aural memory whilst simultaneously studying the live violin music. I used two methodologies to co-ordinate live and fixed elements; my stopwatch as well as reacting in real time with my aural knowledge of the fixed media material and how it lined up with the live part.

The skill of playing strictly in synchronisation with material which is fixed has evolved from many previous experiences on which I drew, including performances of the music of Steve Reich both solo and with The Smith Quartet. These experiences helped me build confidence and technique to facilitate me to play musically and with tonal quality against the fixed soundtrack.

Performance with stopwatch

Example 61[150] (Audio Track 48, 2.30-3.30)

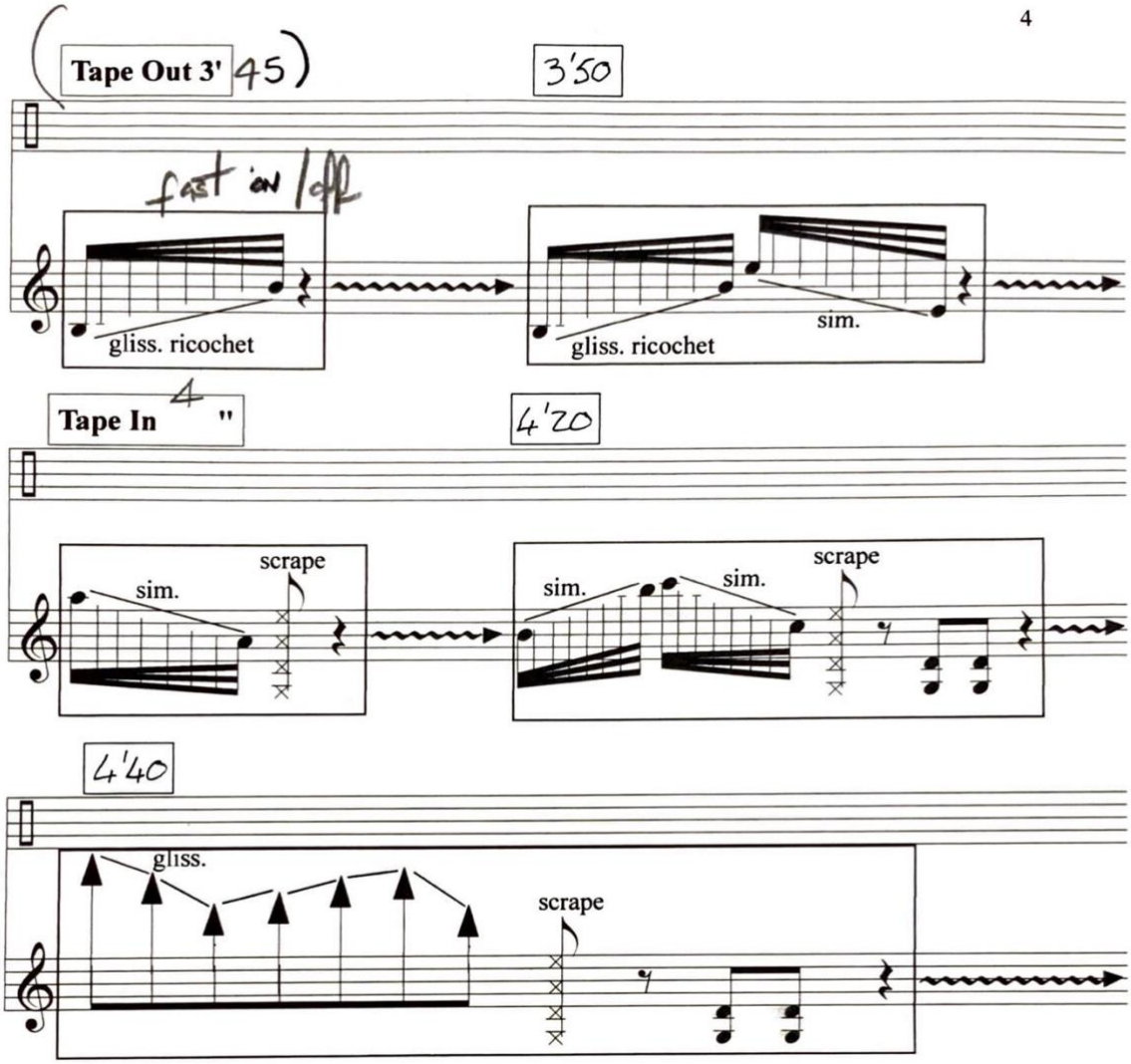


Some of its Parts combines multiple extended techniques and fast virtuosic writing such as in the above passage from 2.55-3.30. I needed to perform this music in a soloistic virtuosic manner, reacting aurally to the fixed media material, whilst checking my stopwatch to ensure I am synchronised with it, in Example 61 at 3 minutes 11 seconds.

Playing whilst referencing a stopwatch requires a further sensory developmental experience; classical musicians inherently spend large amounts of their studies looking solely at sheet music on a stand, on occasion combined with memorisation. An early formative encounter that helped me develop this expertise was performing Frank Lyons' first composition for me *Blitzed!*[151]. To co-ordinate with the tape part in this work, I needed to constantly follow a stopwatch to know and react to timings articulating blocks of semi-improvised musical cells. Though there was a freedom within the notated violin material of this work, constantly referring to a stopwatch for co-ordination with the soundtrack required disciplined eye movement from score to stopwatch and back, to remain concentrated and focussed on the musical line.

[150] Page 3, Lines 1-2, Score, Jonty Harrison, *Some of its Parts.*
[151] Frank Lyons, *Blitzed!* for Amplified Violin and Electroacoustic Tape, 1998.

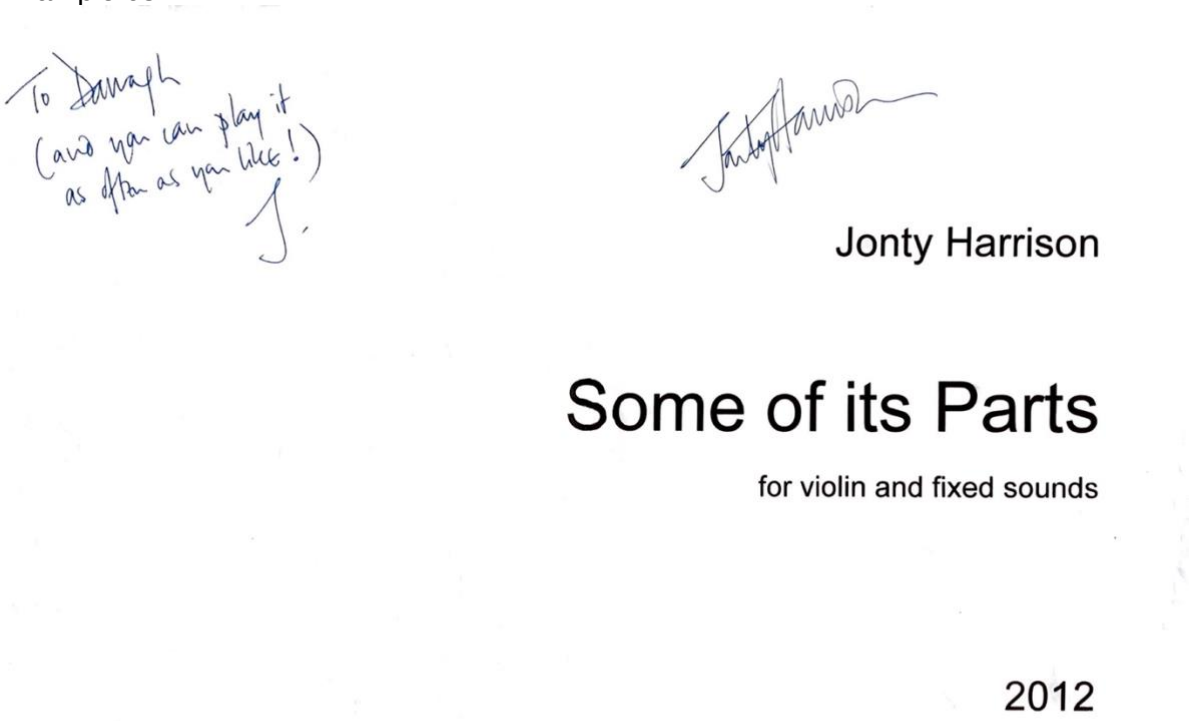
Example 62[152]



Even in a piece with notation as complex as Harrison's the use of a stopwatch did not restrict my performative and interpretative approach. The live solo violin part in *Some of its Parts* is amplified, making it essential to be in control of instrumental dynamics to balance with the soundtrack, with the added complication that the preferred format for diffusing the soundtrack is 5.1. However, the skills and aural awareness that I have developed over many years of preparing, performing and recording numerous pieces using soundtracks, live processing, click tracks, amplification, and foot pedals allow me to approach works such as *Some of its Parts* with confidence.

[152] Page 4, Lines 1-3, Score, Frank Lyons, *Blitzed!* for Amplified Violin and Electroacoustic Tape https://soundcloud.com/fr-lyons/blitzed

Example 63[153]



Nick Roth, of Diatribe Records who released *For Violin And Electronics* calls out Harrison's *Some of Its Parts* as a personal highlight.

"I love the integration of the instrument into the industrial vocabulary of the soundscape."[154]

Chapter summary

The analytical discussion I have provided in this chapter is important in understanding how I have directly influenced compositional and notational decisions through close collaboration with four composers. In Hayes' *Opera*, we perhaps see the baroque influence on contemporary music coming full-circle with baroque compositional materials used as a point of departure, refined through the previously mentioned development of my individual approach to baroque-influenced performance techniques. My work with Causton on *Seven States of Rain* led to my developing new *pizzicato* techniques to cope with the physical demands of the music and the ergonomic challenges of the instrument including movement across strings and relative string tension depending on distance from the bridge. My collaboration with Whitty on *thirty-nine* pages prompted him to explore his 'obsession with the provenance of musical materials' through fragmentation and restructuring of Franck's *Violin Sonata in A Major.* I have also provided insights into how I approach rehearsal and performance of gestural cues to navigate complex scores. My close collaboration with Harrison on *Some of Its Parts* provided much of the sonic material that was ultimately used in the electronic soundtrack and prompted development of extended techniques in the live violin part, including variation of extreme bow pressure using my carbon fibre bow, bowing of the violin body for colour variation of white noise and effects suggestive of fire crackling and seagull cries. I also discussed solutions to the challenges posed in synchronising live performance with a soundtrack.

[153] Jonty Harrison, Darragh Morgan's Personal Copy *Some of its Parts*, 2012, signed cover dedication.
[154] P. Freeman, *The Unorthodox Violin Work of Darragh Morgan*, Bandcamp Daily Feature, 26th May 2017, https://daily.bandcamp.com/features/darragh-morgan-feature, last accessed 8th May 2022.

Chapter Five: Irish traditional music and my approach to the violin music of Michael Finnissy

In this chapter, I will outline my personal approach to performing Irish traditional music and will examine how this influences my performative approach to works by one of the titans of new music, Michael Finnissy; *Seterjentens fridag*, *Mississippi Hornpipes* and Violin Sonata.

Michael Finnissy wrote *Seterjentens fridag* in 2003, originally for Norwegian Hardanger Fiddle, (*Hardingfele*) either solo or with accompaniment (reed-organ and piano, or either one of these, live or pre-recorded and instrumental quartet). The violin part is divided into two types of materials; pages 1, 3 and 5 of the violin score are typically Finnissy in style with highly complex musical language and pages 2 and 4 are made up of a series of cells of material to be improvised or freely elaborated upon by the performer. When Finnissy sent me *Seterjentens fridag* in 2007, his arresting, complex notation made perfect sense to me. I connected to this enigmatic music without barlines, perhaps as a result of my previous studies with Paul Zukofsky who often rebarred music in different time signatures from how they were originally notated.[155] Produced in Finnissy's immaculate hand, the notation in itself suggested so much in the way of tempo, phrasing, articulation and expression.

His use of grace notes, often in multiple groups, and the vivid fast writing of hemi-demi-semiquavers encouraged me to explore the interplay between my cultural identity rooted in Irish traditional music, and the identity of this musical language. I revisited my years of youthful experience playing folk music to inform my approach to interpreting *Seterjentens fridag*.

Finnissy employs *acciaccaturas*, mordents (executed on separate bow strokes) and scotch snaps throughout his repertoire of grace note types in the violin material of *Seterjentens fridag*. Judging the weight and speed of rhythmic inflection required to execute these ornaments convincingly felt entirely natural to me when I first studied this music and I was able to quickly decide on the types of bow stroke required to keep the music sounding natural and almost improvised.

Roots of tradition: influential aspects of style in Irish traditional music

My personal connection to Irish traditional music began with my childhood summers in Co. Sligo, Ireland. Tuesday evenings meant a visit to the Trades Club and Sligo Town's branch of *Comhaltas Ceoltóiri Éireann* under the watchful eye of Sligo fiddle legend Joe O'Dowd. The melodious and virtuosic playing style cultivated through the great south Sligo fiddle traditions of Michael Coleman and Fred Finn and later O'Dowd, with repertoire including the many Planxtys of Turlough Carolan, sparked in me an energetic enthusiasm for Irish traditional music that has stimulated the sonic space around me ever since, leaving an indelible impact on my musical DNA. This intercultural musical heritage and comprehensive understanding of Irish fiddle playing has contributed greatly to my own unique skillset as a violinist, at home in both traditional and contemporary music. In later years at Guildhall School of Music and Drama, my professor Detlef Hahn taught me how to think about playing the violin, creating an awareness and understanding of complete control of the instrument. Not only doing but integrating the 'how' and 'why'. These skills have allowed me to reflexively consider the intersections in my own unique personality as a violinist and musician.

Analysing Joe O'Dowd's technique, I noted he played mostly in the middle of the bow, the balancing point which is the best weighted position for cuts (grace notes) and bow trebles (a series of rapid down and up bow strokes with increased pressure into the string). The playing

[155] I had significant experiences to draw on from previous discussions with Paul Zukofsky where he had shown me re-groupings of bar lengths (and phrase structures) in Haydn Symphonies and also his complete re-barring of the 3rd movement of Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto into time signatures that complemented his idea of phrase structure.

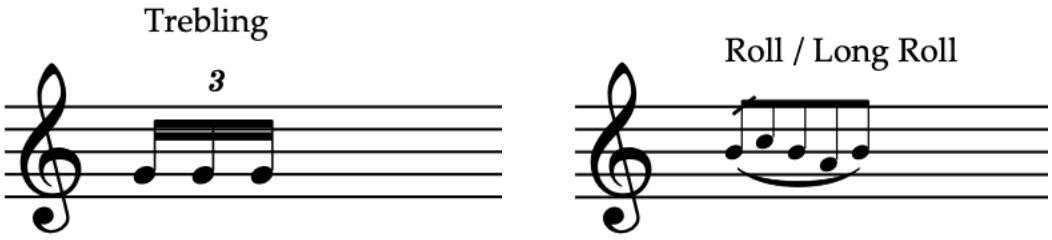
style of using a tiny amount of bow (a common trait in Sligo fiddle style) in these articulations and seldom using slurred bowing gestures, was not only applicable to Irish traditional fiddle playing, but a common feature of Scandinavian traditional string playing, in particular Swedish *Nyckelharpa* (Keyed) fiddle and the Norwegian *Hardanger* fiddle. A comparative example of clear parallels in string playing style between Irish and Scandinavian music is in fiddle player Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh's performance on a Hardanger d'Amore fiddle in his recording of 'Má Tá / If and only If'.[156] His ornamental use of rolls and grace notes embedded within the larger melodic arc sounds very folk-like and organic, yet this is original music created by an Irish artist using an instrument that originates in Norway. Another contemporary comparison can be heard from Anna Lindblad, violinist in Swedish traditional group *Lyy*, where she uses rolls in the faster music of the track *Segertåg*[157] to embellish and characteristically excite the listener's ear in a sound world that could inhabit folk music of both Ireland and Scandinavia.
In my study of bow to string connectivity, I combined Joe O'Dowd's influence with knowledge of the heavy bow treble, ornamented Sligo fiddle style. I have cultivated a natural approach to tension and release in the bow hair to string relationship and, using a taut bow hold, I exploit the crenelations in the horsehair to produce a highly accented articulation. I realise there can be variety in approach to bowing style, weight and articulation based on parallels between Joe O'Dowd's Sligo fiddle style and my own technical grounding, allowing me to combine and embed these ideas into the principles which underpin my own musical identity.

Interconnection between folk styles and *Seterjentens fridag*: insights and outcomes
Seterjentens fridag contains gestures which are similar to ornaments frequently encountered in Irish traditional music, examples of which are shown below.[158]

1. Trebling: a rhythmic effect with the bow, often featured in Sligo fiddle style, with three very short accentuated bow-strokes within a quaver beat.

2. Roll/long roll: a left hand, five-note gesture starting on the principal note, to the note above, back to the principal note, to the note below and returning to the principal note. Executed as a fast, sweeping movement.

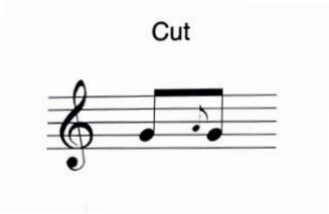
Example 64



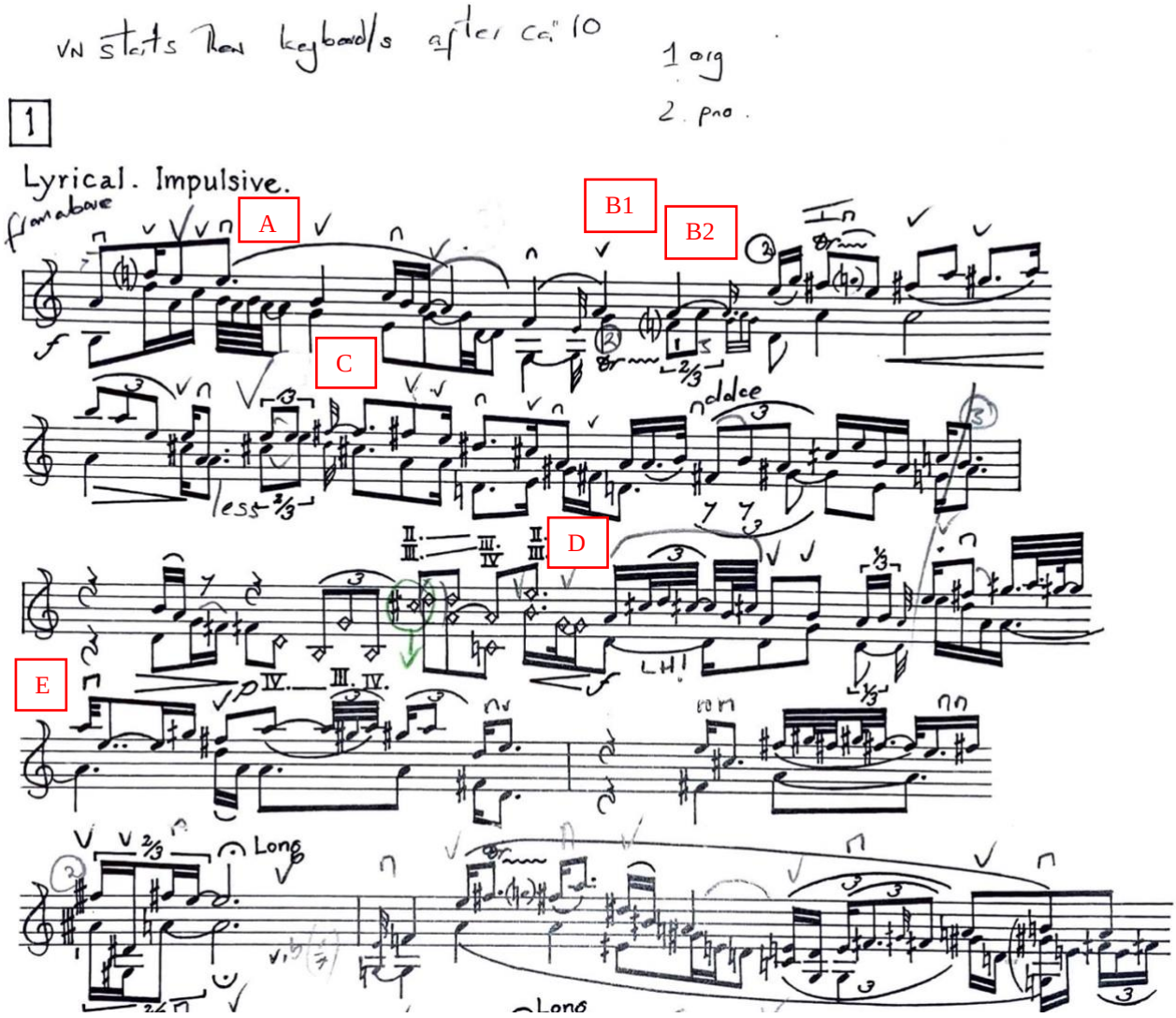
[156] Caoimhín Ó Raghallaigh, *Music for an Elliptical Orbit,* Track 5, Diatribe DIACDSOL005, 2014.
[157] Lyy, *Lyy,* Track 1, DIS007, 2010.
[158] F. Vallely, *The Companion to Irish Traditional Music,* 1999, New York University Press, p. 124, p. 322, p. 156.

3. Cuts/grace notes: when the same pitch appears twice in succession, the second note is preceded by an upper note grace note.

Example 65



Example 66[159] (Audio Track 54, 0.00-0.59)

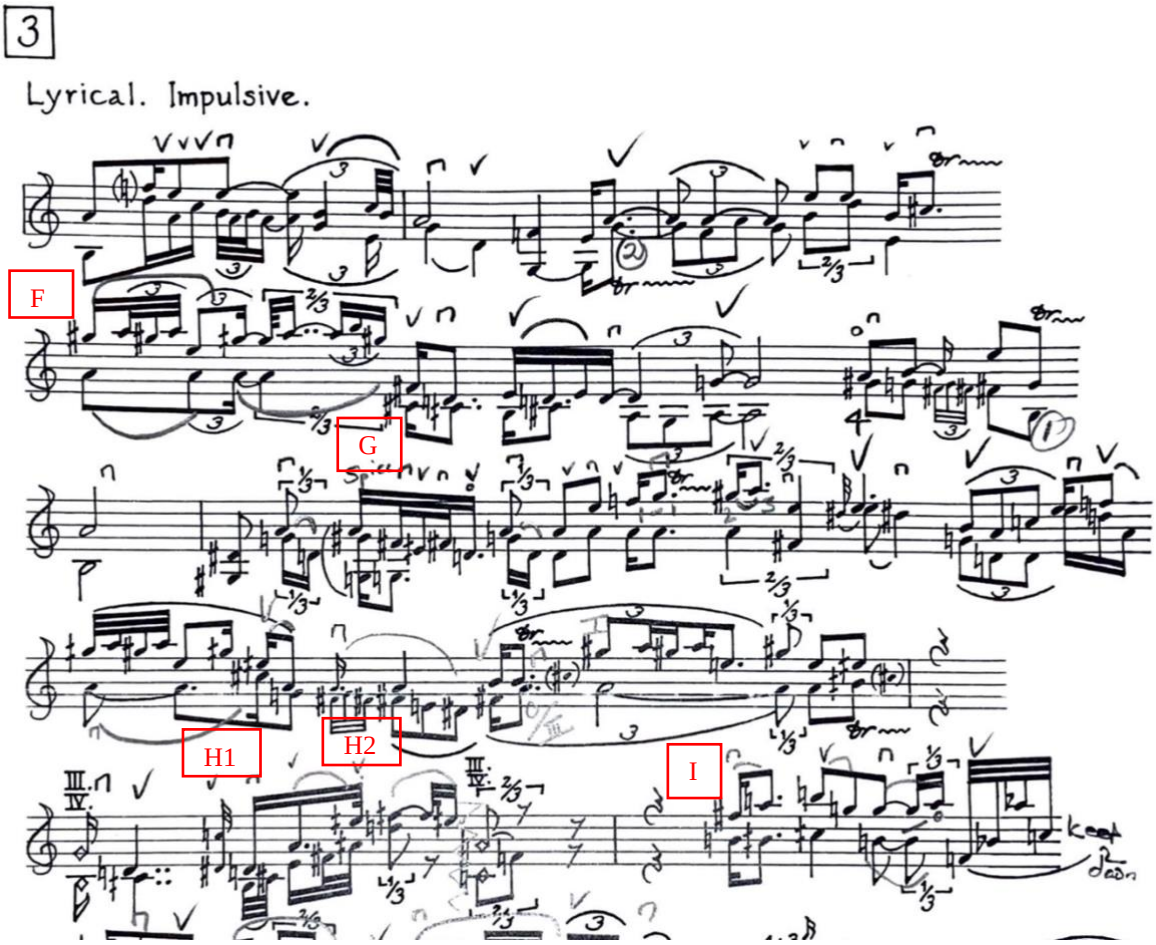


A – This group of notes should be played very fast in a decorative gesture like an Irish traditional music version of a classical trill.

[159] Page 1, Upper Page, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Seterjentens fridag.*

B1 - B2 – The physical preparation of the fast trill in B1 strengthens the fast dexterity of the left hand in order to replicate the trill like group of grace notes in B2. This is similar to a mordent, defined as a cut in Irish traditional music, and applied by me here with a characteristic and rapid 'cut' approach.
C – By slurring the preceding double stop C#-E on an up bow, and by lifting the bow briefly from the string at the frog, the double stop grace notes D-F# conveys the feeling of a weighted upbeat. From my assimilation of elements of Joe O'Dowd's style, I apply here a synthesis of the correct amount of weight, gravity and speed in the bow, to create the necessary folk-like effect.
D – Similar to my approach in Irish traditional music ornamentation, my strategy here is to play this 'roll' gesture in 1st position on the A string, the best position for clear timbral projection, and to keep my 2nd finger firmly on the fingerboard, whilst very quickly articulating the 3rd finger D upwards and downwards.
E – My Joe O'Dowd-influenced approach to bow-string connectivity is applied here, with focus on playing incredibly fast articulation in the middle of the bow. The accentuation and speed of the *acciaccatura*-like A, with my additional left hand *pizzicato*-like flick of the third finger, generates a grit into the sound as appropriate to the hardanger fiddle influence in this music.

Example 67[160] (Audio Track 54, 2.59-3.57)

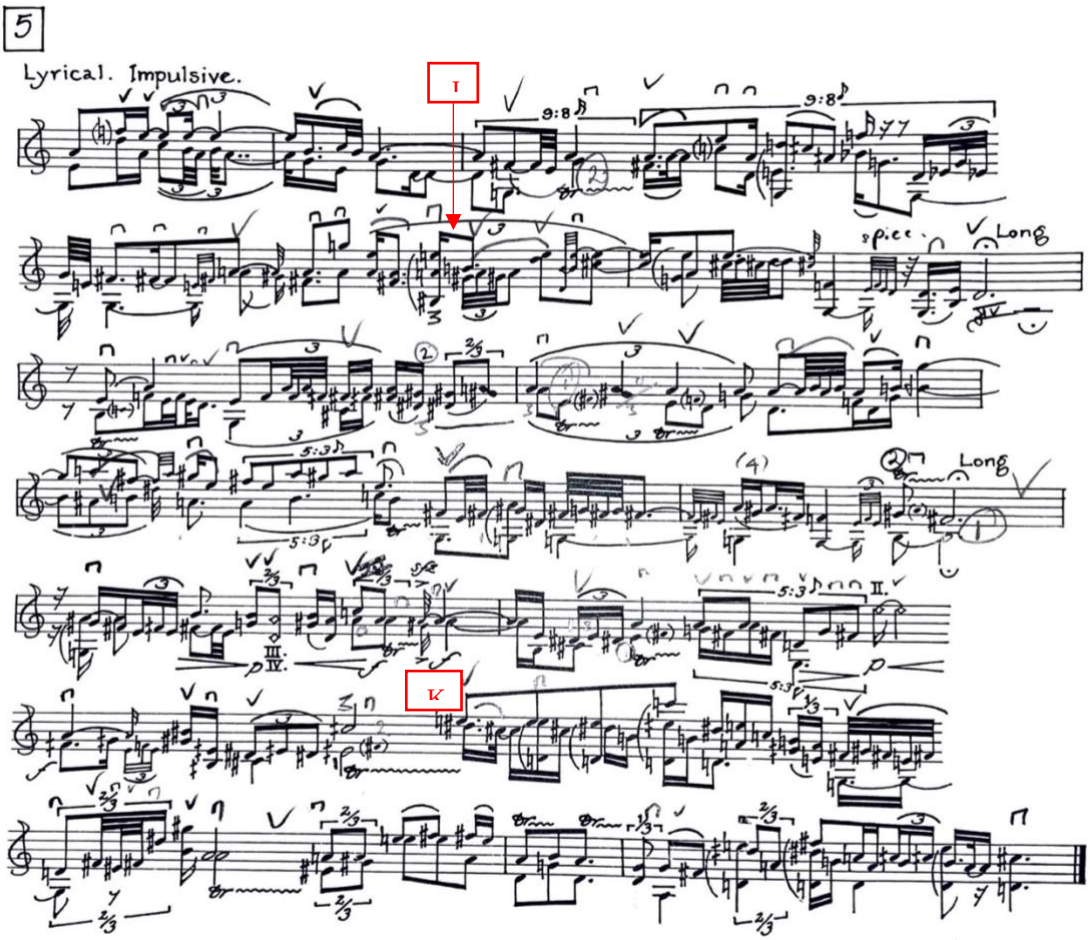


F – A variation around G#. By using a technique embedded in my playing style since learning the Irish traditional long roll ornament, I was able to imbue folk qualities that authentic

[160] Page 3, Upper Page, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Seterjentens fridag.*

'hardanger' fiddle players may be heard to create. Here, I exploit the dexterity developed in my 2nd finger, moving it up and down very rapidly to execute the written gesture.
G – This fast spiccato *jeté* articulation evolved from both my Irish traditional music experiences, and also my acute awareness of the exact balancing point in the bow where a *ricochet* effect can be created by allowing the bow to drop at a 90-degree angle on to the string, with gravitational bounce rather than the horizonal bowing of a standard *jeté* or *ricochet*.
H1 – H2 – The *collé* violin bow stroke achieved by directing the bow with just the right-hand finger joints, whilst keeping the right arm still. The reaction time where bow hair and string connect is very short but when produced correctly creates enhanced articulation.
H1The double stop D#-C grace notes, played on an up bow, at the heel, lightly as a *collé*, helps strengthen the same gesture in H2 - a double stop E-A, quartertone sharp, fractionally longer in duration than H1 produced on the thinner A-E strings.
I– Joe O'Dowd often used slides, particularly in mazurkas. The lower note of the double-stop in I, B natural, needs to navigate upwards a quartertone to a B quartertone sharp, and the most convincing way to produce this is in the form of a slide between the two notes, played fast over the short interval span. I combine elements of slides from my left-hand technique developed in Irish traditional fiddle playing and my experiences performing microtonal music.

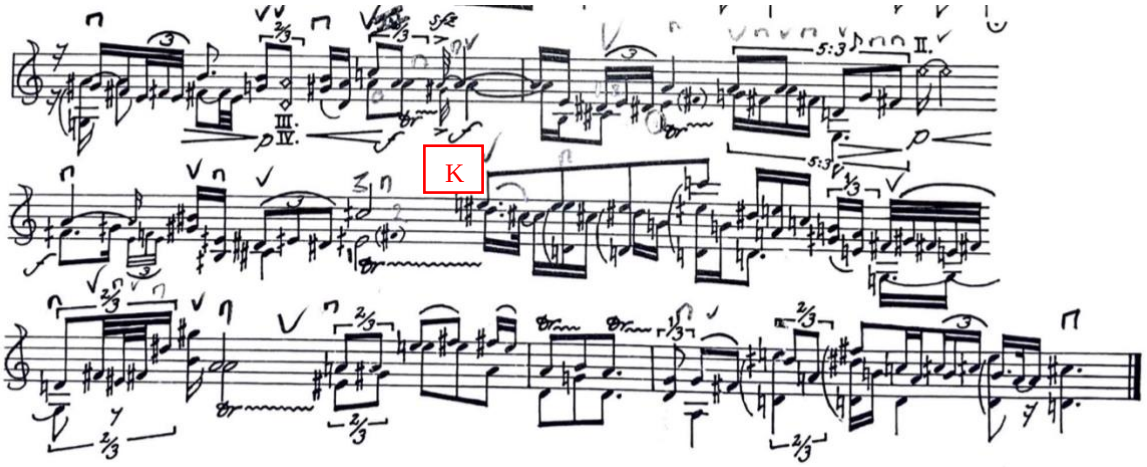
Example 68[161] (Audio Track 54, 6.13-7.58)



[161] Page 5, Upper Page, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Seterjentens fridag.*

J – The elements of this gesture and phrase require consideration of one of the primary technical challenges of violin playing, string crossing. By catching two plus two strings quickly together and by not letting the bow settle into one secure string angle, I discovered that my right elbow acts as a rotating pivot, curving the bow across the strings. This creates the aural impression of ease in performing music containing complex violin passagework.

Example 69[162] (Audio Track 54, 7.12-7.58)



K – An example of difficult string crossing, with left hand pattern constantly changing.

In September 2021, I discussed with Finnissy his perspectives on incorporating folk music elements within his violin writing, allowing me to relate these to my own experiences as I created a personal interpretation of *Seterjentens fridag*. The following is an extract from our email correspondence on the subject.

DM*: I know you have for a long time been fascinated with a range of folk music. Whether it's writing Seterjentens fridag, Mississippi Hornpipes, or our forthcoming new Carolan project[163]. Do you have a particular folk fiddle/violin sound in mind when writing these?*

MF: *To free-up the process of composing, I have to get beyond something as specific as "violin/folk-fiddle sound". In my head there are sounds that gradually, sometimes immediately, morph into potential material, but they are more focussed on pitches, registers and durations (or rhythms) than on a specific timbre. It is different, I think, for some other composers. At a later stage (which can be almost immediately after, like a nano-second after) I'll consider the specifics: a violin, a flute, or a bagpipe, but also a huge number of other considerations, which often imply research: mood, drama, my limitations. Order and chaos hand-in-hand. If I care to, I can ask you (or whoever I am working with) for a particular sound, but* ***after*** *I've written something down: then I would need to hear what you thought it should sound like. I don't have pre-conceptions, but I do have opinions! You hit the spot, that's why I'm still talking to you!!! Actually, I am much more interested in the matter of Folk Music from a political and aesthetic point-of-view, as SOURCE-MUSIC which has co-existed with the ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY. Both are sophisticated and regulated by accumulated and constantly-changing traditions and conventions, but the outlook and needs of their practitioners have diverged over*

[162] Ibid.
[163] In 2022 with funds from RVW Charitable Trust I commissioned a new work from Finnissy *Carolan and his friends* for violin, pre-recorded piano and harpsichord based on the music of 17th Century Irish harper/composer Turlough Carolan, Premieres Chamber Music on Valentia August 2022, Café Oto London November 2022.

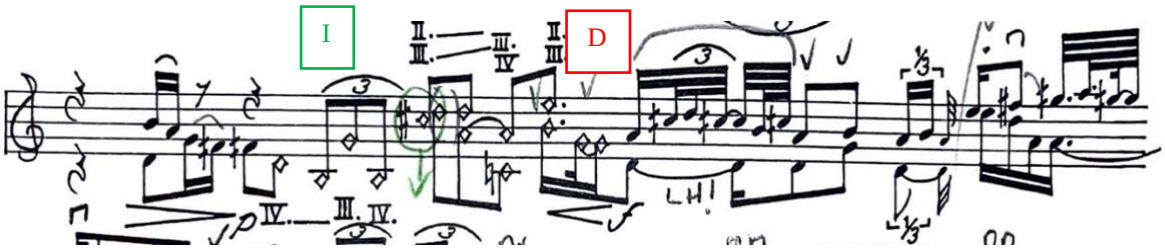
*time. To a certain extent I am **lamenting** the divergence: I detest the current expression 'Music BUSINESS'. Fortunately, it seems to exclude contemporary Art music most of the time - but as financially, rather than philosophically, inept and - in the end - unnecessary.*[164]

In this correspondence I was interested in documenting specifically how Finnissy works with the actual sound of folk music on the violin. In his responses, Finnissy touches upon political questions too, not focusing exclusively on inspiration and technique. I am particularly conscious of his approach to '…sounds that gradually, sometimes immediately, morph into potential material…than on a specific timbre' in performing all of his music for violin and piano. Interestingly, I feel our musical relationship goes deeper than just my role as a performer, suggested when he notes, '…. I would need to hear what *you* thought it should sound like…. You hit the spot, that's why I'm still talking to you'.

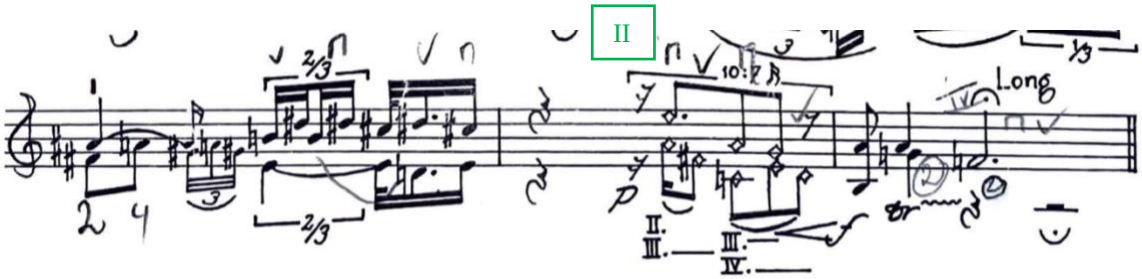
Harmonics

Much of my technical security in executing harmonics developed from my experiences performing the string repertoire of Italian composer, Salvatore Sciarrino. I collaborated closely with Sciarrino on his *Sei Capricci* for solo violin whilst preparing for the premiere of his opera *Macbeth* in Festival d'Automne á Paris with Ensemble Modern. This afforded me the unique opportunity of an in-depth learning experience and encounter with a composer, the vast majority of whose string writing explores harmonics – natural, stopped or half-pressure with left hand on the fingerboard. Working with Sciarrino on his *Sei Capricci* gave me opportunities to explore in detail, exactly the types of timbres he wished to be achieved from that variety of harmonics. Sciarrino's string timbres in general have a wistful sonority, created through a combination of lightness of left hand/bow pressure, very fast material presented in flourishes and the speed of bow required to create a wide variety of tonal colours. He demands sonic elasticity no matter the dynamic gradient stipulated in the score. Immersion in this pioneering approach helped me discover a variety of finger pressures and left-hand positions for both artificial and natural harmonics which generate precision and clarity in their execution.

Example 70[165] (Audio Track 54, 0.26-0.35)



Example 71[166] (Audio Track 54, 1.16-1.30)



[164] Email correspondence, Darragh Morgan and Michael Finnissy, 23rd September 2021.
[165] Page 1, Line 3, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Seterjentens fridag.*
[166] Page 1, Final Line, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Seterjentens fridag.*

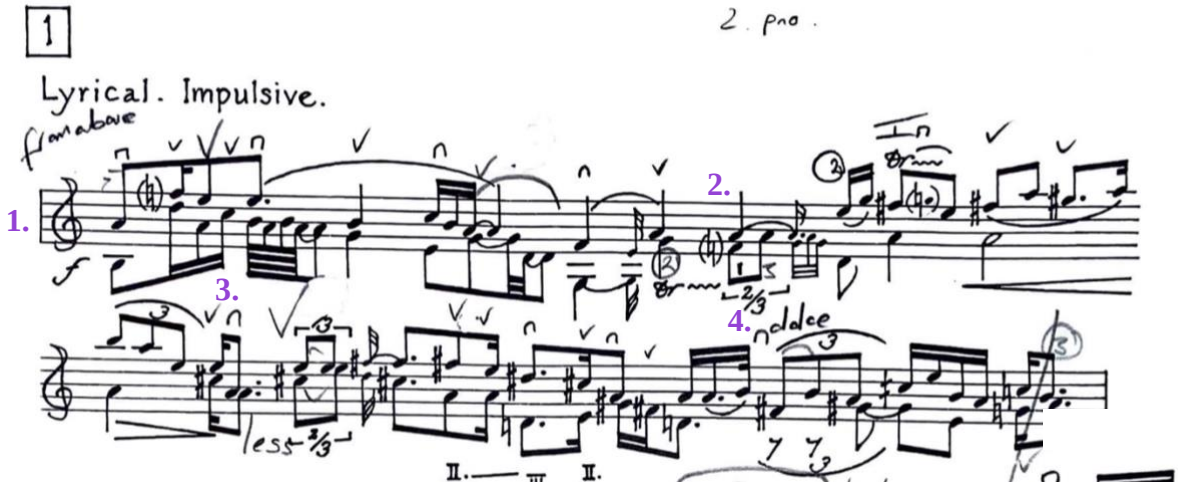
In Examples 70 and 71, I & II are notated by Finnissy as natural harmonics. He indicates where each finger should be placed for the required harmonic to sound. To achieve optimum clarity in these harmonics, I focused on physical elements in my left-hand such as the type of curvature needed in the first and second joints of my fingers, the amount of left-hand pressure required, and the finger pad circumference. These elements, combined with my awareness of how to constantly vary the bow speed nearer the bridge allowed me to securely catch each harmonic.

Finnissy's notation - time signatures, bar lengths and phrasing

At first glance and without the assistance of written time signatures, each bar in *Seterjentens fridag* can look very long (the first bar line on page 1 is at the end of system 2). I don't regard the sparse use of bar lines as an issue, more an open book for flexible exploration of phrase structure.

Music notated in Finnissy's own hand looks very active and complex on the page and it can suggest that the general tempo should not be slow. In my interpretation, in the absence of barlines, I use narrative and natural contours to identify subphrases in the opening two lines of *Seterjentens fridag*, shown in the example below as 1. 2. 3. 4.

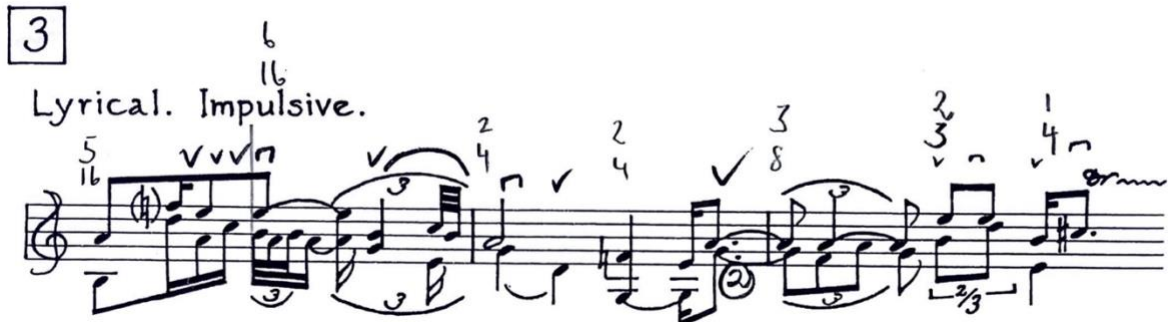
Example 72[167] (Audio Track 54, 0.00-0.25)



In Example 73, from page 3, first system, I have indicated how I hear the music if I was to use formal time signatures as a means of developing rhythmic security in playing this passage, resulting in bars of 5/16, 6/16, 2/4, 2/4, 3/8, 2/3, 1/4. Interestingly, I incorporate a rarely used time signature, that of 2/3, two thirds of a triplet, as frequently encountered in Thomas Adès' 'Piano Quintet'.

[167] Page 1, Lines 1-2, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Seterjentens fridag.*

Example 73[168] (Audio Track 54, 2.59-3.10)

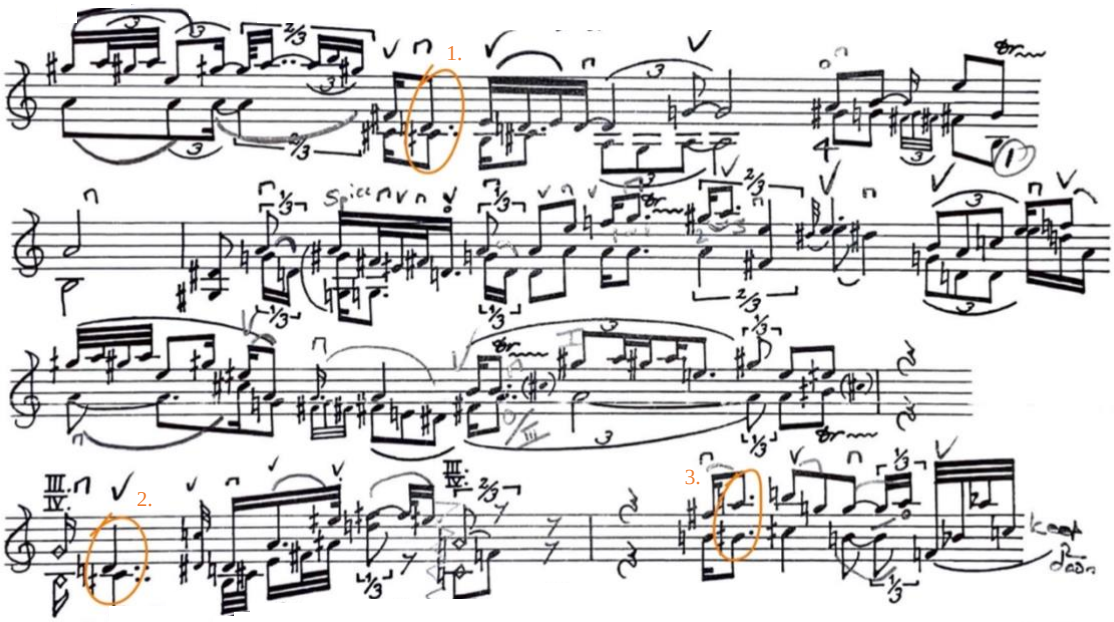


Finnissy described my interpretation of *Seterjentens fridag* when he first heard it as a 'beautiful performance', saying I had carte-blanche to decide on articulation, in order to convey phrasing on a classical violin as if emulating a folk musician playing a hardanger fiddle. This was made easier as Finnissy had very thoughtfully added bow slurring to the notated music. I perceived these slurs as *legato* phrase marks to indicate continuity of line to which I added further slurs and hooked bowing to reproduce a folk character in the music.

Quarter tones

My strategy in performing the quarter tones notated in *Seterjentens fridag* is to gradually increase the emphasis on these notes, initially drawing the listener's ear into a quasi-folk idiom by playing them lightly, then exaggerating them to increase tension. The notated Example 74 below and the accompanying audio illustrates this clearly. By Example 74 I exaggerate more the quarter tone elements of Finnissy's writing.

Example 74[169] (Audio Track 54, 3.11-3.57)

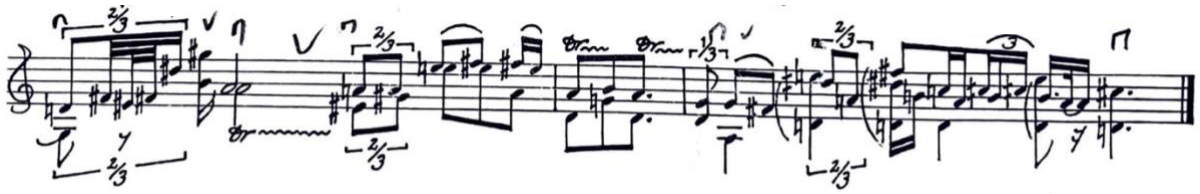


[168] Page 3, Line 1, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Seterjentens fridag.*
[169] Page 3, Upper Page, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Seterjentens fridag.*

Double and triple stops

From page 5 shown in Example 75 below is an example of fast virtuosic violin writing featuring double and triple stopped counterpoint. The music has a compressed quality in which I try to evoke a feeling of breathlessness. The complexity in this last line of *Seterjentens fridag* is clear, featuring sophisticated counterpoint and 2/3 triplet, and yet a folk-like flavour is still evident in Finnissy's writing.

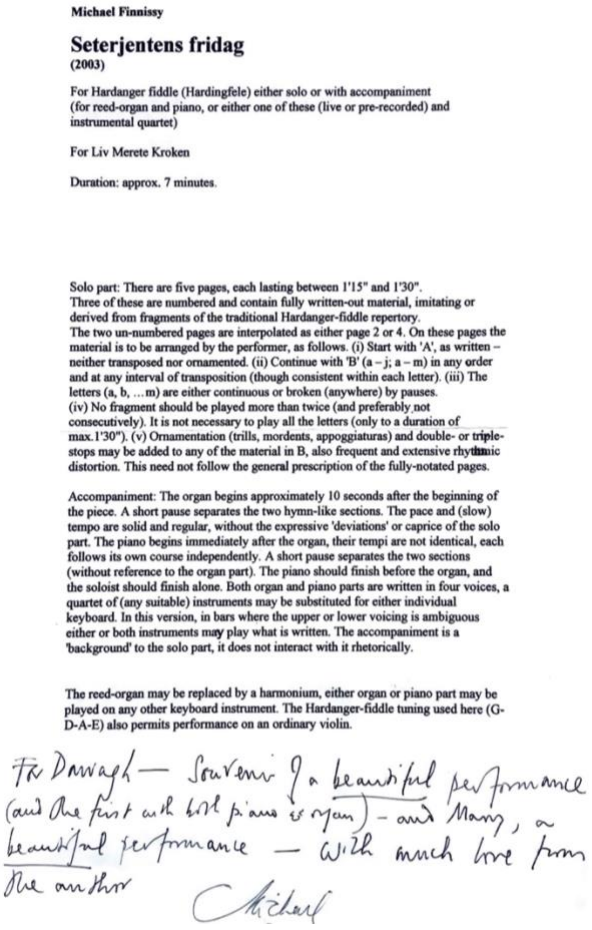
Example 75[170] (Audio Track 54, 7.37-7.58)



Improvisation in *Seterjentens fridag*

The following examples reference a performance on YouTube that I gave of *Seterjentens fridag* with the composer, Michael Finnissy and pianist Adam Swayne at COMA Summer School in 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60TnlbwdWBo[171]

Example 76[172]



Michael Finnissy

Seterjentens fridag
(2003)

For Hardanger fiddle (Hardingfele) either solo or with accompaniment (for reed-organ and piano, or either one of these (live or pre-recorded) and instrumental quartet)

For Liv Merete Kroken

Duration: approx. 7 minutes.

Solo part: There are five pages, each lasting between 1'15" and 1'30". Three of these are numbered and contain fully written-out material, imitating or derived from fragments of the traditional Hardanger-fiddle repertory. The two un-numbered pages are interpolated as either page 2 or 4. On these pages the material is to be arranged by the performer, as follows. (i) Start with 'A', as written – neither transposed nor ornamented. (ii) Continue with 'B' (a – j; a – m) in any order and at any interval of transposition (though consistent within each letter). (iii) The letters (a, b, ...m) are either continuous or broken (anywhere) by pauses. (iv) No fragment should be played more than twice (and preferably not consecutively). It is not necessary to play all the letters (only to a duration of max.1'30"). (v) Ornamentation (trills, mordents, appoggiaturas) and double- or triple-stops may be added to any of the material in B, also frequent and extensive rhythmic distortion. This need not follow the general prescription of the fully-notated pages.

Accompaniment: The organ begins approximately 10 seconds after the beginning of the piece. A short pause separates the two hymn-like sections. The pace and (slow) tempo are solid and regular, without the expressive 'deviations' or caprice of the solo part. The piano begins immediately after the organ, their tempi are not identical, each follows its own course independently. A short pause separates the two sections (without reference to the organ part). The piano should finish before the organ, and the soloist should finish alone. Both organ and piano parts are written in four voices, a quartet of (any suitable) instruments may be substituted for either individual keyboard. In this version, in bars where the upper or lower voicing is ambiguous either or both instruments may play what is written. The accompaniment is a 'background' to the solo part, it does not interact with it rhetorically.

The reed-organ may be replaced by a harmonium, either organ or piano part may be played on any other keyboard instrument. The Hardanger-fiddle tuning used here (G-D-A-E) also permits performance on an ordinary violin.

For Darragh — Souvenir of a beautiful performance (and the first with both piano & organ) — and many, a beautiful performance — With much love from the author

Michael

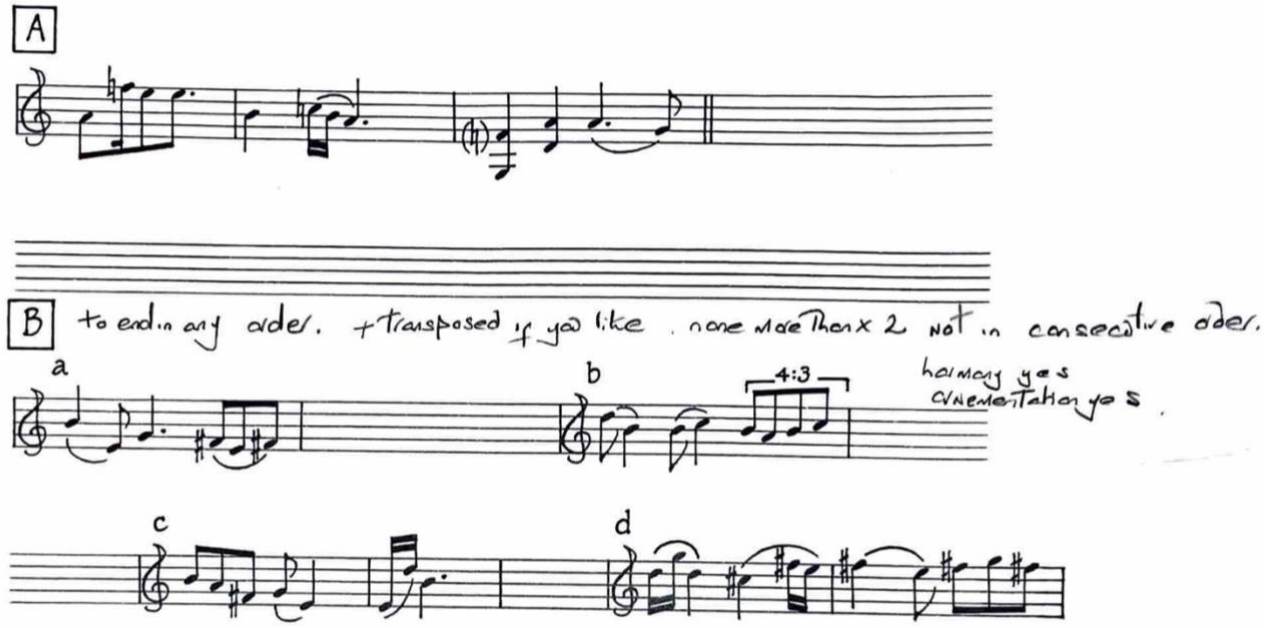
[170] Page 5, Final line, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Seterjentens fridag.*
[171] YouTube Darragh Morgan in concert CoMA (Contemporary Music for All) Released 22nd January 2015.
[172] Michael Finnissy, *Seterjentens fridag,* 2003, Oxford University Press, Cover Page and Dedication.

This is included in addition to my album recording as both Finnissy and I feel that it provides additional insights into live interpretation of the written material. The example above highlights Finnissy's performance instructions from the score and in particular his thinking on interpretation of the fragments of material for improvisation.

Within the structure of the *Seterjentens fridag* there are two unnumbered pages of cells of material for the performer to interpret through improvisation; Cells A and extracts from B are shown in Example 77 below. As recommended by Finnissy, I start with A as written and continue with B with the material reordered, broken by pauses, transposed and decorated by stylistically appropriate ornaments. Resources I utilise to authentically emulate folk idioms include:

- Open strings
- Double stop open strings – to suggest Hardanger Fiddle authenticity
- Left hand rolls
- Left hand upper grace notes before the beat
- Tripletised separate bowing – influenced by Sligo fiddle style (Video time code reference 2.37)

Example 77 (from the score of *Seterjentens fridag*)[173]

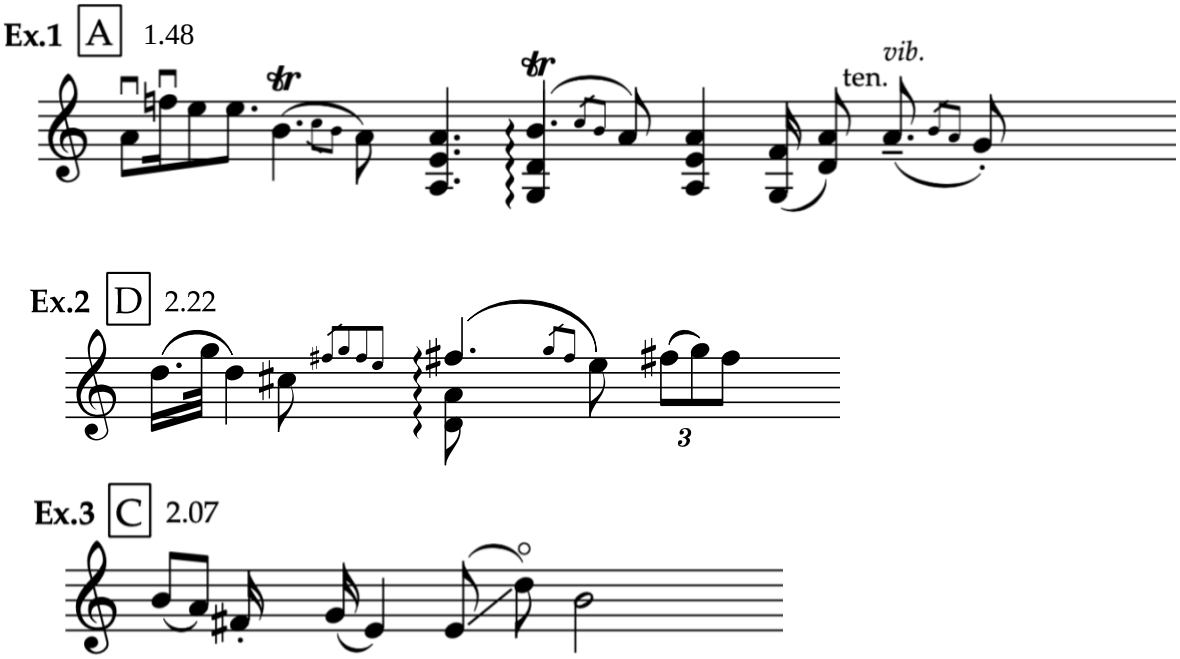


Example 78 below shows transcribed material from my improvisations on Finnissy's cells as follows:

Ex 1 A YouTube (time reference 1.48-1.56)
Ex 2 D YouTube (time reference 2.22-2.26)
Ex 3 C YouTube (time reference 2.07-2.11)

[173] Page 2, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Seterjentens fridag.*

Example 78[174]



The role of the two keyboard parts in *Seterjentens fridag* is deliberately blurred, to provide a background of independent, non-reactionary material. This cushion of sound acts as a sonic 'comfort zone' to enhance the foreground contrasting virtuosic, complex and folk-like elements of the violin material.

Finnissy told me this keyboard music was just 'letting it all hang out'! Fanfare Magazine stated, *'Even those who experience difficulty in forging emotional connections to Finnissy's compositions should be able to admire the composer's quirky insight, the brilliance of the textures the performers have created'.*[175]

Reflections on *Mississippi Hornpipes*

The first work by Finnissy I remember listening to and devouring the score of, in the old BMIC[176] library of 10 Stratford Place, London, was a recording of his virtuosic solo violin work *Enek*, impressively played by Charles Mutter, then violinist in Andrew Toovey's Ixion Ensemble on Finnissy's NMC Mars + Venus album. I was intrigued to discover *Enek* had been written for and dedicated to Yfrah Neaman with whom I had previously experienced illuminating chamber music coaching sessions as a young string quartet player on the 1990 Cambridge String Quartet Symposium (along with Yehudi Menuhin, Sidney Griller and Martin Lovett of Amadeus Quartet).

The violin writing in *Enek* was what I would soon discover to be typical of Finnissy's compositional euphoric verve. On the same BMIC visit I uncovered the score of his ferociously complex *Mississippi Hornpipes* for Violin and Piano.

[174] Darragh Morgan notated improvisations from Page 2, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Seterjentens fridag.*
[175] R. Maxham, 'FINNISSY: Mississippi Hornpipes', *Fanfare Magazine*, Jan/Feb 2015, Issue 38:3.
[176] BMIC British Music Information Centre.

In 2005 Mary Dullea and I methodically learned *Mississippi Hornpipes* over a period of three months, in preparation for the Gaudeamus competition. The Rambler later stated *'Morgan and Dullea do a superb job with razor-sharp articulation and a watchful ear against needlessly highlighting the tunes when they do peep through'*[177] so I put the following question to Finnissy regarding our approach to performing and recording *Mississippi Hornpipes*.

DM: *Have you any thoughts about our (Mary Dullea and my) approach to the virtuosic and complex ensemble music of Mississippi Hornpipes and the 2nd Movement of your Violin Sonata on our recording?*

MF: *'I find certain necessities when I am composing, and sometimes these transcend the accepted conventions, or previous limits. Not just technical difficulty, but also 'good taste' and local 'taboos'. I am totally dependent on the goodwill (perhaps also indulgence) of those who play my music. Perhaps I expect people to be able to 'do things', and I should be more surprised, and reward them more graciously, when they do. I have never found you, or Mary, lacking in goodwill (or perhaps indulgence?!) - but maybe there is a shared sense of being 'outside the normative culture' that unites us 'behind the wire'. Mary can look pretty stern sometimes! I try not to feel intimidated. All three of us are human-beings, and part of a shared culture. We are, in some ways, part of a conspiracy. Perhaps you think so too. I don't remember any instances of disagreements, but I am typically programmed to say "If you can't do it <u>this</u> way, let's try it <u>that</u> way". It's perhaps significant that we met at CoMA. Perhaps not where you'd expect? History can be viewed and narrated from so many vantage-points'.*[178]

Mississippi Hornpipes, though not written for us, made an indelible impression upon me. Reading through old private correspondence with Finnissy, the spirit of his personality is full of vivacious enthusiasm for music. This is so obvious in lots of the music I play by him; both *Mississippi Hornpipes* and the second movement of the Violin Sonata contain chattering, amusing and sometimes almost breathless musical material, reflecting the mood of many of our conversations over the years. It is music with a genuine sense of humour. '*Violinist Darragh Morgan and pianist Mary Dullea play with cheeky verve, creating bright, crackling sonorities from these at-first-blush uncoordinated materials*.[179]

Learning methodologies

One of the core issues in immersing oneself in the study of *Mississippi Hornpipes* is the intimidating nature of the notation. Approaching how to learn such complex music is a topic I have explored in many lecture-recitals on contemporary violin music that I have delivered from Curtis Institute, USA to Central Conservatory, Beijing, China. I have found no 'secret sauce' for this, but rather like learning any new piece, I begin from the opening, slowly reading, playing the music repetitively, over and over, in small segments of material to first a customise my left hand with the musical shapes, discovering any unusual leaps around the fingerboard, organising and deciding an initial framework of fingerings to help commit the work to aural memory. Once I am content that I'm consistently using the most effective fingering patterns repeatedly, I note the key elements of these on the musical score for future reference. To help me commit to memory my left-hand fingerings I use shorthand such as:

- Roman numerals I to IV for the E to G strings, reminding me which string I am working with, as there is often a number of playing positions available
- using the number 0 to remind myself to use an open string (often to further utilise my four left hand fingers for other preceding or subsequent notes, in essence creating a fifth finger)
- writing actual fingerings into the score even on easier passages if I am using a less orthodox violin position (left hand positions 1, 3, 5 being the most comfortable) to

[177] T. Rutherford-Johnson, 'CD reviews: Finnissy and Susman', *The Rambler*, 4th May 2016.
[178] Email correspondence Darragh Morgan and Michael Finnissy, 23rd September 2021.
[179] R. Maxham, 'FINNISSY: Mississippi Hornpipes', *Fanfare Magazine*, Jan/Feb 2015, Issue 38:3.

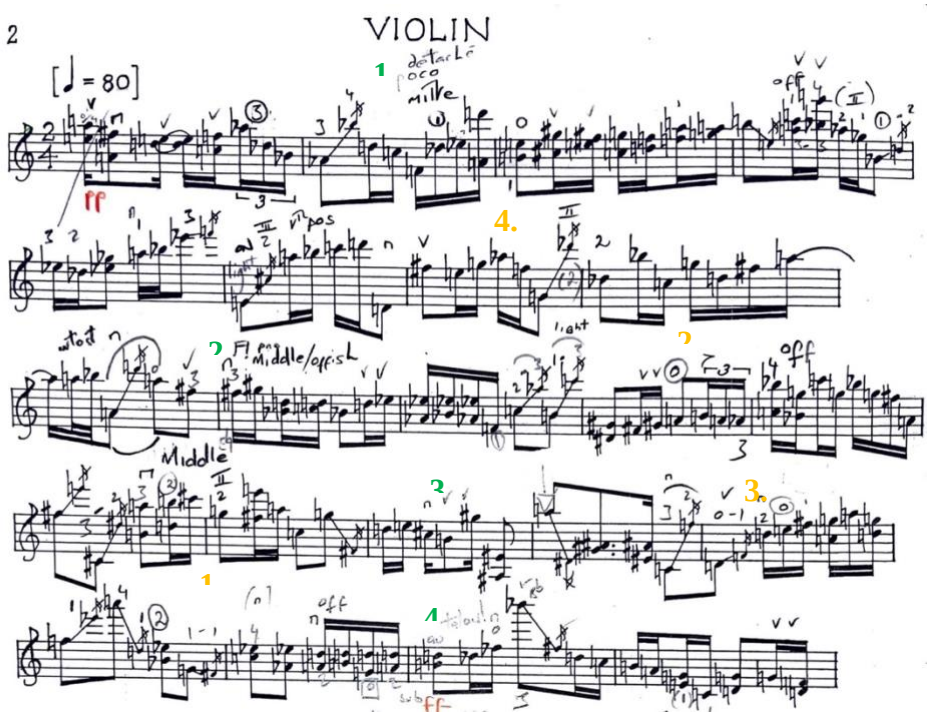
achieve efficient results when moving around fast passage work. (e.g., in 2nd position for material generally played in 1st position)

- using a number and circle for a finger that is a shift or position change. The circle helps remind and defines in the practice process where the left hand needs to be aware to quickly and lightly (to avoid unwanted slides) shift on this note.

With the bow, once I am fluent with left hand material, I increase the practice tempo closer to realistic performance tempo and begin to make decisions about string articulations; where in the bow I should play, on or off the string, exact note duration and actual bowing mechanics. Example 79 below from *Mississippi Hornpipes* illustrates my meticulous approach to marking of bowing.

1. *detaché poco mitte*: (I generally use the term *mitte,* middle part of bow, since my rehearsal experiences speaking in German with Ensemble Modern 2001-2003).
2. middle/offish: a short-articulated bow stroke between staccato/spiccato but with more length to each attack.
3. Going back as far as Corelli, violinists would use this type of bowing on dotted shorter/longer notated rhythms to facilitate the next segment or phrase (which starts or ends the passage) occurring on a down bow, which is easier to control.
4. *(Au) talon*: at the heel, utilising the heaviest part of the bow to create the most impact in a *subito ff* passage.

Example 79[180] (Audio Track 53, 0.30-1.05)



Collaborative ensemble playing

In a performance of *Mississippi Hornpipes* in Dublin, The Irish Times reviewer remarked,

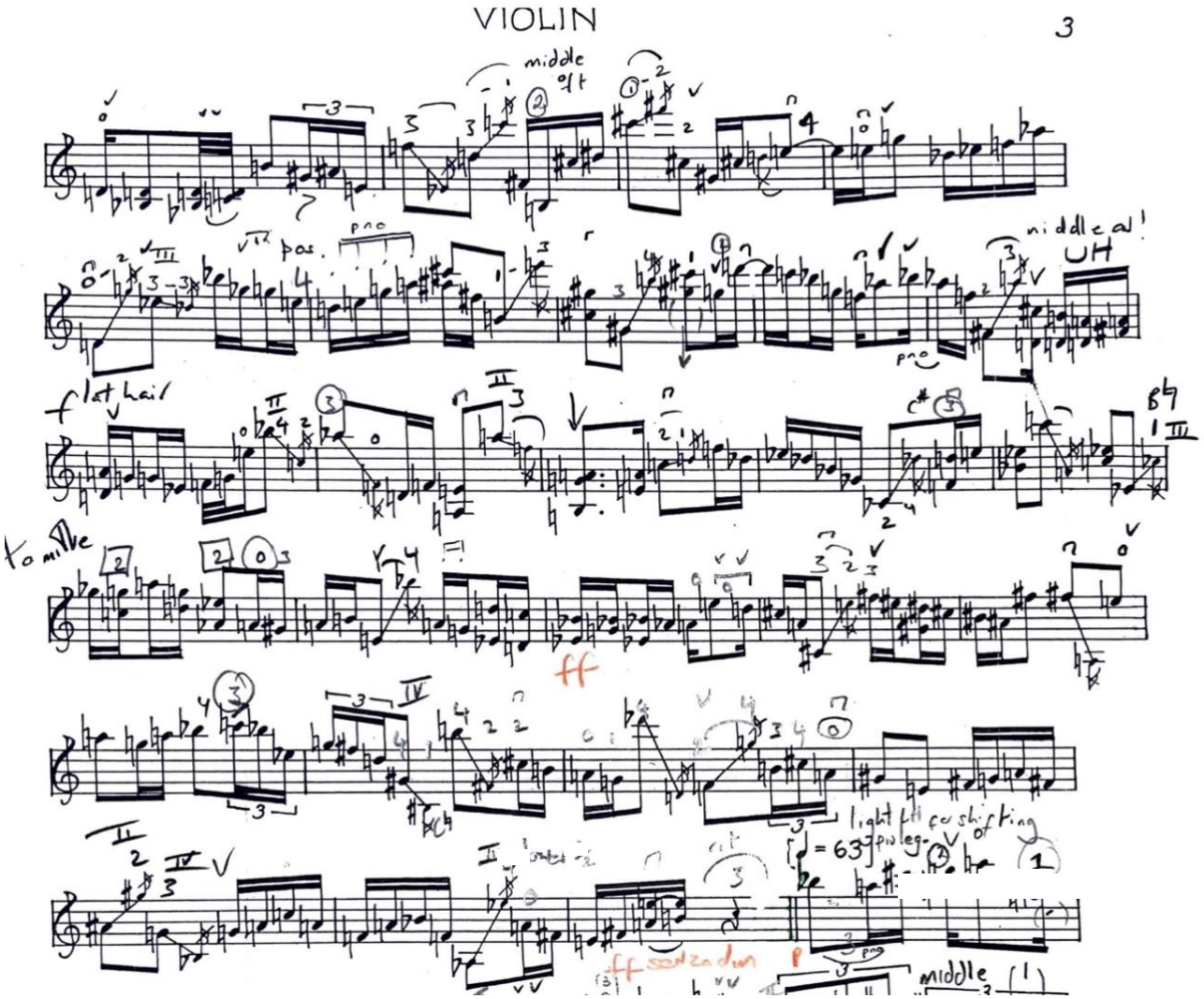
> "*Darragh Morgan and Mary Dullea have a reputation for being able to tackle just about anything that contemporary composers can throw at a violin and piano duo."*[181]

[180] Page 2, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Mississippi Hornpipes.*
[181] M. Adams, 'Morgan & Dullea, NCH John Field Room, Dublin', *Irish Times*, 17th September 2007.

In order to achieve confidence in live performance of a complex work such as *Mississippi Hornpipes* we developed a meticulous and systematic approach to rehearsals. This is a sectional work, so we started by identifying larger blocks of material and breaking these into sub sections to examine in detail. In chamber music as rhythmically complex as this, a strong feeling of internal pulse within the violin and piano ensemble is imperative to staying together. We achieve this by slowly building up the tempo together through metronomic practice, but also by agreeing subtle physical gestures into our leads to direct each other. Having worked together for so long, Dullea and I have developed these gestures to become intimately familiar to us.

Much of the opening section of *Mississippi Hornpipes* is in 2/4, so we keep a sense of the two crotchets within our upper body gestures with greater emphasis given to each down beat for clarity. We decide where bigger physical leads are necessary in moments of either heightened musical significance or dynamic contrast that are more obvious.
In the violin part of *Mississippi Hornpipes*, I have added cues, shown in Example 80 below, where the piano has identical rhythms to me and, for reference, I have notated the piano triplet rhythm during a beat's rest in the violin part.

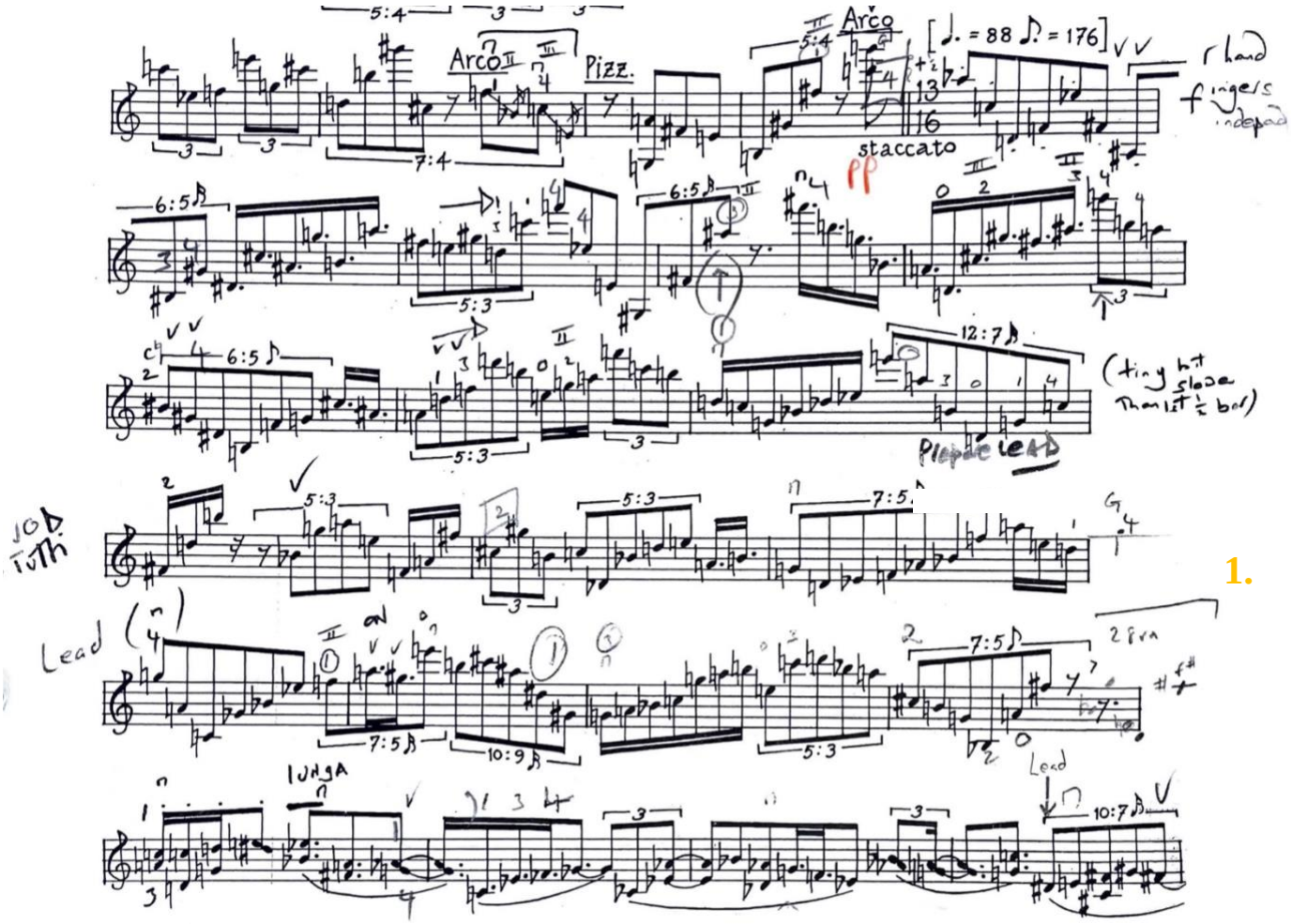
Example 80[182] (Audio Track 53, 1.32-2.16)



[182] Page 3, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Mississippi Hornpipes.*

For additional clarity, I sometimes cue actual piano pitches into the violin part when I have a short rest, as shown at 1 in example below. This provides an extra level of reassurance to offset any additional nervous tension that may occur in live performance of such demanding music.

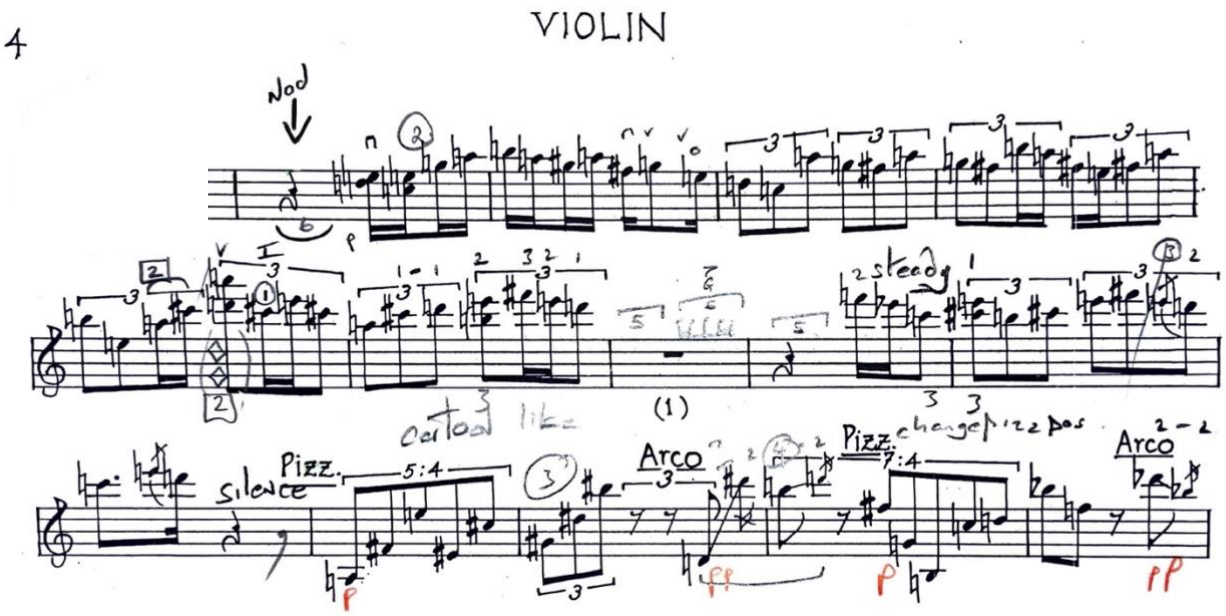
Example 81[183] (Audio Track 53, 4.20-5.09)



Finally, by spending a long time slowly building up our technical and musical understanding of *Mississippi Hornpipes* we have been able to develop a deep and unique interpretation of the work. From how we emulate each other's staccato articulations to sound almost like one hybrid instrument, to our ability to portray 'cartoon like' musical characteristics using *pizzicato* and *glissandi*, noted in the score Example 82 below after rehearsal with Finnissy, we have developed our own personal performance style in *Mississippi Hornpipes.* This exploration of new musical territories together is core to our chamber music partnership.[184]

[183] Page 5A, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Mississippi Hornpipes.*
[184] Darragh Morgan, Finzi Scholarship Application Reference March 2018, question 'What do you consider to be the applicant's outstanding characteristics?' Michael Finnissy wrote: 'Personal authenticity, sensitivity and care for detail. He gives a tremendous amount to a great many composers and the musicians with whom he works.'

Example 82[185] (Audio Track 53, 2.52-3.19)



Creation of a Violin Sonata

At CoMA Summer School in 2007, backstage before a concert we were sharing, the idea of a Violin Sonata was first mooted by Finnissy. Not only was I excited at the idea of a new piece for me but was intrigued by the thought of a Finnissy work referencing such a classical subject matter as the 'sonata'. Awarded a Critics' Choice of 2015 in *Gramophone Magazine*, Philip Clark commented: *'Finnissy, as ever poses vital questions about classical music – what should pieces contain? How should we listen?'*[186]

I put the following question to Finnissy regarding the evolution of the work:

DM: *In your Violin Sonata, which I remember us discussing backstage at a CoMA Summer School concert in Doncaster pre its existence, was my playing style in any ways influential or integral to the composition of the music?*

MF: *I was floating an idea - a vulnerable moment in the creation of a new piece. I see you as an ally, a friend and supporter. I guess the 'you' I know has a playing style, but more likely several playing styles. At least a couple of them were influential on the character of the first part of the Sonata (the second part is like a high-speed re-wind of the first, so you're there as well, by default!). There is 'tough' Darragh (and tough Mary) at the start, and gentler, folk-knowledgeable Darragh in the unaccompanied allusions to Beethoven's folk-song setting. At some fantasy-level I know you can play the 'harshness and violence', fully clad in classical training and technique, but you can also strip that off to reveal the more vulnerable 'nakedness'. Absolutely integral to making a truthful portrait.*[187]

[185] Page 4, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, *Mississippi Hornpipes.*
[186] P. Clark, 'Finnissy *Mississippi Hornpipes*', *Gramophone Magazine* (Critics' Choice 2015), December 2015, p. 18.
[187] Email correspondence Darragh Morgan and Michael Finnissy, 23rd September 2021.

The Violin Sonata received its world premiere in The Great Hall, Ulster University, Derry, Northern Ireland during a visit by Finnissy whilst Mary and I were Musicians-in-Residence at the University in December 2007.

Figure 2[188]

UNIVERSITY of ULSTER

Lunchtime Concert
Great Hall
Magee Campus

Tuesday 4th December 2007
1.15pm

University of Ulster Musicians in Residence

Darragh Morgan (Violin) and Mary Dullea (Piano)

present music
by
Michael Finnissy

Mississippi Hornpipes

Jive

Violin Sonata (World Premiere)

Supported by Cultural Development at Magee in association with the School of Creative Arts and Bank of Ireland

[188] Lunchtime Concert programme, World Premiere Michael Finnissy Violin Sonata, Great Hall, Magee Campus, University of Ulster, 4th December 2007.

At the premiere we played the two movements of the Sonata without a break. Afterwards Finnissy wrote to me asking for the Sonata to be clearly in two defined movements. (Originally the bar numbers in the score carry on so Movement Two begins at Bar 247). [189]

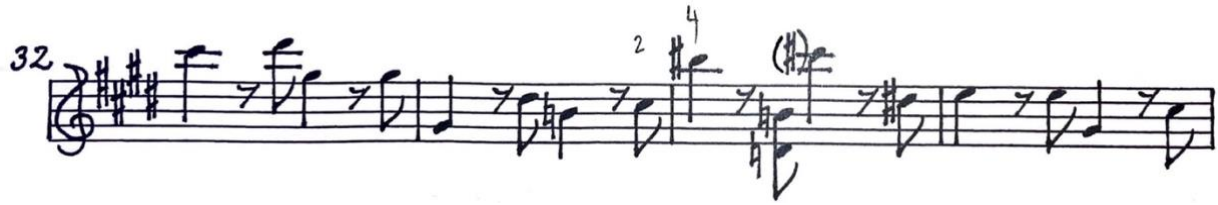
Movement One

Movement One is full of deeply sensuous music. Some of Finnissy's emotive string writing references the first movement of the Brahms String Quintet, Opus 88 in F Major. Interestingly, in previous correspondence to me Finnissy specifically mentions Brahms: 'I'm not so against Brahms that I won't write about him (the violin plays my idea of 'Brahms' music in *In Stiller Nacht*)'.[190] This sensuous style that I refer to is evident in both sonority and material; the music is heartfelt, emotionally moving and expressive (AudioTrack 58, 0.16-0.25).

With Finnissy's approval, my approach in terms of style was to create a warm romantic tone with generous vibrato in the first movement. On three occasions Finnissy quotes the Beethoven Irish folk song *Oh! Thou Hapless Soldier* (Audio Track 58, 1.53-2.14) where I purposely create a more whimsical singing colour to emphasise and enhance this recurring folk idea.

The other primary material in Movement One is the rhythmic motif, crotchet- quaver rest - quaver, which seemed to me to act as a structural device by where it was placed in the architecture.

Example 83[191] (Audio Track 58, 1.00-1.07)

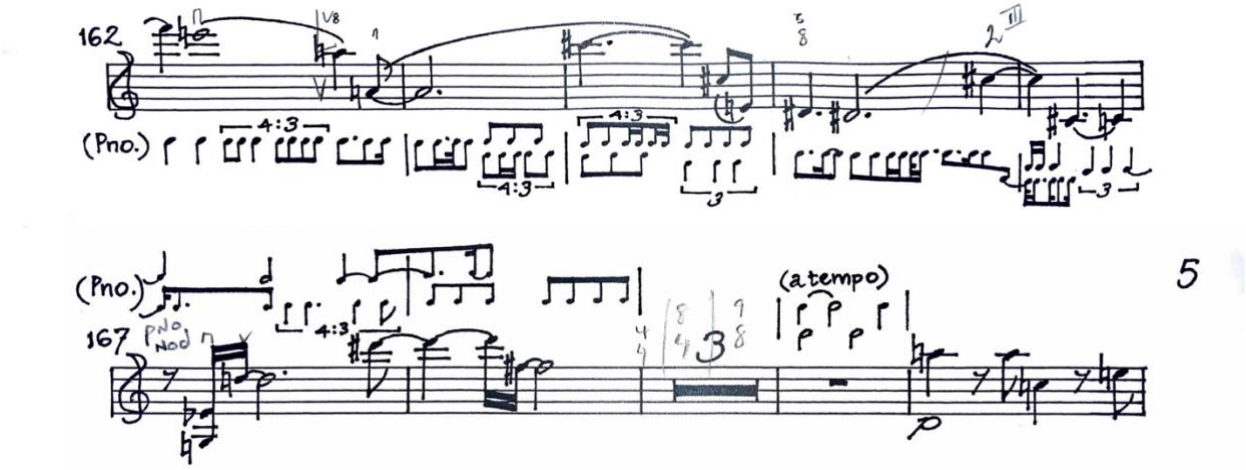


I demonstrated to Finnissy an approach placing rhythmic precision and exactness of note length as central to my interpretation of this material. Using tailored bowing articulations, I aimed to produce a crisp, yet strident sound whether playing soft or loud. My technical approach was to add weight to the crotchets by applying *tenuto*, then release from the string right at the beginning of the next beat, enhancing rhythmic vitality. After the quaver rest, the following quaver is played *staccatissimo* from above the string, drawing on my knowledge of the *collé* bow stroke, approaching the string in the lower half of the bow, swiftly opening and closing the joints in the right-hand fingers for a crisp, clean attack. In rehearsal, Finnissy and I agreed that the precision in my approach to rhythm in Movement One enhanced the definition of the musical character he imagined.

The deconstructionist element of Finnissy's music is seen in his introduction of complex triplets in the piano part in Example 84, from bar 162, requiring creative thinking in how I count to keep the parts together.

[189] Michael Finnissy, Personal Communication (Letter), 10th January 2008.
[190] Michael Finnissy, Personal Communication (Postcard), Date unknown, probably 2006.
[191] Page 1, Line 8, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, Violin Sonata

Example 84[192] (Audio Track 58, 6.59-7.40)



Example 84 shows how I draw on my experiences with Paul Zukofsky in re-barring music; in bar 162, I think of 3/8 at the end of the measure, then imagine a 3/8 in how I count the opening of bar 165. This type of thinking provides assurance in my security of rhythm.

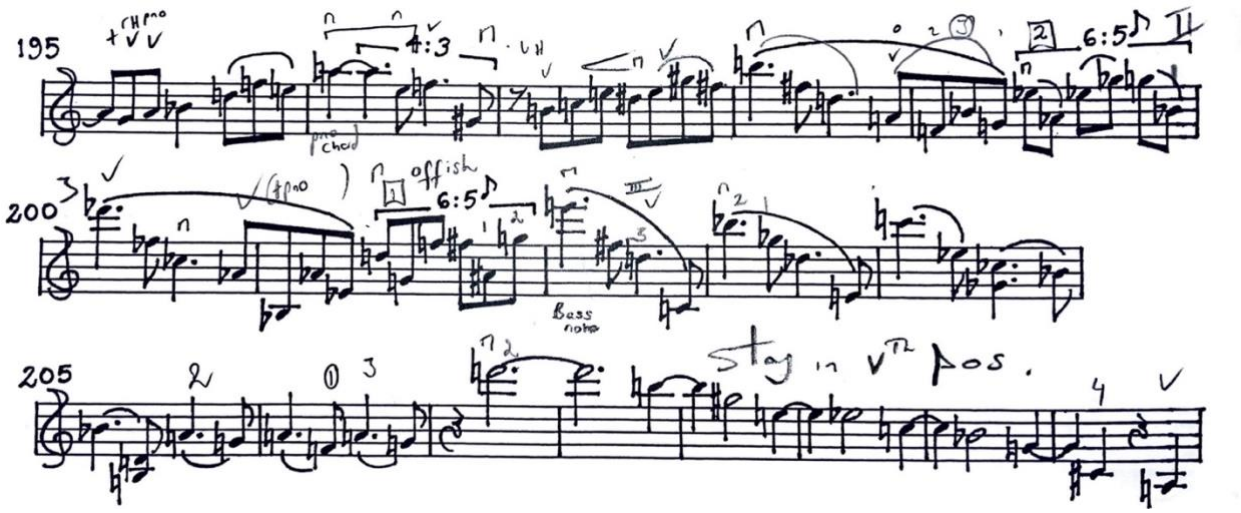
The quasi-romantic material in the penultimate section of Movement One allowed me opportunities to indulge in my love of older violin performance practice. One particular feature highlighting this approach is my use of *portamento*, a type of light *glissando* from one note to another which was a fashionable expressive tool in early to mid-twentieth century violin playing. Applying *portamento* on larger intervals on the violin evokes a particularly poignant quality of which I'm fond; this works effectively in bars 188-189 over the interval of a 7th, B to A, as shown in Example 85 below.

Example 85[193] (Audio Track 58, 8.07-8.10)

Overall, as illustrated in Example 86, this section of the Sonata demonstrates a fascinating combination of overtly romantic violin lines with highly complex 4:3 and 6:5 tuplet figures.

[192] Page 4, Final Line & Page 5, Line 1, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, Violin Sonata.
[193] Page 5, Line 4, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, Violin Sonata.

Example 86[194] (Audio Track 58, 9.45-10.55)



In Finnissy's violin writing in this work, there is an implied counterpoint, similar to J.S. Bach's solo string music, with a hierarchical structure prioritising certain melody note, so not every note is to be given equal weighting. I identified these priority notes, which create the dominant musical line and set out to draw the listener's ear to signal the architecture within the phrase. In Example 86 above, I emphasise the notes B, Db, E, Bb and C at the beginning of bars 198, 200, 202, 203 and 204 respectively, in order to create the impression of an implied contrapuntal melodic line.

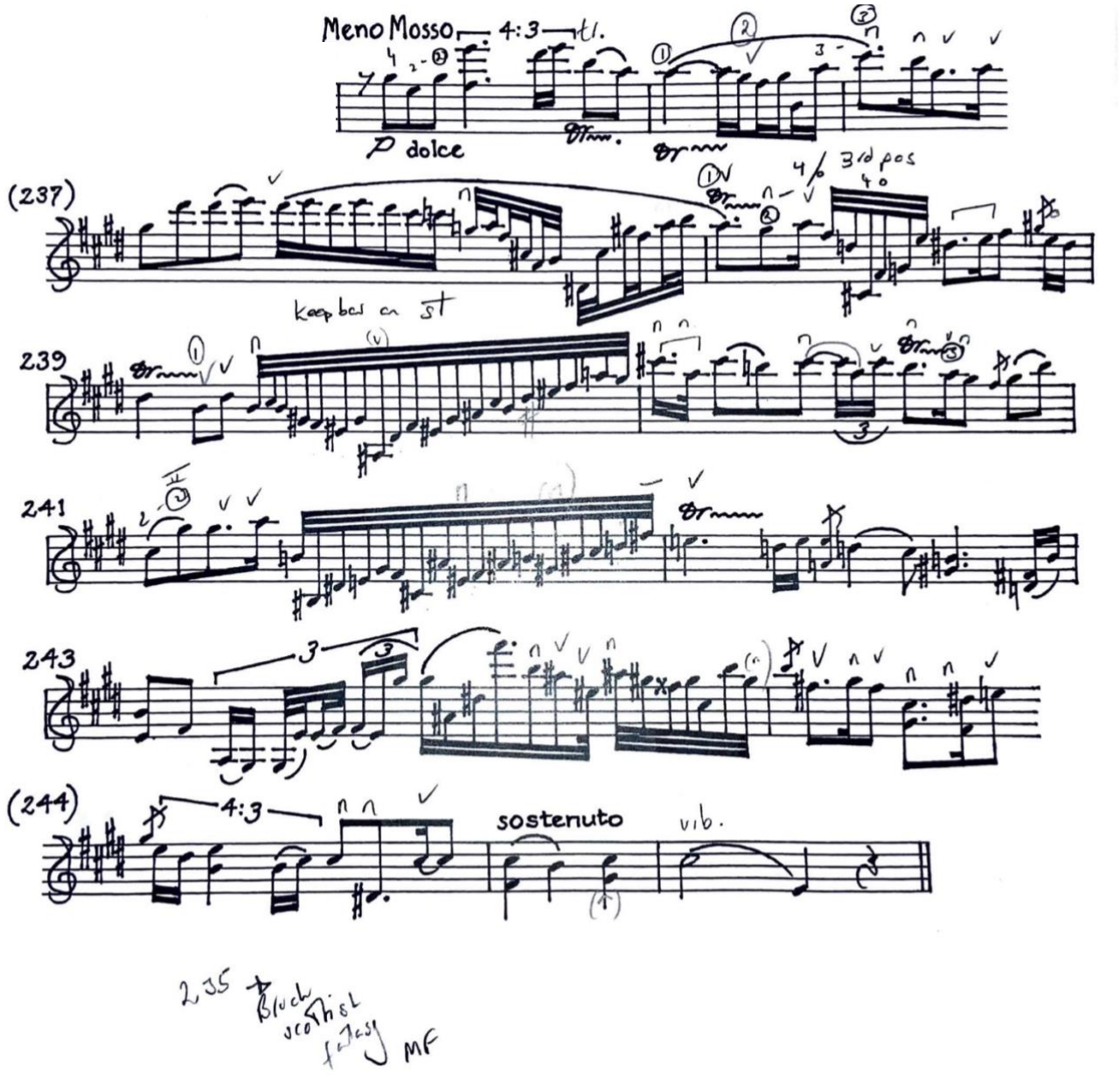
The material of the final coda *Meno Mosso* which begins at bar 235 Example 87 (Audio Track 58, 9.45-10.55) is still connected to Beethoven's Irish folk song. Finnissy interestingly asked me in rehearsal to imagine this more in line with Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy*, reflected in my pencil inscription on the violin part. This approach to melodic contour and highlighting of pitches came to me from my experiences with *Seterjentens Fridag* and also the violin part from Finnissy's first ensemble work that I recorded in 2002, *Lost Lands*.[195]

Cross-referencing the dotted rhythmic material and grace note ornamentation, I immediately decided to use identical bowing approached to those I had applied in *Seterjentens Fridag.* Finnissy's long term interest in folk music and love of Bruch's *Scottish Fantasy* invoked for me parallels with the colour that the grace notes added to the material in this coda.

Lost Lands seemed to reassert itself in the virtuosic scale like gestures in bars 239 and 241 which contain an abundance of notes, 20 then 17, respectively, shown in Example 87 below. Though they are challenging patterns, they fell naturally under the shape in my left hand.

[194] Page 5, Lines 6-8, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, Violin Sonata.
[195] Michael Finnissy, *Lost Lands* Topologies, MSV CD92050 Metier, 2002.

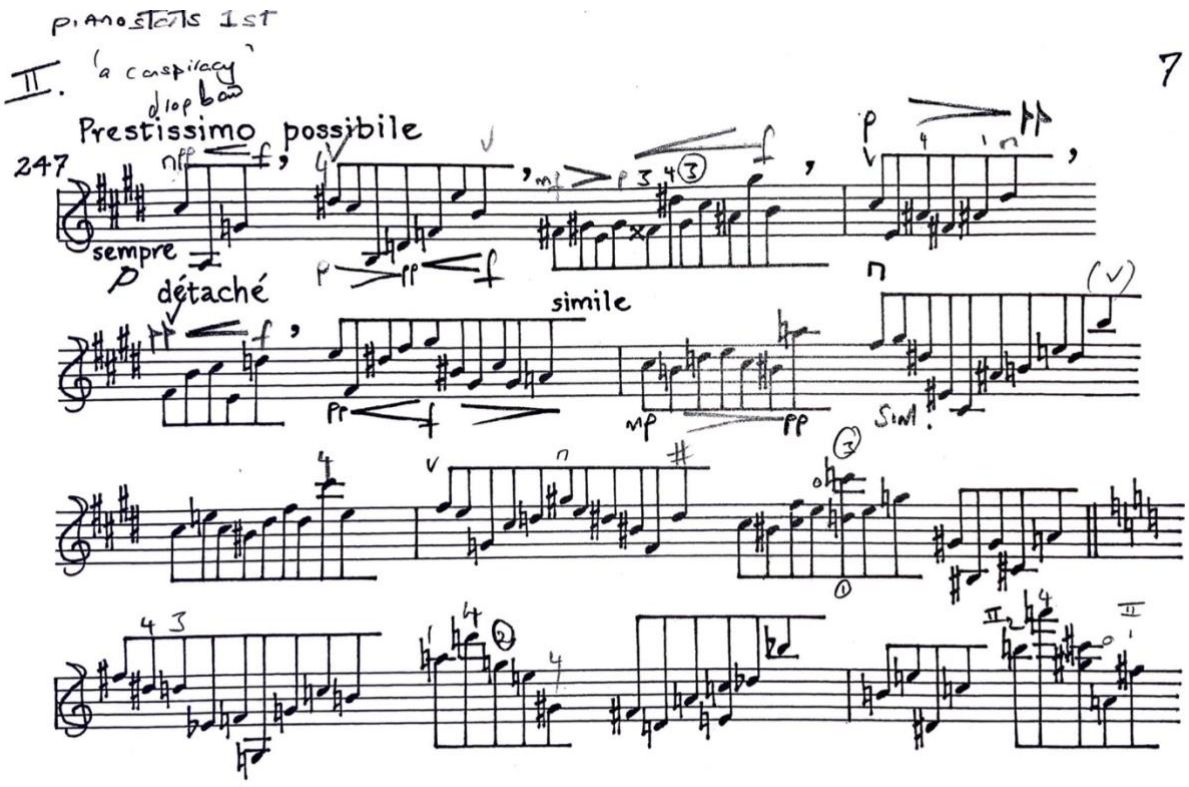
Example 87[196] (Audio Track 58, 9.45-10.55)



[196] Page 6, Lines 3-8, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, Violin Sonata.

Movement Two - *Prestissimo, possibile*
The opening violin material of Movement Two is incredibly fast, tenacious and virtuosic.

Example 88[197] (Audio Track 59, 0.00-0.21)



I prepared this by learning every cell of material separately, playing slowly *legato* on the string, deciding the most functional set of fingerings for each musical shape. Only after many repetitions, slowly increasing the tempo did I move from an on-the-string articulation to an off-the-string bow stroke and begin to incorporate Finnissy's dynamic shapes and directions. My eventual goal was to produce an overall virtuosic effect with each cell springing open, almost like a thrown *jeté* bow stroke; a stream of unstoppable consciousness.

A large section of this *Prestissimo* is repeated, with the first section of music marked *Presto – rall – Moderato* and the repeat marked *Moderato – rall - Adagio molto*. In rehearsal Finnissy described the first section as 'wayward and irregular' which was an incredibly helpful insight, not just into the music's character and shape, but as the material is initially presented as individual cells and later as single notes, his description helped me in deciding where to place each new cell or segment of material. In rehearsal, Finnissy alluded to a more 'hesitant and erratic' approach in the repeated section as a guide to convey his musical ideas.

The music of Movement Two is presented in separate parts for the violin and piano, as both instruments work through their material entirely independently throughout. In order for this concept to be achieved successfully much rehearsal time was focused on taking particular sections at particular tempi. After Movement One which depends on precision and togetherness of ensemble much focus is required of both players to maintain their

[197] Page 7, Lines 1-4, Violin Part, Michael Finnissy, Violin Sonata.

independence of each other in Movement Two. Each player has to know their part intimately and much rehearsal is required to instil confidence that whilst playing independent parts, there is a mutual understanding of structural cues and achieving the required architecture in the piece. Finnissy described to us that the music should appear as a type of 'conspiracy', enlightening our interpretative portal into his compositional intention.

Eventually, Finnissy's deconstructionist approach plays itself out, so that the final section of Movement Two becomes very quiet and still, almost recalling a Feldmanesque sound world. Only after the entire movement has been repeated do I use a physical gesture as a cue of where I am in the material, and only in the final four bars, after six or seven repetitions of *ad lib* material do I give a final leading gesture. This cue is on the penultimate note as only the last note of the work is articulated together, softly in both violin and piano.

Finnissy's presence

Wherever we have been with Michael Finnissy, his presence through both his music and his teaching has always had a profound effect on students, teachers and audience members. I often think there must be clones of Finnissy out there, whether I am in the Norfolk Broads, where he surprisingly appeared whilst I was performing Schubert's 'Trout' Quintet, or performing his music at international festivals where everyone always seems to know him, have studied with him or have been influenced by him. Of course, this shouldn't be surprising given his never-ending enthusiasm for such a wide variety of music making, performance, composition and teaching. We felt this most acutely during the special weekend we spent with Finnissy in 2008, when we recorded the works discussed here for our Metiér release, Michael Finnissy, *Mississippi Hornpipes*, at Queen's University, Belfast.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have provided detail of how my extensive experience of Irish traditional music has prepared me to develop unique interpretations of the highly decorative, folk-influenced violin music of Michael Finnissy. I have traced contrasts between the ornaments encountered in Irish traditional music and the Scandinavian folk music that influenced Finnissy and have detailed how I use microtonal inflections to accentuate the folk influence. My analysis provides insights into the rehearsal and performance methods I have developed in ensemble settings to navigate the highly complex rhythmic aspects of Finnissy's music as encountered in *Mississippi Hornpipes* and in the Violin Sonata which he composed for me. These methods include slow learning, a Zukofsky-influenced rebarring of the music and the use of gestural cues between the performers.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

My creative practice will always inhabit a place of experimentation, searching for the unconventional to unlock new forms of artistic expression.

> *'As a classically trained violinist who began playing traditional music as a young boy, Morgan was interested in "new music" at a very early age. "I was attracted to the freedom of approach I could give in interpretation, and the dialogue with living composers"'*[198]

The continuous refining of my craft is integral to my ongoing artistic development. My technical capability on the violin constantly improves and develops through engagement with contemporary music, for example through exploring innovative extended techniques or devising new bowings and fingerings to navigate the incredibly challenging, highly demanding and virtuosic new repertoire that I play by composers of our time. However, beyond technique, my immersion in contemporary music has developed in me a deep reflective understanding of the 'how' and 'why' in interpretation, allowing me to 'get inside' a range of styles and genres, bringing original insights to the music.

I have long considered the recording of music to be a vital and necessary extension of performance and interpretation and thus a process in which I always insist on taking a leading role. (I often wonder how fascinating it would be to be able to access the first airings and performances of Beethoven's chamber music given by Ignaz Schuppanzigh and his colleagues.)[199] My approach to the recording process, beginning with my first album *OPERA* on NMC,[200] has been to be absolutely connected into the complete exercise, starting with choosing the recording venue, selecting the best takes, editing, producing, mixing and mastering the finished product. Christopher Ballantine acknowledges the value of this approach in his October 2006, International Record Review article about my recording, *OPERA:*

> *'Perhaps because he himself co-produced the disc (with Merlyn Sturt) and the composers were in attendance, the production values of the recording are very high: the instruments have a vivid, remarkably natural sound, and the ambient acoustic projects both warmth and depth.'*[201]

For the albums featured in this project, I have been fortunate that, apart from the Feldman, the composers were present in the concert hall or studio for the recording and editing sessions. This has facilitated direct communication on aspects of the music they have created, such as tempi, dynamics and characterisation, completing the collaborative process which started with our workshops in the earlier stages of composition.

Whilst the body of work which features in this project comprises twenty pieces, the specific works I chose for deeper consideration clearly demonstrate how my artistic involvement has positively impacted on both the composition and recording processes. I have illustrated examples of how, in workshops and rehearsals, my sound, technical approach and musical personality have influenced the collaborative process with the composer, leading to performances and recordings that are regarded by the composers as definitive.

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[198] L. Charles, 'Classical fare with an electronic spin', *The Mercury Goodlife*, Durban, South Africa, 12th September 2012, p. 31.
[199] Ignaz Schuppanzigh was leader of Count Razumovsky's string quartet, See Griffiths, P., (1985).
[200] Various, *OPERA: New Works for Violin and Piano',* NMC D108, June 2006.
[201] C. Ballantine, 'Opera, New Works for Violin and Piano', *International Record Review,* October 2006, p. 64.

Through my study of Morton Feldman's, *For John Cage* in Chapter Two, I highlighted how my innovation in developing an unconventional bow hold and my transition to the use of a baroque bow for ethereal, quiet, still repertoire of extended duration, represents an entirely original approach. This new knowledge has provided me with the tools to create an expanded range of fresh approaches to timbre, which will be of use to future performers.

The lineage in my relationship with Zukofsky directly to Feldman has given me access to critical information not in the public domain. The information relayed to me through conversations and in pedagogic settings has provided valuable insights in relation to performance of the music discussed. For example, in relation to intonation, I provided insights to enhance the understanding of Feldman's desire for 22 cents difference between enharmonic spellings to approximate mean tone intonation of intervals and his reasoning for using this notation. This in turn has informed my own original approach to interpreting this music in performances and recordings.

John Tilbury identified and contextualised qualities in my interpretative approaches that place me centrally as the leading expert and key future advocate in this music. Through documenting personal relationships, correspondence and discussions with performers such as Tilbury and Zukofsky I have been able to inform my own musical thinking and in turn provide insights which will be of importance to other musicians.

The focus in Chapter Three on approaching the performance of minimalist repertoire, uncovered connections between the physical and psychological demands of the music itself and the development and nuancing of technical and tonal production skills. The driving repetitive musical material in *Elastic Harmonic* demanded development of technical facility and a fresh approach to sonority that allowed me to phrase lines with fluidity and flexibility, generating colours and expressive nuances whilst maintaining a clear focused tone at the core of my sound.

> *'Each liquescent layer of sound simultaneously fixed to and free from its now reflective, now opaque mirror… Darragh Morgan simply shines in this premiere recording.'*[202]

As a musical custodian of this style, I needed to develop an interpretative approach that kept this most visceral of violin material rhythmically grounded, whether driving and *'Gutsy'* or within a feeling of ebb and flow. Encouragingly, Dennehy gave me the freedom to implement my individual interpretative ideas, the success of which I feel is reflected in this correspondence from our mutual friend, writer and musicologist, the late Bob Gilmore, after the album was released:

> *"Just wanted to write you a quick email to congratulate you on the release of the fantastic Dennehy CD with the superb performance by yourself of Elastic Harmonic! I got my copy on Monday and, quite seriously, I've listened to that track four or five times since then. I knew it was great in Dublin, but I think the mix is great and it's a joy to hear. I think it may be Donnacha's masterpiece to date, but partly why I listen so often is the incredibly vivid and beautiful playing by your good self!"*[203]

In Chapter Four, I highlighted the positive impacts of close collaboration and co-creation between performer and composer, tracking the development of four key works: *Opera* by

[202] M, Quinn, 'Donnacha Dennehy Elastic Harmonic', *Journal of Music in Ireland*, July 2007, p. 32.
[203] Bob Gilmore, Private Email Correspondence, May 2007.

Morgan Hayes*, Seven States of Rain* by Richard Causton*, thirty-nine pages* by Paul Whitty and *Some of its Parts* by Jonty Harrison*.* I demonstrated how in working on alternative bowing approaches with Hayes, his library of articulations was greatly expanded for use in his piece. As a result of my workshops with Causton, I realised that I needed to devise a wider palette of *pizzicato* timbres, achieved through exploration of unconventional technical approaches. My initial conversations with Whitty led to an innovative take on a romantic mainstay, Franck's *Sonata*, and in subsequent workshops the composer and I devised technical features such as exaggerated vibrato to highlight the stylistic associations in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek way. Harrison and I collaborated closely over an extended time period to develop a new library of extended techniques to expand and enhance the electroacoustic sound world created by the composer.

In Chapter Five, I traced my interaction from an early age with Irish traditional music, cross-referencing this to Michael Finnissy's lifelong fascination with, and encyclopaedic knowledge of, folk music from many parts of the world. I provided insights into our collaborations on the existing pieces, *Seterjentens fridag* and *Mississippi Hornpipes*, which led to the composition of the Violin Sonata for me. The discussion of our creative collaboration over many years, highlighted and examined the absorption and development of my own lived musical environment and how that brought a completely original contribution to my interactions with Finnissy's folk-inspired, highly sophisticated musical language. Additionally, I presented new perspectives on innovative learning methodologies, and fresh thinking on rehearsal and performance strategies that we deploy when dealing with highly complex music.

The original insights presented on style, collaboration and innovation in this study should mark it as an essential point of reference in the future for performers, composers and scholars of contemporary music. The substantive and significant body of work that forms the core of the project is a living document of how I think the music should sound, reflecting my journey through thousands of hours of creative collaborations, conversations, arguments, debates workshops, rehearsals, performances and recording sessions.

In *The Art of Is,* violinist and composer, Stephen Nachmanovitch writes:

> *'We understand that we cannot describe music in words….. What matters is presence. What happens in the moment of reading, of writing, of playing, of listening to the soundscape, of being together in conversation with a friend? You have to be there. Just so in a live performance: you have to be there. Just so even listening to a recorded performance. A recording is supposedly fixed in a single form, static forever, but you listen to it one particular afternoon as you watch a pile of pink clouds float by and feel the immeasurable complexity of what is. It flutters away.'*[204]

This captures how I feel about music and for me reflects the core component of my creative practice; music-making in and of the moment.

Working with composers of today continues to be a privilege, an enlightenment. We exist in a symbiosis with the performer bringing the music to life.

[204] S. Nachmanovitch, Private email correspondence, unpublished material for chapter 'This Moment' in *The Art of Is,* (New World Library California, 2019), December 2022

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Other primary sources

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Personal email and written correspondence with composers dating from 1995 to the present day.

Appendix 1

Track Listing

Darragh Morgan/John Tilbury For John Cage
1 *For John Cage*, Morton Feldman, Track 1, 83.59
https://diatribe.ie/product/morton-feldman-for-john-cage/

Donnacha Dennehy elastic harmonic
1 *Glamour Sleeper*, Donnacha Dennehy,10.23
2 *Paddy*, Donnacha Dennehy, 7.42
3 *Junk Box Fraud*, Donnacha Dennehy, 12.31
4 *Elastic Harmonic*, Donnacha Dennehy, 13.02
5 *pAt*, Donnacha Dennehy, 10.52
6 *Streeetwalker*, Donnacha Dennehy, 11.07
https://nmc-recordings.myshopify.com/products/donnacha-dennehy-elastic-harmonic

Paul Whitty thirty-nine pages violin Darragh Morgan piano Mary Dullea
1-38, *thirty-nine pages*, Paul Whitty, 2.52, 5.08, 1.11, 0.41, 0.10, 1.34, 4.32, 0.53, 2.17, 1.12, 2.49, 0.56, 1.05, 0.52, 3.40, 0.18, 2.17, 0.28, 0.28, 0.54, 1.04, 4.09, 4.18, 1.40, 1.59, 0.58, 0.41, 1.58, 1.26, 0.56, 1.23, 0.41, 0.22, 0.56, 0.16, 0.43, 2.24, 1.57
https://divineartrecords.com/recording/whitty-thirty-nine-pages/

OPERA Darragh Morgan Mary Dullea
1 *re(GAIA),* Joe Cutler, 5.36
2 *Seven States of Rain*, Richard Causton, 11.32
3 *Fantasia*, Joseph Phibbs, 8.15
4 *Listenings I*, Bryn Harrison, 17.23
5 *Intrecciata*, Jonathan Powell, 4.46
6 *Opera*, Morgan Hayes, 6.50
https://nmc-recordings.myshopify.com/products/various-opera-new-music-for-violin-and-piano

Darragh Morgan For Violin and Electronics
1 *Trapped in Ice*, Paul Wilson, 14.22
2 *Some of its Parts*, Jonty Harrison, 11.26
3 *Flame*, Scott Wilson, 11.16
4 *Koorean Air*, Ricardo Climent, 8.34
5 *Stringscape*, Simon Emmerson, 21.02
6 Where distant city lights flicker on half-frozen ponds, Jonathan Nangle, 6.48
https://diatribe.ie/product/for-violin-and-electronics/

Michael Finnissy Mississippi Hornpipes
1 *Mississippi Hornpipes*, Michael Finnissy, 9.49
2 *Seterjentens fridag*, Michael Finnissy, 8.04
3 *Amphithéâtre des Sciences Mortes*, Michael Finnissy, 8.05
4 *Jive*, Michael Finnissy, 0.31
5 *Molly House*, Michael Finnissy, 12.45
6-7 Violin Sonata, Michael Finnissy, 21.31
https://divineartrecords.com/recording/mississippi-hornpipes-michael-finnissys-music-for-violin-and-piano/