

Finding Resonance:
Exploring Approaches to Musical
Fusion in a Caribbean Context

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Declaration

I declare that the five compositions and accompanying commentary that constitute this submission are my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge or belief, they contain no material previously published or written for the award of any other degree or diploma of the University of London or other institution of higher education.

Signature.....

Name.....

Date.....

Abstract

The music in this portfolio represents an exploration of different approaches to fusing traditional Trinidadian elements with musical gestures and instrumentation more closely associated with the western classical tradition. The research that led to the creation of these scores focused on identifying apparent and hidden characteristics encoded in Trinidad's culture and in its musical styles, and on finding ways to bring these together in music ultimately intended to express aspects of Trinidad's culture in fresh ways.

Fundamental to this research was the author's developing an understanding of the cultural context to which his compositions are a response and, crucially, of his own situatedness in relation to that context. Numerous field trips were undertaken to experience music-making in different cultural and religious situations in Trinidad. Participant observation was a fundamental research method in the author's attempts to internalize aspects of style and subsequently to draw upon these markers to define structures within new compositions.

Research into approaches to cross-cultural musical fusion is timely given recent global political trends towards isolationism. New music shaped by structures and aesthetics from different traditions is by definition inclusive and, insofar as it embraces styles that may not be widely known, can encourage an awareness of cultures whose music historically may have experienced oppression or neglect.

The creation of the pieces presented here included collaboration with Trinidadian artistes or with non-Trinidadian specialists on Trinidad. Such collaborations assisted in the exploration of ways to develop a musical voice intended to resonate with local audiences.

All pieces in this portfolio were written for the University of Trinidad and Tobago's resident Ibis Ensemble, and for music students at the university.

This commentary aims to contextualise the compositions that make up the portfolio by considering the issues that form a background to writing cross-cultural music in Trinidad.

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List of Audio/Video Files on Accompanying USB Stick

1. *The Temple in the Sea* —15' - vibraphone, *tassa* drum and drone (one performer).

Poetry by Sandra Alcosser.

Performer — Deborah Sunya Moore.

Recorded live in Theatre 1, University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) Campus at the National Academy for the Performing Arts (NAPA), Port of Spain, Trinidad.

May 2014

2. *River of Freedom*¹ — 55' - flute/piccolo, violin, clarinet, French horn, trombone, steelpan (low C tenor pan), percussion, double bass, baritone voice and narrator.

Script by Caitlyn Kamminga.

Performers — Kwamé Ryan, conductor. Michael Cherrie, narrator.

Krisson Joseph, baritone voice. Katy Gainham, flute/piccolo.

Yevgeny Dokshansky, clarinet. Adam Walters, French horn.

Aidan Chamberlain, trombone. Mia Gormandy, tenor steelpan.

Josh Watkins, percussion. Simon Browne, violin. Caitlyn Kamminga, double bass.

Recorded by Maarten Manmohan in Auditorium, Maritime Campus, UTT, Chagaramas, Trinidad.

Mixed and mastered by Maarten Manmohan.

May 2015

2a-2c. Extracts from field recordings in preparation for writing *River of Freedom*

- **2a.** *Hello* chorus: St Ann's Church of the Spiritual Metaphysics, Couva, Trinidad, 29th September 2013. (32'')
- **2b.** *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*: St Michael's Spiritual Baptist Tabernacle, Third Company Village, Trinidad, 10th November 2013. (1' 08'')
- **2c.** Baptist chorus that inspired the opening of *River of Freedom* Part 3: St Ann's Church of the Spiritual Metaphysics, Couva, Trinidad, 1st December 2013. (42'')

¹ Two scores of *River of Freedom* are submitted. One – marked “As Recorded” – corresponds to the recording submitted along with the portfolio. The other – marked “Definitive” – has not yet been recorded but incorporates revisions that were made after the recording was made. Both scores are included to show the evolution of the piece but, in this commentary, all bar numbers for *River of Freedom* correspond to the “As Recorded” version unless indicated otherwise. Details of the revisions are included on page 63 of this commentary.

3. *Lament* — 4.5' - steelpan (tenor and double seconds (one player)), violin, viola, double bass and piano.
Film direction by Maria Govan.

Performers — Eleanor Ryan, violin. Caitlyn Kamminga, double bass. Simon Browne, viola. Mia Gormandy, tenor and double second steelpan. Hayward Mickens, piano.

Recorded by Maarten Manmohan and Martin Raymond in Auditorium, Maritime Campus, UTT, Chagaramas, Trinidad.

Mixed and mastered by Martin Raymond.

December 2015

4. *Prayer* — 7.5' - trombone, steelpan (tenor and double seconds (one player)), loop machine, backing track and pre-recorded birdsong.

Performers — Aidan Chamberlain, trombone. Mia Gormandy, tenor and double second steelpan.

Birdsong recorded by Aidan Chamberlain, St Ann's, Trinidad. Trombone and steelpan recorded by Adam Walters in Theatre 1, UTT Campus at NAPA, Port of Spain, Trinidad.

Mixed by Adam Walters and mastered by Maarten Manmohan.

September 2016

5. *Engine Room* — 5.5' - body percussion ensemble, cow bell, congas and bass drum. Choreography by LaShaun Prescott.

Performers — Kwamé Ryan, conductor. Denilson Gulston, cowbell. Lemuel Davis, bongos. Nicholas Thomas, bass drum. 1st and 2nd Year Music students of the Academy for the Performing Arts, University of Trinidad and Tobago.

Live performance recorded by Antonio Achée in Theatre 1, UTT Campus at NAPA, Port of Spain, Trinidad.

June 2017

1 – Introduction

The transition from being an African – or a European – to being a Caribbean is a key process in the formation of Caribbean culture and music, embodied in the term “creolization,” which connotes the development of a distinctive new culture out of the prolonged encounter of one or two more other cultures. (Manuel, 2016, p. 16)

i. Creolisation and Musical Fusion in Trinidad

The Caribbean region has for centuries absorbed diverse cultural influences. European elements were imposed in the days of empire, African culture arrived amid the horror of the transatlantic slave trade, indentured labourers imported their traditions from India, and immigration from countries such as China and Syria has also impacted upon the cultural landscape. This process of cultural syncretism in the region came to be known as ‘creolisation’ and has impacted upon all aspects of life, including cuisine, religion and artistic expression.

Creolisation represents in the Caribbean the dynamic interaction between peoples with different heritages and from different social classes, a process that over time gives rise to new traditions and cultural practices. It should be noted that creolisation is far more complex than being simply a happy blending of artistic styles in a context of mutual respect; on the contrary, many enduring innovations in the arts arose from a climate of racism and repression, even after slavery was abolished.² Creolisation is therefore the result of dialogues and tensions between different ethnicities and classes from the time that Europeans first arrived in the Caribbean. This is a fundamental aspect of the Caribbean context, and of particular significance to this portfolio is that there continues

² The invention of the steelpan and the emergence of Trinidad’s traditional Carnival characters are examples of creative responses to oppression.

to be widespread interest in and encouragement of those exponents of the creative arts seeking to express local culture in new ways.

A thorough overview of the many aspects of creolisation is beyond the scope of this commentary; suffice to say here that no island in the Caribbean exemplifies the cultural melting pot more than Trinidad. With its history of cultural fusions, the Trinidadian context is a particularly apt one for a composer exploring ways to mesh together stylistic features of different musical traditions.

Unsurprisingly, there are plentiful musical traditions in Trinidad and the opportunities for the cross-fertilisation of sounds and styles have yielded many popular genres, most famously calypso, soca and chutney. Outside of the mainstream, attempts to express local traditions in the context of art music have in recent years become more widespread, at least in part due to the establishment of the Academy for the Performing Arts (APA), part of the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT).³ In employing several classically-trained faculty members locally and from abroad (including myself), the university prompted the birth of a new repertoire that has for the past few years been given high-profile performances. This has helped to fulfil UTT's initial hope for the "emergence and evolution of new and exciting musical forms of cultural expression through the collaborative work fostered within the BFA [Bachelor of Fine Arts] programme."⁴

The phenomenon of creolisation forms an appropriate backdrop to the composition of the music in this portfolio as these pieces demonstrate different approaches to blending

³ Whilst definitions can be problematic, the term 'art music' in this commentary is used as a shortcut to describe music in the style descended from the tradition of western classical music in the way articulated in Gangelhoff and LeGrand (2013a, p. 2). This definition is included in Appendix A.

⁴ Quoted from *Validation Document, Bachelor of the Fine Arts in the Performing Arts with specialisation in Music*, Academy for the Performing Arts, University of Trinidad and Tobago, April 2012.

musical influences rooted in different cultures. Whilst my music would not itself be termed creole – this word implies the blending of cultural influences on a societal (rather than individual) level over a generational timeframe – my attempts at musical syncretism in a Caribbean context certainly connects with the region’s long-standing tradition of musical and cultural reinvention and could, arguably, be seen as a microcosm of the creolisation process itself.

ii. Initial Impetus for My Composing in Trinidad

I moved to Port of Spain in September 2009 along with other musicians from the UK and the US, having been recruited by UTT. In Trinidad I found myself in a context where there is enormous pride in local musical forms. There is a sizeable audience for western classical music concerts but, unsurprising in a post-colonial society, there also exists some significant questioning about the relevance of European art forms to modern-day Trinidad.

Soon after arriving in Trinidad, I began to feel strongly that concerts presented by Ibis Ensemble – UTT’s ensemble in residence of which I am the French horn player – should include music that in some way reflected the locality. I was often concerned that performances consisting entirely of western classical music would be perceived at best as disconnected from Trinidad or, at worst, as neo-colonial; Ibis Ensemble is made up mainly of white European and American instrumentalists such as myself playing music often written at a time when racism was the status quo. There was no doubt that our performances were, depending on the repertoire we chose, enjoyed by those listening and there was (and continues to be) a loyal audience that attends our concerts regularly,

but the question of relevance persisted.⁵ What were the implications of our performing in this particular context? Does the enjoyment of today's listeners mean that we can overlook the fact that in a certain way the ensemble members are demonstrating musical skills we have had the privilege of honing thanks to European and American wealth that was to a large extent made possible by systems of exploitation such as slavery? And, if so, does this even matter when we see our Trinidadian students being inspired by the performances we present?

The political impulse behind importing foreign musicians to perform and teach in Trinidad was based on a notion of cultural development. Today, UTT's Academy for the Performing Arts gives music students the opportunity of a formal training in a range of musical traditions including western classical music, and the role that my colleagues and I have played in this is surely a good thing in itself. But due to the fact that a group of foreign performers was given a privileged position in society by dint of pay and, I feel it is true to say, by the colour of our skin, we were understandably never going to be welcomed by everyone. Additionally, there has been a noticeable (and understandable) move amongst Trinidadian intellectuals towards celebrating the country's African and Indian heritages (Henry, 2003) whilst distancing themselves from European influences. In this light it can be seen that the social context I have been working in is a complex one.

This commentary focuses on the gestures of certain Trinidadian musical styles and aspects of Trinidadian culture and the way that I have integrated these into a body of work otherwise rooted in my background in western classical music. I have chosen to focus predominantly on these local musical influences and to give less background to

⁵ These audiences are mainly made up of middle class Trinidadians with an interest in the Arts and of APA students who are encouraged by their lecturers to be present at live performances.

the stylistic aspects of western classical music I have drawn upon in my portfolio compositions. This choice of emphasis reflects the narrative of this research which, as described below, consisted of self-consciously striving towards acquiring a working knowledge of musical gestures and salient features of culture that were previously unfamiliar to me and integrating these into a musical language rooted in the western classical tradition which I had internalised since childhood.

2 – Background to Research

... the value of a piece of music as music is inseparable from its value as an expression of human experience... (Blacking, 1995, p. 51)

i. Context and the Self

It seems reasonable to assert that for a composer to respond meaningfully and with integrity to an environment or culture, she or he must engage with it. In cases where that composer has grown up (or at least lived for a very long time) within that setting, such an engagement may justifiably be taken for granted. But when that environment or culture is unfamiliar, a process of research, observation and learning is crucial if the composer hopes to write music that resonates locally or, indeed, further afield. It is this belief that led me to carry out a large number of fieldtrips in Trinidad as a fundamental part of my research for writing the music presented in this portfolio. Whilst I cannot claim any formal qualification in ethnomusicology, I have certainly drawn upon that discipline's emphasis on "the study of music in or as culture" (Nettl, 2005, p. 5). Spending many hours immersed in the music of the Spiritual Baptists or that of the panyard afforded insights not only into the music itself, but also into the all-important

social and cultural contexts in which music is made. These experiences of music and people had a direct and profound impact upon my development as a composer and upon the pieces I have written in Trinidad.

My approach to researching social and musical contexts can be likened to that of educationalist Katy Gainham who spent time working with children in music workshops in South African townships in the 1990s. Gainham writes “Understanding the context as broadly and deeply as possible was vital in that I was working with and negotiating between several different communities, including my own” (Gainham, 2005, p. 355). Whilst her outcome (an increase in the self-esteem of young people as the result of participation in musical activity) was different to mine (composition of new music as the result of immersion in a non-native culture), the methodology is remarkably similar. Her words neatly reflect my own experience: “I was both researcher and practitioner. I am at the centre of my research, but I am NOT its subject” (Gainham, 2005, p. 362). By recognising the way that experience is filtered through self, a researcher stands to document her or his findings with honest nuance. Similarly, a composer working in an unfamiliar culture who thinks carefully about the way that the self represents a filter between herself/himself and the material he or she writes may be more likely to express something meaningful – truthful, even – in her/his music. In the words of composer Jonathan Harvey, “What matters ... is not whether music can *convey* anything of its composer’s experiences, but whether those experiences *influenced* the compositional process” (Harvey, 1999, p. 42).

ii. The Ethnographic Composer

In her book *The Ethnographic Self: Fieldwork and the Representation of Identity*, Amanda Coffey (1999) articulates the view that acknowledging the emotional aspects of fieldwork should form a backdrop to ethnographic enquiry, and once again this is a view which may resonate with a composer living in a culture other than her or his own. In the following extract, Coffey speaks to the centrality of understanding context in the specific discipline of ethnography; I would argue that by reading ‘composer’ for ‘ethnographer’ in this citation, the statement perfectly expresses a strong philosophical approach for a composer working outside her/his culture:

... it is naïve and epistemologically wrong to deny the situatedness of the self as part of the cultural setting. As a positioned and contexted individual the ethnographer is undeniably part of the complexities and relations of the field. The pursuit of cultural understanding and the process of personal development are intimately rather than tangentially related. (Coffey, 1999, quoted in Gainham, 2005, p. 362)

Further, the various emotional responses that result from living in an unfamiliar culture may be usefully embraced as productive aspects of research for the reflective ethnographer or composer. Engaging with the people, environment, linguistic nuances, cuisine, social mores and so on of a culture is all-consuming, and the experiences of the newly-arrived can certainly arouse a wide range of emotions. Coffey’s evocation of a romance as a metaphor for an ethnographer’s emotional relationship to ‘the field’ (Chapter 6 of *The Ethnographic Self* (1999)) certainly resonates with my experience of researching Spiritual Baptist music in advance of writing *River of Freedom*. Further, my fieldtrips to Spiritual Baptist church services took place at an emotionally turbulent time for me, and in retrospect I see that the emotional response I had in relation to the music I heard in the churches was heightened as a result of my prevailing emotional state. This is in no way to diminish the experience itself; rather it is to acknowledge the emotional self as a filter through which the experience passed.

Of course there is nothing new to the idea that composition is the result of a subjective response to given subject matter. But the idea of the ‘ethnographic’ composer is an important one to the extent that it represents an approach that is the synthesis of two disciplines; by engaging with a culture both physically and emotionally one may ultimately be able to write music that expresses something ‘of the place’ and also, crucially, ‘of the *character* of the place’. My engaging with Trinidad’s culture and music-making was not an incidental detail in relation to my compositions; rather it underpinned the creative choices I made when writing, and is therefore fundamental to the resultant music.

iii. Purpose of Research

There exists an extensive repertoire of art music by Caribbean composers (Gangelhoff and LeGrand (2011); Gangelhoff and LeGrand (2013a)). These composers, as ‘cultural insiders’, are likely to have a familiarity with local musical gesture which may assist in their ability to express something of the musical character of a location. A composer who is a ‘cultural outsider’, however, may well have a very different musical background and may, as in my case, have had no previous knowledge of the new culture at all. This affords an opportunity for that composer to create music that combines her or his different musical experiences. The resulting compositions are likely to reveal previously hidden musical possibilities and thereby express something new. At its most basic this might be a new combination of instruments, but a newcomer who seeks out salient aspects of a culture and allows these to influence her or his approach to manipulating musical parameters may achieve fusion at arguably a much deeper level.

Any attempt at musical fusion requires a composer to have at least some understanding of the styles being combined, and some situations require even more sensitivity to context. This portfolio, written by a white middle-class British male living in a former British colony of which racism and slavery were constituent parts, is a case in point. Some may even argue that it is inappropriate for a composer of my demographic to make an artistic response to this context, and this is a viewpoint that I have experienced myself.⁶ I would counter, however, that by careful and respectful consideration of the context in which one is working and of the musical traditions one is referring to, the ‘ethnographic composer’ can indeed justify her or his artistic contribution. Further, this contribution may be well-received by cultural insiders themselves, as fresh approaches to local subject matter (musical and non-musical) can produce interesting and aesthetically-pleasing results.

In her study of music by living art music composers in Jamaica, Davis (2013) argues that works of musical fusion (“hybrids” in her terminology) not only represent new forms of expression, but can also play a significant role in preserving traditional forms – here she speaks specifically of folksongs – and, particularly important in the Caribbean context, in reaffirming the value they were denied historically because of the racist views of the ruling classes:

“Pairing folk music with Euro-classical styles allows the folksong to be brought into spheres uncommon to folk traditions. If not for hybridization, folksongs – having roots in slavery, a dialect once considered shameful and only used by the uneducated, and conveying stories from a rural lifestyle – would not have the opportunity to be performed in concert. Not only does the hybrid allow for international exposure, but it also contributes to the longevity of this new tradition. Such hybridization ensures the survival of something that was otherwise deemed unworthy and not fit for public performance.” (Davis, 2013, p. 37)

⁶ At a pre-concert talk before a performance of *River of Freedom*, an audience member expressed her outrage at author Caitlyn Kamminga’s and my attempt to write what she called a “Disney version” of this local story. She hadn’t heard the piece but her preconception was revealing in itself.

On a global level, political changes in recent years have included strong moves towards isolationism, and such a philosophy seems to stem largely from a lack of understanding of situations in which people elsewhere in the world find themselves.⁷ By referring to – and demonstrating respect for – music from different cultures in her or his music, a composer can play a small part in encouraging an awareness and appreciation of cultures and traditions that previously may have been outside the direct experience of the listener.

iv. Salient Features of Music and Culture in Trinidad

A key hypothesis behind my research for writing the music in this portfolio is that by identifying and integrating into her/his music the salient features of different cultures and different musical styles, a composer can write music that communicates to audiences from either background. My approach to musical fusion has been to combine a number of these features in any one piece so that the music can justifiably be called a synthesis of different genres.

Today, with the internet making it easy to access professional and home-made recordings, it is not difficult to get an impression of musical traditions from across the world. Living in a culture gives a far better impression, but even this is not enough if one moves exclusively within a bubble, interacting solely with people of one's own background and demographic. It is my experience that only through engaging with a wide variety of local contexts can one hope to identify themes and concepts that are particularly pertinent to a culture as a whole; whilst some of these features may be

⁷ The refugee crisis in Europe and the US travel ban against mainly Muslim countries are two recent examples.

apparent to the short-term visitor, one can only hope to understand their relative significance after interacting with the culture for a longer period of time.

Below is a table of some of the principal features of Trinidad that I have identified as being particularly pertinent to its population and which have impacted upon my choices in this portfolio.

| <u>Feature</u> | <u>Notes in reference to Trinidad</u> |
|---|--|
| <u>Carnival</u> | Carnival is by far the most significant national event in the calendar of Trinidad and Tobago. It is a huge, multi-faceted celebration expressed in costume, dance, and music which inspires a great outpouring of artistic creativity that draws everyone in, whether as participants or onlookers. The concept of transformation is one that underlies many aspects of Carnival as explained in more detail below. |
| <u>Environmental sounds</u> | Trinidad has its own specific soundscape resulting from its rainforests, coastlines and urban settings. |
| <u>Harmonic and melodic conventions</u> | Indo-Trinidadian music includes music that draws upon the ragas of the Indian classical tradition. Afro-Trinidadian styles are underpinned by the western harmonic system with stylistic approaches to melodic embellishment and harmonisation deriving from African traditions. |
| <u>Historical and social themes</u> | The choice of historical themes is clearly important to the perceived relevance or otherwise of a piece of music to a particular audience. In a postcolonial context such as Trinidad, themes pertaining to self-determination and courage are unsurprisingly prevalent. |
| <u>Instruments and sounds</u> | Certain instruments and sounds are well-understood as defining sonic markers of Trinidad's diverse musical traditions and communities. |
| <u>Musical function</u> | The most widespread Trinidadian musical styles are linked to celebration (soca and steelpan music at Carnival, for example), religion (music is especially fundamental to worship in the Christian, Orisha and Hindu faiths as practised in Trinidad) and social commentary (calypso). |

| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <u>Musical arrangements</u> | Steel orchestra arrangers for Trinidad's national Panorama contest are held in at least as high regard as the composers of the music for this event. These arrangers display astonishing virtuosity in developing source material into eight-minute showpieces for their band, and winning arrangers are handsomely rewarded in prize money. |
| <u>Process of musical creation</u> | Much (though by no means all) music-making in Trinidad stems from the aural tradition with instrumentalists and vocalists learning material through demonstration and imitation. This gives rise to an immediacy of connection between musician and music. Also, much music is created in a collaborative manner. A calypsonian often enlists an arranger to create notated parts for big band, for example, and steel orchestra arrangers will often create inner parts by improvising them 'live' whilst a melody and bass line are played on loop by other musicians in rehearsal. |
| <u>Repertoires</u> | By drawing upon pre-existing melodic or rhythmic elements, musicians refer directly to the tradition or culture from which that material emanates. |
| <u>Steelman</u> | Having been invented as a direct result of British colonial oppression, the steelman represents the triumph of freedom over adversity. In the words of Trinidadian writer Sunity Maharaj, "steelman is a symbol of our creative possibilities and a catalyst for liberating us from the prison of self-contempt into the freedom of self-confidence." ⁸ |

Table 1: Salient features of Trinidadian culture that have influenced this portfolio.

⁸ From Sunity Maharaj's article *Above all, the steelman*, published in the Daily Express on 14 April 2012. More detail about the significance of steelman is provided in Appendix B.

v. Carnival and Transformation

In addition to the above salient features, the concept of ‘transformation’ runs through many aspects of Trinidad’s Carnival. Masqueraders playing the traditional blue devil character, for example, undergo a ritual of transformation as they cover themselves in blue paint and allow the insistent rhythms played on biscuit tins to induce in them a transformed state which sees them ‘play the devil’; in Jouvert – the early morning street party that marks the start of Carnival Monday – participants witness the transformation from night into day; and musical arrangements – essentially transformed compositions – are held in high esteem, most especially in the field of steelpan.⁹

A key characteristic of masquerade (or ‘mas’ as it is most often called in Trinidad) is, as the name implies, the donning of masks. On a societal level, it sees a temporary transformation of a generally conservative society into one that is temporarily noticeably liberal: modern mas bands are made up of scantily-dressed men and women, many of whom enjoy ‘wining up’ on strangers during the parade.¹⁰ From a historical perspective, too, during the years of colonial rule Carnival represented for the poor a short-term transformation of their circumstance from oppressed to empowered. In the words of Trinidadian writer Pat Ganase, “the ‘masks’ are different now. But their purpose is still the same: freedom, a brief freedom from the taboos that society holds closest to its heart.”¹¹

⁹ Outside of the Carnival context, altered – or ‘transformed’ – states of consciousness are characteristics of worship in Trinidad’s Spiritual Baptist and Orisha faiths.

¹⁰ Wining is a type of sexualised dance commonly seen during Carnival street celebrations.

¹¹ ‘Trinidad Carnival: The People’s Party’ in *Caribbean Beat Magazine*, Issue 23, January/February 1997.

During the course of writing the pieces in this portfolio, I have noticed myself returning frequently to the concept of transformation and, as I demonstrate in Chapter 4, this has been a thread that runs through my compositions.

vi. Identity, Reception and Integrity

Due to its subjective nature, ‘relevance’ – as it pertains to how a musical composition is perceived within a culture – is impossible to evaluate by any quantitative measure.¹² So, as a cultural outsider living in Trinidad, it was clear to me from early on that in each of my pieces I would need to contrive a style that in some way would help my music to be perceived as being somehow rooted locally.

My thinking on issues of cultural and national identity in music was informed and shaped by discussions with Trinidadian composers Dominique Le Gendre and Roger Henry. Due to their nationality, their music – no matter what it sounds like, what compositional techniques they employ and what influences they turn to – could rightly be labelled as Trinidadian. In the words of Roger Henry:

If I were acting in a Shakespeare play, from the moment I opened my mouth everyone would know that I’m Trinidadian; my accent immediately gives me away. I also bring my individual interpretation to the phrasing of lines, based on my lived experience, wherever in the world. In composing, it’s the same. Music serves to reflect and encode lived experience in the form of sound. I create new compositions using found elements – melody, harmony, etc. – from the environment around me. My world view is essentially Trinidadian, so my use of these materials is necessarily Trinidadian, too. (Henry, personal correspondence 2018)

¹² I handed questionnaires on ‘relevance’ to audience members at the premieres of two of my works but due to receiving only a small number of responses on each occasion there was not enough data for meaningful interpretation.

Bahamian composer Quincy Parker echoes the same sentiment in reference to his own experience:

“I’m a Bahamian, and whatever I write, by virtue of the fact that I wrote it, is Bahamian ... My major influences as an instrumental composer runs the gamut from Camille Saint-Saëns ... to some of the Chinese composers, to some African polyrhythm drumming.” (Parker transcribed in Wright and Gangelhoff, 2013, p. 83)

Parker goes on to comment upon his own Caribbean musical heritage. Whilst he may not always consciously draw upon local musical styles when composing, he allows for the possibility that these will have informed his style at some unconscious level. “I was not influenced by goombay or by Junkanoo [Bahamian musical forms] or by soca or by calypso that I can tell. But I think it’s that last phrase that is important. I can’t tell how I was influenced by that music” (Parker transcribed in Wright and Gangelhoff, 2013, p. 83).

In contrast to Parker’s position, I would feel uncomfortable claiming “I’m British and so whatever I write is British music” because in my case this does not encapsulate my whole experience or intention. Unlike Parker – a Bahamian writing music in The Bahamas as a cultural insider – I have written my music not in Britain but in Trinidad as a cultural outsider concerned with communicating with and winning acceptance with audiences in that culture. This has required the self-conscious effort of internalising – and then including in my compositions – local musical gestures or cultural references; this process of acculturation has been central to my research.

Further, the sense of national pride of a black composer living and working in the Caribbean is likely to be very different to the way I see myself in relation to my country of birth. I recognise that a significant reason for my discomfort with the word ‘British’ as a label for my music stems from a historical awareness of the shameful conduct of

Britain during the years of slavery and colonial rule.¹³ As a British person living in the Caribbean I feel embarrassed by these aspects of my country's past, so I would choose to define my music as 'rooted in the western classical tradition' rather than as 'British'; the former emphasises style, the latter is more politically charged and is therefore, especially in the Caribbean context, more contentious.

Discussions with audience members in Trinidad have revealed the way my music has been received by some cultural insiders. For instance, during a discussion with award-winning Trinidadian novelist Earl Lovelace about a performance of *River of Freedom* that he had attended in 2016, he told me that he felt it was a successful attempt to fuse western classical and traditional Trinidadian musical styles. However, talking about the western classical influence apparent in my writing he said that a difficulty for local audiences more generally could be in understanding the signifiers of this style. This was certainly confirmed by another remark from a UTT manager: "Well, it's not Carnival music, is it!" Whilst the piece was in fact well-received both in performance and in reviews, the examples above highlight that the issues surrounding identity and acceptance are not uncomplicated.¹⁴ I have learned that, ultimately, a composer writing what might be called 'cross-cultural' music can do no more than make musical decisions informed by her or his worldview; if that worldview is well-informed and genuinely respectful of different cultures then the resulting work can be said to be honest and balanced.

In his *Essays Before a Sonata, the Majority, and Other Writings* Charles Ives (1999) writes the following, which certainly corresponds to how I have come to see my experience of writing music in Trinidad:

¹³ *Britain's Forgotten Slave Owners* – a BBC documentary (2015).

¹⁴ A full review of *River of Freedom* is included in Appendix C.

“... whatever excellence an artist sees in life, a community, in a people, or in any valuable object or experience, if sincerely and intuitively reflected in his work – his work, and so himself, is, in a way, a reflected part of that excellence. Whether he be accepted or rejected, whether his music is always played or never played – all this has nothing to do with it; it is true or false by his own measure.” (Ives, 1999, p. 102)

In this statement, Ives refocuses the discussion of ‘identity’ to arguably the more important one of ‘integrity’. During the course of my time writing music in Trinidad, I have learned that for a composer successfully and meaningfully to fuse together influences from more than one culture, this integrity can be attained in the following ways:

- internalisation of aspects of style and gesture by immersion in each culture;
- respect for (and love of) each musical tradition identified as an influence;
- understanding of the context of each musical style and, crucially, valuing them equally;¹⁵
- sensitivity to the implications of fusing together two musical traditions.

Composers have approached cross-genre musical fusion in different ways according to the context in which they are writing. Movie scores often draw upon well-understood musico-emotive conventions (Blacking, 1970), and composers often add instruments and stylistic gestures from other world musics to reference specific geographic locations depicted on screen. Examples of this technique are plentiful, and of interest to me in this approach is the fact that, through the globalised cinema industry, the language of music played on western instruments has become such a familiar story-telling tool that

¹⁵ I have found that cultural outsiders sometimes tend towards prejudice one way or the other. During my time in Trinidad I have on occasion caught myself admiring local musical practices to the extent that I come to value these above all others. On the other hand, I have noticed amongst some outsiders a tendency towards cultural superiority, with negativity about local styles seemingly stemming from a feeling that western art music is in some way ‘better’. Whilst this latter position is particularly unhealthy, neither is helpful. It is my experience that an awareness of the function of a musical style is necessary for it to be properly understood and evaluated, and that this awareness is crucial in avoiding the sort of comparisons that can lead to prejudice.

audiences understand its emotional syntax even in parts of the world where these instruments are not widely performed live.

vii. Individual and Collective Approaches to Composition

As noted by Bruno Nettl (2005), societies across the world have different approaches to the act of musical creation. The western art music tradition has for centuries embraced the notion of the solitary composer who works in isolation to invent masterpieces, but in the greater scheme of things this is just one approach. More common across the world are variants of the practice of collective composition whereby music is created as the result of interactions between musicians.

Two ethnomusicologists who have lived embedded in cultures other than their own and have written music to resonate with local people are Michael Tenzer (in Bali) and Thomas Turino (in Peru). Tenzer explains how one way of understanding a music “as its creator sees it” is to participate in it by attempting to “faithfully *compose* models of the music one is studying” (Tenzer, 2011, p. 79). Turino (1993) found that by identifying and deconstructing salient features of musical style and practice, he was able to compose music that won significant local acceptance. The most significant aspect of these examples in relation to the compositions presented here is the notion of needing to adapt one’s approach to correspond to prevailing cultural norms. Turino had understood the process of non-confrontational persuasion in collective music-composition sessions in order for his piece to gain acceptance. Tenzer, for his part, came to realise that “fusion wasn’t only about merging sounds. Whole lives and philosophies had to be reconciled” (Tenzer, 2011, p. 80).

Throughout the course of writing the music in this portfolio, I too have realised that one's approach to the very act of composing can have an impact on how well one's work is received locally. It should be no surprise, perhaps, that the degree of dialogue between a cultural outsider (such as myself) with cultural insiders (local musicians, for example) during the creative process will impact upon the way a piece of music is received. Each of the pieces presented here was influenced by working with collaborators but, for the most part, musical contributions from others consisted only of small details once I had written a piece and rehearsals had begun. It was only at the end of this research (in writing *Engine Room*) that I felt confident enough to let go of the notion of a composer working in isolation and to invite true creative participation from other musicians.

viii. Pre-Portfolio Research and Attempts at Fusion

My first attempts to draw upon aspects of Trinidad's culture in writing music for Ibis Ensemble begin before embarking upon this PhD. In my works *Little Red Riding Hood* (2011) and *The Old Yard: Portraits of Carnival* (2012) I had turned to the traditional characters of Trinidad's Carnival for inspiration, collaborating with artist Che Lovelace who created artwork for a book of the former and with photographer Maria Nunes in presenting performances of the latter. These pieces were mostly well received locally, but one movement of *The Old Yard: Portraits of Carnival* was more controversial. At Carnival presentations I had seen the Midnight Robber character portrayed by old men who moved in a slow, threatening way whilst declaiming apocalyptic-sounding speeches known as 'robber talk'. Translating what I had seen into music, my score was correspondingly slow and threatening-sounding, but the reactions of local people told me that I had somehow missed the point of the character altogether. They felt music to

represent him should be rhythmic and violent; the Midnight Robber is a boastful character, they told me, full of dangerous energy and passion. Reflecting upon this afterwards, I realised that people steeped in Carnival culture (cultural insiders) were able to see the archetype of the character being portrayed whereas I, as a cultural outsider, had focused rather on the superficial fact that the Midnight Robber was often portrayed by slow-moving old men.

This episode strengthened my resolve to write music that Ibis Ensemble could play on our western classical instruments that would communicate in a meaningful way with local audiences. The expression ‘finding resonance’ in the title of this paper refers directly to this idea of communication and also to the notion of exploring local musical expression and incorporating elements of these sounds into my own music whilst trying to remain true to my own musical style.

Since the composition of *The Old Yard: Portraits of Carnival* I have been careful to try to align myself more closely with local views in order that my music might represent more faithfully an emic perspective (as distinct from an etic one). The opportunity to live in and absorb a culture other than one’s own is clearly advantageous in this regard; a concrete example of this is my research into the music of the Spiritual Baptist faith in preparation for writing *River of Freedom*. By attending church services for several months I was able to hear which hymns are the most frequently sung, and I chose one of these for inclusion in my score. This choice helps the piece to resonate with the preferences of congregations in Trinidad and therefore to have a greater integrity than if I had only been in Trinidad long enough to attend only a small number of church services and had chosen a hymn that is only infrequently heard in the churches.

3 – Approaches to Research

Like all fusions, indeed like all music, meaning and association are entirely dependent on where one stands and the cultural ears one uses. (Tenzer, 2011, p. 99)

i. Immersion

In preparation for composing the pieces presented here, I made extensive field recordings of music played in churches, temples, at Carnival shows and in the panyard of Trinidad All Stars Steel Orchestra. Transcribing many of these extracts was a fundamental part of my research as this helped me to become familiar with certain traits of the music I had heard and wanted to represent in my own compositions. Over and above affording me the opportunity of simple live listening experiences, listening to music in situ was crucial in the development of my understanding aspects of cultural context and musical function in Trinidad. Experiencing the hypnotic energy of a Spiritual Baptist chorus towards the end of a four-hour thanksgiving service, for example, allowed me an insight into the role of repetition in provoking transformed states of consciousness in this form of worship. And seeing just how easily steelpan players who learn by ear are able to learn and recall long passages of music informed how I approached writing my body percussion piece *Engine Room*.

With my musical background from the UK very much defining my own musical personality, it felt important for me not only to listen to but also to actively participate in Trinidadian music-making in order to feel confident about using stylistic markers in my compositions. To this end I studied traditional local rhythms on djembe in many intensive practical lessons with Shannon Lewis and Everaldo “Redman” Watson from the Spiritual Baptist and Orisha traditions respectively, and from 2013 to 2014 I spent

many hours in Spiritual Baptist churches.¹⁶ I also attended a number of Orisha ceremonies to experience the rhythms and songs of that tradition.¹⁷

In addition to the above, I have played tenor-bass steel pan with Trinidad All Stars Steel Orchestra in the national Panorama championships for the past five years and found this experience to be highly revealing of the virtuosic approach to music-making of the players and, as mentioned above, of the band's arranger Leon "Smooth" Edwards. My time as a member of All Stars has given me insights into Trinidadian culture that I feel extremely fortunate to have had and, crucially for my research, has been an opportunity for me to internalise the rhythmic gestures and sonorities of Panorama.

ii. Understanding Context: Art Music and Fusion in the Caribbean

It was important for me to consider other composers' approaches to writing art music in the Caribbean in order to understand how they have blended local forms with the western classical tradition. It quickly became apparent that, beyond the common trait of setting out to represent something of the region's indigenous musical heritage and "to capture the black experience here [in the Caribbean] and elsewhere" (Adderley in Wright and Gangelhoff, 2013, p. 91), there is nothing prescriptive concerning style amongst art music composers in the Caribbean. This has had the effect of spawning works reminiscent of many past masters: prolific Bahamian composer Cleophas Adderley demonstrates startling technique in the Bernstein-esque overture to his opera *Our Boys* (1986); compatriot Quincy Parker's approach to harmony in parts of his score

¹⁶ I attended services in churches in the following locations across Trinidad: Curepe, Diego Martin, Fifth Company Village, Gasparillo, McBean Village (Couva), St Mary's Village (Moruga), Toco, Third Company Village and Tunapuna.

¹⁷ The Orisha faith is a tradition within the Yoruba religion practiced throughout the African diaspora. It is related to Santar  a in Cuba and Voodoo in Haiti.

to the movie *The Kindly Ones* (2010) calls to mind a neoclassical style not unlike that exemplified by Stravinsky, and Trinidad's Roger Henry looks to Brahms in his *Remembrance* (2017). The latter is an excellent example of fusion between western classical and Trinidadian traditional musical expressions. In the form of an oratorio structured and orchestrated in a similar fashion to Brahms' *A German Requiem*, it includes a large steelpan orchestra and incorporates the Trinidadian stickfighting chant *Mooma, Mooma* as a unifying melodic thread throughout the entire forty-minute work.¹⁸

I have found it liberating to work in a context where people seem to accept and appreciate the tonal music I write. Before moving to Trinidad I had come to realise that my preferred musical language was outmoded in relation to prevailing trends in much contemporary European art music. Trinidad, though, provided me with a sense of direction with my composing; here, along with composers native to the region, I feel comfortable writing in a tonal language, using this as a vehicle to focus on the notions of musical and cultural identity that are so widely considered and discussed.

I realised that as a cultural outsider in Trinidad I would need to make careful stylistic choices if my music was to communicate locally. With art music representing a relatively narrow interest in the Caribbean, composers cannot afford to alienate audiences too often and so self-reflection when considering style is key to acceptance. This likely explains the prevalence of tonal harmony in new works, a point articulated in Davis's study in reference to Peter Ashbourne's approach to composition in his native Jamaica:

"Experimenting with various musical devices, Ashbourne notes his struggle in composing art music in Jamaica, where there is no clear model from which a composer may work ... Ashbourne has learned when to experiment and when to conform to society's ideals in his works, admitting that he is not very adventurous with his compositions, since the Jamaican public has not been known to appreciate great degrees of atonality. Jamaican society rather embraces melodies that can be easily reproduced

¹⁸ Stickfighting is a Trinidadian tradition in which competitors face each other in brutal combat. The annual stickfighting championship forms part of the annual Carnival celebrations.

and that are pleasing to the ear. This factor has limited his compositions to a degree since his experimentation with atonality could be greater if his audience was in support of such music.” (Davis, 2013, p. 63)

iii. Drawing Upon Musical Structures – Pre-Existing and ‘Realised’

To a large extent, my approach to contriving a Trinidadian style has been an exercise in justifying compositional decisions based on letting my material be influenced by musical structures that are indigenous to Trinidad. In some cases, these structures are recognisable melodic or rhythmic ideas drawn from pre-existing material known in Trinidad; in other cases, the structures are less obvious ones that I have realised (that is, ‘made real’) and have allowed to impact upon my writing in some way. Specific examples of this (such as using the placement of the notes on the steelpan to determine thematic material) are given in the notes on each individual piece in Chapter 4.

The concept of ‘allowing’ has been key; I have found that allowing culturally-influenced structures to settle and combine gives a composition its own internal integrity which allows its creator to justify it as being rooted in that culture.¹⁹ This was especially true in *River of Freedom*: during the writing of this score I found that counterpoint was a highly effective tool for bringing together material derived from music of different traditions in order to achieve a fusion that reflects the development of the story.²⁰

The incorporation of pre-existing material in my works is in itself a process that reflects the tradition of arranging that is held in such high esteem in Trinidad’s world of steelpan. It is significant that this craft of creating arrangements is such an important

¹⁹ Such an approach is advocated by Trinidadian-born British author Monique Roffey who, as I heard in a writing class I attended in Port of Spain, speaks of gathering the elements of a story and then allowing them to combine in the way that feels most natural to them.

²⁰ An example is my combining of a spiritual and a military march in Part 1b of *River of Freedom*.

part of Panorama because arranging is in itself a form of transformation which, as described above, is a defining aspect of Carnival culture. Drawing upon Trinidadian themes – musical or extra-musical – and re-presenting them is, then, an important conceptual point that underlies this portfolio.

iv. Selecting Local Musics as Influences on this Portfolio

Many styles of music are associated with Trinidad, so speaking in general terms of ‘Trinidadian music’ is meaningless without qualification. Calypso is a Trinidadian genre, for example, as are the popular styles of soca and chutney, and the religious musics of the indigenous Orisha and Spiritual Baptist faiths. *Tassa* drumming, with its origins in India, has particularly flourished in Trinidad, and the steelpan tradition is quintessentially Trinidadian. The music in this portfolio draws upon certain of these Trinidadian musics but by no means all of them, although some rhythmic gestures that I incorporate in my music are found in more than one of the forms listed above.²¹

In this portfolio I refer to the musical traditions of the two largest ethnic groups of the island: Afro-Trinidadian and Indo-Trinidadian. I have incorporated influences from *tassa* and from the Indian classical tradition (itself prominent on the Trinidadian musical landscape) in *The Temple in the Sea*, and a rhythmic unit common to *tassa* also features in *Engine Room*. Steelpan has influenced each of the other portfolio pieces in different ways as detailed in Chapter 4. And the music of the Spiritual Baptist faith was a major influence in *River of Freedom*.²²

²¹ The prime example is the calypso rhythm. Versions of it can be heard in folk presentations, church services, Panorama arrangements and soca songs.

²² An overview of Spiritual Baptist music is included in Appendix B.

In all pieces except *Prayer*, the type of Trinidadian music I turned to was a direct result of the extra-musical subject matter of the particular piece I was writing at the time. Working with texts in *The Temple in the Sea* and *River of Freedom*, the most appropriate musical influences were easy to identify. *Lament* (written as the final scene of a movie) was composed in response to the nature of the story portrayed on screen. And *Engine Room* was a commission to write a piece for body percussion ensemble in the style of Panorama, so once again the musical starting point was pre-determined. Only in *Prayer* did I have completely free choice, and in this piece I gravitated towards the steelpan and pre-recorded birdsong as a simple way to root firmly in Trinidad a commission that started out as a piece for solo trombone.

I also recognise in myself a preference for the *acoustic* musical traditions of Trinidad, specifically Spiritual Baptist music, Panorama (part of Afro-Trinidadian culture) and *tassa* (from the Indian tradition). The Spiritual Baptist, Panorama (and Calypso) traditions have in common that they all flourished initially amongst the country's poorer communities and were shaped in various ways as a result of the racist policies of British colonial rule. From this perspective they might be regarded as being musics 'of the people'. I see these musics in contrast to soca, for example, which, though derived from calypso, is driven by high-earning celebrity superstars. So whilst a genre such as soca is unquestionably Trinidadian and extremely popular, I felt more inclined to turn to the more traditional musical forms.²³

I also acknowledge my *aesthetic* preferences in my choices of prime musical influences. I had some particularly profound musical experiences in Spiritual Baptist churches and

²³ Taking such musical influences and integrating them into music intended to be heard in a formal setting has an interesting parallel with the process of creolisation as described by Peter Manuel: "In the typical pattern, these lower-class, syncretic forms gradually percolate upward, acquiring more musical sophistication and eventually coming to be enjoyed by the upper classes" (Manuel, 2016, p. 17).

panyards, and it is therefore unsurprising that my choices have been influenced by such moments.

v. Instrumentation

The orchestration of the pieces I have written in Trinidad has been largely informed by the particular circumstances in which I have been working. Commissions from colleagues for solo pieces clearly determined the main instrumental focus, though in both *The Temple in the Sea* and *Prayer* I added a Trinidadian instrument (*tassa* drum and steelpan respectively) to make direct references to local musical traditions.

River of Freedom is scored for the full forces of Ibis Ensemble minus viola; I omitted this instrument to achieve a neat balance of instruments: two strings, two woodwind, two brass and two percussion. Whilst this is certainly a workable combination of instruments, I did find that care was needed to avoid it sounding too ‘top heavy’.

Constraints in the budget of the movie *Play the Devil* determined the small ensemble used in that score (of which *Lament* is a part), and, conversely, the large ensemble size of *Engine Room* was possible because APA’s music programme required all first and second year students to take part in the piece for course credit.

All of these pieces stem directly from initial decisions made by the Trinidadian government under the leadership of former Prime Minister Patrick Manning both to open an Academy for the Performing Arts and to recruit its music faculty, the membership of which was to become Ibis Ensemble. Political decision-making in Trinidad, then, has been absolutely fundamental to the instrumentation of and, in fact,

to the very existence of this portfolio, and in this sense the music I have written could be seen as a small detail in the nation's artistic narrative. I make this claim without self-aggrandisement but rather to acknowledge the role that circumstances played in leading to the creation of this music.

My approach to writing for the orchestral instruments of Ibis Ensemble has been heavily influenced by many years of playing diverse repertoire as a professional French horn player with orchestras in the UK. Whilst this experience has given me a certain degree of confidence in writing for orchestral instruments, I was unfamiliar with the steelpan before my arrival in Trinidad and felt a need to have a physical understanding of the tenor steelpan (part of the ensemble in three of the five pieces presented here). I therefore taught myself enough to take my Grade 1 in 2013.²⁴ Despite the rudimentary level of the material I learned, this exercise was valuable to me as composer because it gave me a first-hand understanding of the energies and resonances of the different registers of the instrument.

Many of my compositions continue the recent trend of combining steelpan with conventional western orchestral instruments.²⁵ With its sound so closely associated with the Caribbean in general and with Trinidad in particular, this may seem like nothing more than a shortcut to evoking local culture. However, with steelpan's many associations with themes in Trinidad's past, incorporating this instrument carefully in ensembles of other instruments can, I feel, considerably deepen the level of significance of a piece of music to knowledgeable audiences.²⁶ Certainly, combining steelpan with flute (a duet passage in *River of Freedom*), with trombone (*Prayer*) and with strings

²⁴ The University of the West Indies (UWI) offers exams from Grade 1 to Grade 8 on steelpan.

²⁵ Trinidadians Roger Henry, Dominique Le Genre and American Andy Akiho are three other composers who have done this in recent years.

²⁶ See Appendix B.

(*Lament*) gave rise to textures I found effective in expressing a variety of narratives and abstract musical characters.

vi. A Note on Harmony

More in-depth discussion of the harmonic fabric of each piece is included in Chapter 4 but, as a general point, I chose to use western functional harmony in my attempts to write music intended to be meaningful locally.²⁷ This is because the harmonic language of the popular and traditional styles of Trinidad is itself a diatonic one, reflecting a musical influence on Trinidad from Europe and Africa. Whilst in certain pieces (notably sections of *The Temple in the Sea* and *River of Freedom*) I include non-functional harmonies for symbolic reasons or dramatic effect, the pieces presented here (with the exception of the purely rhythmic *Engine Room*) have clearly defined tonal centres throughout.

4 – Portfolio Compositions

i. Overview of Portfolio

The pieces in this portfolio show a progression from using abstract symbolism to determine a score's musical content, to a style that is more immediate and rarefied in terms of the way Trinidadian sounds are integrated into the music. In *The Temple in the*

²⁷ My preferences for the Late Romantic period and for the sorts of soundworlds invented by Igor Stravinsky, are evident in parts of *River of Freedom* and *The Temple in the Sea* and I found that I was able to draw upon the harmonic and gestural traits of these styles to help convey the story behind these pieces.

Sea and River of Freedom I make extensive use of leitmotif with motivic structures and harmonic sequences being transformed to reflect the unfolding narratives. Whilst *River of Freedom* is built upon musico-symbolic structures embedded into the score at quite a deep level, *Lament* and *Prayer* evoke a Trinidadian environment by using more readily-audible devices such as an ostinato derived from street musicians (*Lament*) and pre-recorded local birdsong as a decorative acoustic backdrop to the music (*Prayer*). *Engine Room* draws heavily upon rhythmic units typically used in arrangements for steel orchestras.

Throughout the portfolio I have attempted to blend the sort of musical sonorities and gestures that typify certain traditional Trinidadian styles with those that reflect my own musical background and training in England. It is within this framework that I have drawn upon concrete musical elements (such as a pre-existing hymn-tune, birdsong or a widely-used rhythmic unit), abstract concepts derived from programmatic themes, and on what might be called ‘hidden structures’ that I have consciously sought out and embedded in my work.

ii. Selection of Portfolio Pieces

The pieces presented here exemplify my different approaches to writing music that combines elements of Trinidadian local musics and western classical art music. The pieces are in no way intended as an album, but rather as a disparate collection that demonstrates an arc from *The Temple in the Sea* (rooted in contemporary western art music with nods towards Trinidadian *tassa* drumming) to *Engine Room* (focusing almost entirely on rhythmic and structural features of Panorama’s steelpan arrangements). These two pieces, then, sit at either end of a conceptual spectrum.

Other pieces I have written since starting my PhD do not demonstrate my approaches so clearly either because they were written as preparatory sketches for pieces in this portfolio (*Promenade for a Professor* (2012) and *Entertain the Spirits* (2014)) or as separate projects entirely (such as my songs *Show Me A Shadow* (2017) and *All Night Through* (2017)).

Finally, rather than include the whole of the score I wrote for the movie *Play the Devil*, I chose only the *Lament* because this cue best demonstrates my approach to fusing gestures from a recognisably filmic musical style with the concepts of cultural referencing discussed throughout this commentary.

iii. Preparation and Presentation of Recordings

The APA's Music Technology (M-Tech) Department guided the recording and mastering of *River of Freedom* and *Lament* and I contributed to the mixing and editing sessions of these pieces. *Prayer* I recorded myself using a Snowball USB microphone feeding directly into Logic X on an Apple MacBook Pro. *Temple in the Sea* and *Engine Room* were both filmed in live performance, the former using a Zoom recorder and the latter again guided by audio-visual specialists in APA's M-Tech Department.

I present each of the pieces in the format that best represents the way it was ultimately intended to be heard. The live films of *The Temple in the Sea* and *Engine Room* give a good impression of the non-musical elements – choreography in particular – intrinsic to them in performance. *River of Freedom* was made into a book published by Plain Vision Publishing and I present that book here to demonstrate the end result of this collaboration with writer Caitlyn Kamminga, lyricist Krisson Joseph and artist Che

Lovelace. I also include a revised score of *River of Freedom* to show the changes I made after recording the work. Details of these changes are given on page 63.

I present *Lament* with the final scene of the movie *Play the Devil* to demonstrate my musical response to the images, and *Prayer* is included simply as an audio file.

iv. Features of Portfolio

i) *The Temple in the Sea* (2013)

For solo percussionist (Vibraphone, *Tassa* drum and Voice)

with pre-recorded Tanpura drone.

Poetry by Sandra Alcosser

Background and Aims

APA colleague Deborah Moore asked me to write a piece for solo percussionist that she could perform in education workshops focusing on combining words with music. I had been wanting to write a piece about Central Trinidad's Temple in the Sea (a national monument) for a while prior to this, and Deborah was excited when I suggested that this be the focus of the new work. She asked American poet Sandra Alcosser to write an original poem on this theme. Sandra and I discussed what we felt should be addressed in the poem, and I received the final draft in April 2013. I completed the score in July of that year.

My principal aim in this piece was to emphasise through music the themes and emotions arising from the poetry. Also, to reflect the locality of the piece's starting point it was important to me to bring something Trinidadian to the score, hence the inclusion of the *tassa* drum and background drone. I hoped that this would help the piece find resonance with Trinidadian audiences and that these elements together would give it a unique character wherever it is performed.

Aspects of Composition

1. Instrumentation

Vibraphone

Deborah is a virtuoso performer on mallet instruments and I felt that the resonance of the vibraphone would suit the subject matter particularly well. I attempted to explore the different sonorities of the vibraphone, using the entire range of the instrument and incorporating four-part harmonies as well as sections to be played with two mallets.

Tassa drum

The *tassa* drum is commonly heard in Trinidad at Indian celebrations and cultural events.²⁸ I wanted to include this instrument not only as a signifier of the locality of the story, but also because I was concerned that an extended piece of music for solo vibraphone may become rather monotonous. Inclusion of the *tassa* drum gives the music greater textual variety.

Voice

The soloist is required to recite Alcosser's poem as an integral part of the performance. Additionally, the performer is required to sing "Sewdass Sadhu" – the name of the devout man who built the original Temple in the Sea – at the start and then once more later on in the piece. This is in the style of an intoned prayer and falls in the low register of the voice, whether it is a male or female performer. During the rehearsal period, Deborah Moore added more moments of singing – on the words "Peace", "Ram Ram" and "Salaam". I found this to be very effective, and subsequently incorporated the idea into the score as shown in Ex. 1.

²⁸ More information about *tassa* is provided in Appendix B.

Ex. 1: Bar 269 of *The Temple in the Sea* showing intoned notes.

Drone

Borrowing a *sa-pa* (tonic-dominant) *tanpura* drone from Indian music made sense to me for two reasons. First, this sound alludes to the Indian background of Sewdass Sadhu. Second, using the drone in the background throughout the entire piece gives the impression of this sound surrounding and stretching across the music, symbolic of the way the sea surrounded Sewdass's temple and how it stretches from India to Trinidad.

2. Harmonic Language

The first melodic idea I had for the music of *The Temple in the Sea* also gave rise to my initial harmonic starting point: the four-note theme heard at the beginning. This 'Sewdass motif' is derived from the letters from the word 'Sadhu' (meaning "holy man") – B-flat, A, D and B-natural²⁹ – and suggested to me a tonal centre of D. By collapsing these notes into a single chord (with the addition of a G) I had a sonority that would be associated with the protagonist (the 'Sewdass chord').

This technique of assigning chords to the principal themes of the poem runs throughout the score and is therefore fundamental to the structure of the piece. Writing

²⁹ *Si* from French *solfège* corresponds to the letter S, the derivation of A and D is clear, and H, from the German system, gives B-natural.

a work with a constant drone (D and A) gave me the possibility of depicting concepts that were ‘near to’ or ‘far from’ the so-called home theme of Sewdass Sadhu and his temple. For example, the element that is diametrically opposed to Sewdass himself (represented by tonal centre D) is oppressive British colonial governance in Trinidad whose national anthem appears in the piece with a tonal centre of A-flat. Below is a list of some of the poem’s principal themes with a description of their corresponding harmonies. As stated previously, all are underpinned by the ever-present drone of D and A.




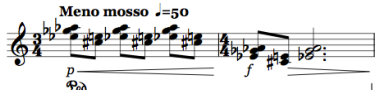

| Element in poem | Harmony | Example from score |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Sewdass Sadhu | D maj. plus G maj./min. | Bars 9-11:  |
| Temple/Lotus Flower | D maj. plus E | Bar 282:  |
| British-owned land in Trinidad | C-sharp maj./min. | Bars 31 and 32:  |
| Idea to build the temple | A-flat 7 to A maj. | Bars 251-252:  |
| Nature | B maj. | Bars 48-51:  |

Table 2: Themes in *The Temple in the Sea* and their corresponding harmonies.

3. Motivic/melodic elements

The derivation of the piece's main motif – the Sewdass motif – is explained above. Two other melodic elements are also woven into the score where appropriate to the text: birdsong and the British national anthem.

Birdsong is a prominent feature of Trinidad's soundscape, and one I drew upon to represent Nature, aspects of which are referred to in the poetry. The motif in B-major that represents Nature (see Table 2 above) is derived from the song of a Trinidadian bird I often heard in the forest near where I lived at the time I was composing the music in 2013. Birdsong is such a prominent feature of the local soundscape – and likely to be one that Sewdass Sadhu himself would have heard – that I felt it would help root my music geographically.

The British national anthem appears in three guises during the course of the composition. The use of this theme is ironic in Sonnet 2 which speaks of how people were deceived by the British into coming to Trinidad. Here, as shown below, the rhythm of the anthem is used throughout as if it were a funeral March, heard on *tassa* drum immediately after the typical *tassa* rhythm symbolising Sewdass's Indian roots.

Allegro vivace ♩=120
Tassa drum
(Unaccented notes to be played quietly)
ff

Lento subito ♩=60
p

Ex. 2: Bars 115-119 show the typical *tassa* rhythm (bars 115-117) followed by the opening of the British national anthem (sung to “God save our gracious queen”) in bars 118 and 119.

Also throughout this sonnet, the upper note in each vibraphone chord yields the first two bars of the melody of the national anthem (repeated).

The third appearance of the national anthem – altered to a minor mode – is in the Interlude section which is intended to depict the tension caused by British colonial rule. The melody begins in bar 239 in the upper octave and, despite the surrounding harmony, has A-flat as its root.



Ex. 3: Bars 210-217 of *The Temple in the Sea*. The accented notes give the melody of the British national anthem.

A large part of the Interlude is based on the rhythm mentioned above as being closely associated with *tassa* repertoire. The example below shows it in combination with the Sewdass motif:



Ex. 4: Bars 144-149 of *The Temple in the Sea* showing the *tassa* rhythm (in the top staff) which features prominently in the Interlude.

Discussion

Whilst the vibraphone, *tassa* drum and voice can be performed acoustically, it would be entirely appropriate for the piece to be amplified: this would be another link to Indian

musical traditions as it is common practice for Indian music performances to use amplification. Amplification also gives the music a greater immediacy for the audience.

In rehearsing the work, Deborah devised a repertoire of gestures using the mallets to illustrate different aspects of the poem. This choreography added a further dimension to the piece in performance that I found very successful. I had intended for the music to have a ritualistic quality about it, and the movements served to reinforce this characteristic.

The Temple in the Sea was first performed on a beach in Miami as part of a poetry evening at the Hermitage in April 2014. There were problems with the sound due to it being an outdoor performance on a windy evening. A more successful performance took place at the Academy for the Performing Arts, University of Trinidad and Tobago, on 15th May 2014. Deborah wore a sari, and photographs of the Temple in the Sea (with a focus on the prayer flags nearby) were lent to us by photographer Maria Nunes and projected onto the wall at the back of the stage. This performance was the musical feature of the opening ceremony of a conference on Arts and Disabilities hosted by UTT, and it is a film of this event that is included in this portfolio.

We found that it was crucial to check the sound level of the drone carefully. In Miami, a dry-run of the piece had caused audience members to question the drone, but when the volume was reduced in the beach performance people embraced this element far more. Deborah liked how the drone is very prominent in the quieter sections and is almost inaudible when she's playing loudly. She also found that the drone helped her to relax as there is a continuity of sound that means she did not need to feel that she had to rush to play the next passage after a rest.

I am pleased with much of *The Temple in the Sea*, especially with the way that the music responds to the more meditative aspects of the poem, though in retrospect I felt that the high level of dissonance in some parts of the score – most particularly the more extended musical sections between iterations of the poetry – hindered the piece’s overall success.

Despite its shortcomings, this piece allowed me to develop two techniques in particular that I would return to later on in this portfolio: first, integrating pre-existing (sometimes transformed) music relevant to Trinidad into a new composition to allow relevant extra-musical elements to have a direct impact upon the score (in this case, the way the notes of the word Sadhu determined the principal motif) and, second, in manipulating such material, giving new expression to narratives linked to Trinidad’s history and culture.

ii) *River of Freedom* (2015)

For flute/piccolo, violin, clarinet, French horn, trombone, steelpan (low C tenor pan), percussion, double bass, baritone voice and narrator.

Script by Caitlyn Kamminga.

Background and Aims

A documentary called *The Merikins* – produced under the auspices of the US Embassy – premiered at the IMAX Trinidad cinema in 2012. My colleague Caitlyn Kamminga subsequently suggested that she and I collaborate to tell this story in words and music to commemorate the 200th anniversary in 2016 of the Merikins’ arrival in Trinidad. This part of Trinidadian history has at its core the universal themes of determination in

the face of adversity and the pursuit of freedom; as such, it was an ideal vehicle for my research aim of writing music to resonate with local Trinidadian audiences whilst also being accessible to audiences further afield. I also saw this as an opportunity to make a significant contribution to the repertoire of music for chamber ensemble from the Caribbean. I set out to write my score in an accessible style both to facilitate the music's communication and also in the hope of attracting the attention of filmmakers with a view to writing for screen in the future.

For the book of this work that was published in 2016, Trinidadian artist Che Lovelace painted three large canvases. *River of Freedom* was therefore a joint venture between an American writer, a British composer and a Trinidadian artist, all collaborating to tell a part of our countries' collective history. The work is in three parts:

- Part 1 (1a and 1b) is set in America.
- Part 2 is set during the war between America and Britain.
- Part 3 concerns the Merikins' arrival in Trinidad.

It was important to me to include steelpan in the ensemble. Whilst this instrument had not been invented by the time the story of the Merikins took place, it felt absolutely necessary to me to include it for two reasons: first, the great pride Trinidadians have in their national instrument and, second, the fact that its sound is so immediately associated with Trinidad.³⁰

³⁰ Taking an artistic liberty by referring to a musical development that in reality occurred much later than the narrative context has historical precedence. In *Der Rosenkavalier* Richard Strauss turned to the Viennese waltz as a stylistic marker even though this genre didn't enjoy its heyday until a good century after the events depicted in the opera.

Aspects of Composition

1. Pastiche

River of Freedom contains sections that are pastiches of styles I had not written in before. I therefore spent a long while listening to recordings of American folk songs, African-American spirituals and British fife and drum music in order to be able to give a recognisably faithful impression of these in the appropriate sections of the score.

2. Harmonic Structures

Many of the principle elements in the story of *River of Freedom* are assigned their own tonal area. The key of A-flat minor in Part 1 that represents America is contrasted at the tritone with D minor used to represent Slavery. The story's protagonist Nathaniel is assigned E-flat major and this is also the tonality given to the Merikins. In fact, Part 3 hardly deviates from E-flat major at all. The focus on this key here gives the music a settled feel appropriate to the narrative, refers to the protagonist's tonality, and is also the key of the hymn *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say* and the chorus *Hello* as I'd heard them sung in Spiritual Baptist churches.

I chose to make the harmonic language of Part 2 rather different to that of Parts 1 and 3. This was for a distinct metaphorical reason: this suggestion of feeling 'out of place' is intended to reflect the Merikins' experience fighting alongside the British army.

River of Freedom uses for the most part conventional harmonic progressions within a tonal context. There is an emphasis on chords with added notes and this is a trait throughout the entire score, the intention being to add a richness to the sonority of the small chamber group. The 9th chords that permeate the harmony (and, to a lesser

extent, 7th and 6th chords, too) relate to the rising fifths Determination/New Beginnings motif (see Fig. 15 below) which generates such chords naturally. Localised dissonance is used for programmatic effect.

As *River of Freedom* refers to three different countries, I drew heavily upon the national anthems of Trinidad and Tobago, America and Britain as starting points for harmonic and motivic material. In some instances these are quoted explicitly, but elsewhere they provided me with a harmonic progression as a background for an original melodic strand. An example is the opening fanfare of the national anthem of Trinidad and Tobago which is as follows:



Ex. 5: The three parallel chords at the start of the national anthem of Trinidad and Tobago.³¹

I use this sequence of parallel chords at many points in the score, though adding a ninth to each chord. An example is in the score's spiritual (an original pastiche) in Part 1a (bars 280 to 282):

Tempo primo ♩=80

Fl/Ct/Hn

p

Pan/Cb

mf

Tbn

Ex. 6: Altered parallel chords derived from the national anthem of Trinidad and Tobago as used in the spiritual.

³¹ The rhythmic fanfare figure from this phrase is also an element I integrate into certain parts of the score.

The theme of protagonist Nathaniel is harmonically related to the fanfare of the anthem. The only difference between the two chord sequences is that the third chord of Nathaniel's theme is a semitone higher than the second chord (rather than a tone higher as in the anthem). Here is Nathaniel's theme as it appears towards the end of Part 1b (bars 624 to 627):



Ex. 7: Nathaniel's theme: a variation of the first three chords of the opening of the national anthem of Trinidad and Tobago.

In *River of Freedom* the notion of liberty is set in stark contrast to the system of slavery in the America of the early 1800s. In a symbolic reference to this opposition of ideologies, the first three chords of the Trinidad and Tobago national anthem are inverted (resulting in the sequence A-flat minor, G-flat major, F-flat major – each chord with an added 9th) to provide the harmonic basis of the theme of American slave master Dr Jones (and, by extension, of America itself) in Part 1a (bars 102 to 104):



Ex. 8: Theme depicting Dr Jones/America: harmonically an inversion of the national anthem of Trinidad and Tobago.

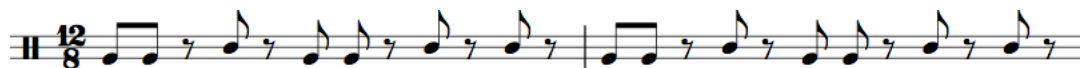
3a. Motivic elements – Pre-Existing Material

In *River of Freedom* I combine pre-existing motifs and melodies with original elements to convey the different aspects and themes of the story. Material in unchanged form makes explicit reference to the national anthem of Trinidad and Tobago and to music from the country's Spiritual Baptist tradition. The pre-existing material is:

- the *yanvalou* rhythm (explained below);
- phrases of the national anthem of Trinidad and Tobago that carry the following lyrics:
 - “Forged from the love of liberty”;
 - “Side by side we stand”;
- a chorus sung to the word *Hello*;
- the hymn *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*.

*Yanvalou*³²

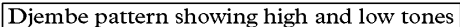
The *yanvalou* rhythm (also known as the *mandingo* or *nandingo*, especially by musicians from the south of country) is a pattern often heard played in Trinidad's Spiritual Baptist churches and cultural presentations. In *River of Freedom* I use it as a motif to depict the river of the title. The rhythm is of a 12/8 type commonly heard in African music which can be divided into twos and threes and therefore has great potential for polyrhythm.



Ex. 9: *Yanvalou* rhythm as played on djembe, showing higher and lower tones.

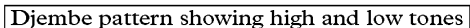
³² In Trinidad this is pronounced “avalu”.

below:



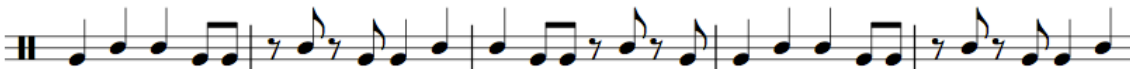
Ex. 10: *Yanvalou* rhythm as I initially perceived it.

fact perceived in Trinidad as follows:



Ex. 11: *Yanvalou* rhythm as perceived in Trinidad.

the pattern:



Ex. 12: Transformed *yanvalou* rhythm as incorporated in *River of Freedom* (Part 1b, bars 326-330).

National anthem of Trinidad and Tobago

The first line of the anthem is sung to the words “Forged from the love of liberty” and this melodic fragment is used at appropriate moments throughout *River of Freedom*.



Ex. 13: Beginning of melody of national anthem of Trinidad and Tobago sung to the words “Forged from the love of liberty”.

Another quote from the anthem in *River of Freedom* is the related five-note melodic fragment sung to the words “Side by side we stand” which I felt expressed a particularly appropriate sentiment for the Merikins’ story:



Ex. 14: Melodic fragment of national anthem sung to the words “Side by side we stand”.

The above two elements appear together towards the end of Part 1b (bars 610 to 620) and I also chose to emphasise the “Side by side” motif in the extended ending when revising the work.³³

Spiritual Baptist invocational chorus sung to the word “Hello”

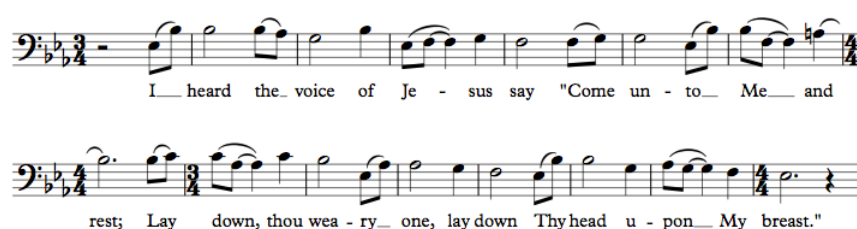


Ex. 15: Spiritual Baptist chorus.

³³ This passage is to be found in the score marked “Definitive” from bar 228 where it has a fortuitous relationship to the descending figure from the opening of Part 3 (whose derivation is explained on page 55).

I first heard this chorus at St Ann's Church of the Spiritual Metaphysics on 29th September 2013. (An extract from my field recording is included as file 2a on the accompanying USB stick.) In the context of a church service it serves as a greeting to the Holy Spirit and I give it an additional layer of meaning when it is heard in Part 3 as the Merikins arrive in Trinidad. This chorus is heard in Parts 1, 2 and 3 and, as such, it represents an important structural element in *River of Freedom*.

Hymn - *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*



Ex. 16: First verse of *I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*.

I have heard this hymn in several churches, most notably in St Michael's Spiritual Baptist Tabernacle on 10th November 2013.³⁴ (An extract from my field recording is included as file 2b on the accompanying USB stick.) It was sung that day very quietly and reflectively in a rendition that I found deeply moving. I transcribed it and Part 3 of *River of Freedom* includes the following references to that transcription:

- Figuration (melismas in voice) heard in harmonies hummed by the ensemble members and played on violin, pan and trombone;
- The trombone line in the tutti verse. This is a literal transcription of the priest as he sang that day;

³⁴ The hymn was written by Horatius Bonar in 1846. Its lyrics are more famously set to the (entirely different) melody *Vox Dilecti*.

- The rising fifth that begins the melody. This interval gives it a motivic relationship to the Determination/New Beginnings theme in *River of Freedom* (explained below).

The lyrics of the hymn are particularly appropriate because they include the words “living water” which are used in Kamminga’s script, and because the words “traveling days” are apt for the Merikins’ story.

Opening of Part 3

This music is a radically slowed-down version of a Baptist chorus I heard – simply sung to “ah” – at St Ann’s Church of the Spiritual Metaphysics on 1st December 2013. (An extract from my field recording is included as file 2c on the accompanying USB stick.) I wrote the following note about it in my journal that day:

Yanvalou underpins a falling phrase in voices. This was exhilarating to experience as it built up more and more. A particularly memorable moment for me.

The version of this chorus that I heard on that occasion was sung joyfully and loudly, but I transformed it in Part 3 to convey a sense of peace and of being at rest. To me, this transformation feels satisfactory both aesthetically (the slowed tempo and the instrumentation suggest an appropriate stillness) and intellectually (the pitches and rhythm are unchanged from those I heard in the Spiritual Baptist church so there is an undeniably connection with the source material):



Ex. 17: Spiritual Baptist chorus that forms the basis of Part 3 of *River of Freedom*.

3b. Motivic Elements – Original Material

The principal original melodic and motivic elements in *River of Freedom* are listed in Table 3 and then described in more detail in the text that follows.

| Narrative element depicted | Description of motif/melody |
|------------------------------|--|
| Determination/New Beginnings | Rising perfect fifths, derived from the modern configuration of notes on the tenor steel pan (see Ex. 20). |
| Slavery | Arpeggio based on the blues scale and used in many guises in Parts 1 and 2 (see Ex. 21). |
| Freedom/Birdsong | Patterns of notes built by stacking up thirds (for example, Part 1a, bars 253-266 in flute and steelpan). This motif relates to Nathaniel's theme. |
| Nathaniel | Rising thirds underpinned by a chord sequence that is a variant of the first three chords of the Trinidad and Tobago national anthem (see Ex. 7). |
| Dr Jones/America | The start of this theme is derived from the first six notes of the US national anthem (see Ex. 18). |
| Benevolence (ironic) | Melodic fragment that is an extension of the theme for Dr Jones/America (for example, Part 1a, bars 179-181 in violin). |
| Britain | Rhythmically altered version of the first six notes of the British national anthem (see Ex. 19). |
| UK military | Dotted rhythm and fife and drum type music on piccolo and snare drum (for example, Part 1b, 420-433). |

Table 3: Melodic-motivic elements in *River of Freedom* with brief descriptions.

In cases where melodic elements are transformed versions of pre-existing material, I tried to strike a balance between, on the one hand, ensuring that the identity of the new version was not too obviously derivative and, on the other, that the integrity of the original was nonetheless retained. The start of the theme associated with Dr Jones/America is derived from the first six notes of the US national anthem. Changing the tonality, rhythm and metre disguises the anthem sufficiently for Dr Jones' theme to assume its own distinct melodic identity:

Beginning of US national anthem:



Beginning of Dr Jones' theme:



Ex. 18: Derivation of theme for Dr Jones/America.

The British national anthem is even more heavily disguised, and forms the main motif of Part 2:

Beginning of British national anthem:

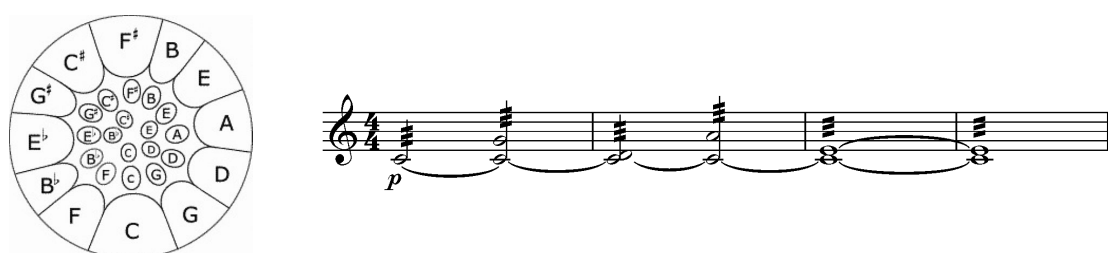


Principal motif of Part 2 (bars 2 and 3):



Ex. 19: Derivation of main motif of Part 2.

The Determination/New Beginnings theme is derived from the standardised configuration of notes on the tenor steelpan. Playing the notes anti-clockwise around this instrument gives rise to a pattern of rising fifths and falling fourths that extends through the full chromatic scale. The theme is so named because of the new life that the Merikins had to make for themselves in Trinidad, so the idea of devising it from the fundamental structure of the pan is heavily symbolic. Additionally, the interval of the perfect fifth is widely understood as a ‘strong’ interval, prevalent at the start of heroic themes in many orchestral film scores.



Ex. 20: Configuration of low C tenor pan and first appearance of the Determination/New Beginnings theme (Introduction, bars 3-6).

This theme is heard in many forms throughout *River of Freedom*, sometimes made up of a row of five notes – as in Ex. 20 – and elsewhere including all the notes of the chromatic scale. The Introduction is in fact simply a harmonisation of the chromatically extended version of the theme.

The motif associated with slavery occurred to me initially as the melody of the spiritual (see Ex. 21i below).³⁵ The first few notes of this melody undergo various rhythmic and textural transformations throughout Parts 1 and 2. In Part 1a, for example, the motif is contrasted with the music representing Dr Jones/America in symbolic reference to the contrast between slavery and the bourgeoisie of the day. In Part 2, the motif becomes a ‘walking bass’. Here, the symbolism is that the experience of the African-Americans in

³⁵ The lyrics of the spiritual were written by Krisson Joseph, a singer colleague of mine at APA.

fighting alongside the British was underpinned by their predicament as escaped slaves. There is no reference to slavery motif in Part 3 since at this stage in the story the Merikins are free people.

i.



ii.



iii.



Ex. 21: Examples of variants of the slavery motif in *River of Freedom*.
i. in Part 1a (bars 206-209); ii. in Part 1b (bars 410-411); iii. in Part 2 (bars 16-18).

Notably, this motif also provides a foundation to the music that accompanies mention of the White House to imply that slavery was a fundamental part of American society (Part 2, bars 141 to 147).

4. Counterpoint

In *River of Freedom* I made extensive use of contrapuntal techniques to combine the many elements of the Merikins' story. There are examples of this throughout the score, perhaps the most prominent being the combination of the spiritual melody and fife and drum military music in Part 1b in the passage beginning in bar 473.

I find that a work can have a great internal integrity if the creator is meticulous in searching for ways to allow musical elements to combine. In this regard I feel that the passage that follows the *Hello* chorus in Part 3 – bars 159 to 180 – is particularly successful.³⁶ The musical fabric of this passage is woven together from motifs representing many of the key elements in the narrative (shown in Table 4 below), intended to seem as though it was arrived at inevitably; in writing it, I had the distinct impression of realising – of ‘making real’ – music that the Merikins’ story had itself caused to exist. Kwamé Ryan – who conducted the work – felt that these bars are a clear metaphor for the *pelau* that is Trinidad – comprised of disparate elements, yet sitting together as a coherent whole.

| Musical Element | Instrumentation |
|---|-----------------------|
| The slowed-down Baptist chorus characterised by a falling phrase | Flute |
| Determination/New Beginnings motif | Steelpan |
| The opening fanfare of the national anthem of Trinidad and Tobago | Trombone |
| The River of Freedom motif | Djembe |
| Hymn: <i>I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say</i> | Baritone voice |
| Nathaniel’s theme | Violin |
| Brief allusion to military material (dotted rhythm) | Clarinet and trombone |

Table 4: Musical elements and instrumentation of a highly contrapuntal passage near the end of *River of Freedom* (Part 3, bars 159-180).

³⁶ This was originally the section that brought the entire work to its conclusion though I subsequently extended the ending as explained later in this chapter.

Discussion

1. Combining Different Approaches

In Part 3 of *River of Freedom*, the use of material I had heard and transcribed in Trinidad was a deliberate attempt to express the conclusion of the Merikins' story through appropriate local musical means. This section therefore has parallels with the craft of musical arranging which, as already noted, is such a prominent and respected part of Trinidad's musical landscape. I tried not to impose too much of my own aesthetic on the music of Part 3 and to allow the Spiritual Baptist 'voice' to carry the narrative. Examples include the inclusion of my transcription of the priest's singing in the hymn (mentioned above), and also my being careful to retain the parallel fifths I heard in the harmonies sung by other worshippers in that rendition: here, I did not change any voice leading to correspond to rules of harmony traditionally adhered to in the western classical tradition. In this way, the passage remains more faithful to the Spiritual Baptist musical style. I feel that borrowing material is justified as long as one's intent is authenticity of expression and, crucially, one acknowledges one's sources. Otherwise, one risks the serious accusation of cultural appropriation.

Writing a piece of music about such an interesting part of history, I was able to use metaphor and irony to express concepts not mentioned explicitly in the text. I have already mentioned the use of the slavery motif to underpin the music when the narrator refers to the White House. Another example is the dissonance created by muted trombone (low F) and double bass (open E string) to depict the snorting of the pig mentioned in the script in Part 2 (bars 46 to 48). Using the same sonority later on directly after mention of the Liberator King (bars 246 to 248) – thereby likening the king to a pig because of his *laissez-faire* attitude to slavery – I was able to make a further political statement. Doing this is surely one of the goals of being an artist. Certainly, in

writing this score I felt more than ever before that I had something to say that would add to the way the story was conveyed. I think that an emotional engagement in the topic was key to this.

2. Lessons Learned

In writing *River of Freedom* I came to understand what my supervisors Brian Lock and Helen Grime had said to me some time before about combining different harmonic approaches in one piece. I feel that the different styles of Parts 1, 2 and 3 of *River of Freedom* all have a role to play and a justification for being part of the same piece. In Part 2 I understood more deeply that musical elements can be successfully combined in unconventional harmonic passages as long as the identity of each element is strong enough. I struggled with the structure of Part 3, feeling unsure how successful it would be to combine different pre-composed elements, but in the end by simplifying the tonal structure (it is all in E-flat major) and keeping to just two different main tempi I found a way to give the section an overall coherence.

As indicated earlier in this commentary, after recording and premiering the work I felt that certain revisions were needed and, for reference, I submit with this commentary the revised score along with the original, recorded version. I extended the *Hello* chorus in Part 1 and Part 3 in large part due to feedback from members of the Spiritual Baptist community who attended the premiere. They felt that these sections were too short to be properly representative of their tradition. With more repeats of the melody in the revised version of *River of Freedom*, the music is now more faithful to how it is heard in situ. Also, upon hearing the recording of Part 2, I realised that there were several moments when the music was too dense to act as effective underscore for the dialogue. I therefore reworked several passages to facilitate the communication of the text.

Finally, in Part 3 I added a fourth verse of the hymn and extended the ending to create a greater feeling of completion to the whole. These revisions have, I feel, given the score a far more satisfactory sense of overall pacing.

As I composed the work, I was often plagued by self-doubt and insecurity when I found myself searching for musical answers through what felt like a haphazard process of trial and error. But in subsequent conversations about this with other composers and authors I found that this is really quite a common feeling and something that can be a typical part of the creative process. I am reminded of what Stravinsky wrote in his *Poetics of Music*: “A composer improvises aimlessly the way an animal grubs about. Both of them go grubbing about because they yield to a compulsion to seek things out” (Stravinsky, 1970, p. 55). And writer Hilary Mantel who, in *Growing a Tale*, gives a detailed description of her approach to writing, admits that “half the time I don’t know what I’m doing” (Mantel, 1993, p. 41).

River of Freedom has received a good deal of attention since its premiere. It is now the set work that students study as part of the APA’s Form and Structure course, and performances are planned in the US in August 2018 and March 2019.

iii) *Lament* (2016)

For violin, viola, steelpan (double seconds), double bass and piano.

Background and Aims

In 2015 a colleague recommended me as a composer well suited to score a local movie called *Play the Devil*. The director and producer were enthusiastic about my previous work in combining instruments of the western classical orchestra with elements of Trinidad's local musics, and asked me to score a scene from the movie as a test piece. This was well received and I was then asked to compose music for the entire film.

The subject matter of the movie was daring as it centres around sexual identity in Trinidad (where homosexuality is stigmatised). The budget was tight, so I initially chose to write for steelpan and a small ensemble of strings.

My aim in the score was to serve the film by drawing on local Trinidadian musical material and adapting it according to the narrative and emotive requirements of the story. As mentioned in Chapter 2, transformation is a key aspect of Carnival, and my awareness of this led me to decide that the notion of musical transformation would be my conceptual starting point for the score.

During the writing process I would input my cues into Sibelius and I used the opportunity of this assignment to gain greater fluency in using Logic Pro 9 to create mock-ups of my music to send to the director. These audio files used a mixture of Sibelius's string sounds and Logic's steelpan and piano samples.

Aspects of Composition

1. Instrumentation

My initial impulse was to choose to combine the well-understood expressive qualities of string instruments with the steelpan, and *Lament* – which begins with these instruments – was the first music I wrote for the movie. At one point during the composition of the movie score, the film producer became keen that piano should be included in the soundtrack.³⁷ Whilst I was privately reluctant to incorporate this instrument on the grounds that it made the combination of instruments even more heavily balanced towards the western classical tradition than it was already, I was also aware of the film composer's role in realising the movie makers' musical vision. I was ultimately pleased to have included the piano in *Lament* as the instrument's resonance and sustaining qualities added depth to the sound of this emotive scene.

Also in the score is a passage that includes an unspecified type of drum. I originally envisaged that this would be played live, but music producer Martin Raymond suggested that assigning this part to a MIDI instrument would be at least as effective. During editing sessions, we experimented with different sounds and quickly settled on a taiko drum sample chosen for the dry, immediate nature of its attack. In live performances of *Lament* in 2017 and 2018 I chose to omit the drum part entirely due to the balance issues that I expected would have arisen.

³⁷ In this movie, the producer had an unusually high level of artistic involvement during the post-production phase.

2. Motivic Elements

My first decision when writing the score for *Play the Devil* was to draw upon the music associated with devil mas for the thematic material of the score.³⁸ Devil mas is traditionally accompanied by a repeated rhythmic figure played on biscuit tins and by a repetitive two-note chant.³⁹ This chant is sung to the vowel sound “o” (as in the name ‘Oliver’) and in context assumes a menacing and other-worldly quality. No pitched instruments accompany the chant, so the pitch of the two-note motif changes from one mas band to the next. In the version recorded in situ for the final sequence of the film, the masqueraders sang it to E and F-sharp:



Ex. 22: Typical devil mas chant.

This melodic unit was the starting point for several cues I wrote for the movie, including the music for the final scene *Lament*. In this piece, I chose to make the first note of the chant the tonic, to slow down the original devil chant, to alter its rhythm and to extend it. Assigned to steelpan, the transformed chant becomes the ostinato that permeates the score:



Ex. 23: Steelpan ostinato in *Lament* (bars 1-4).

³⁸ Devil mas is a type of masquerade in which the participants assume the appearance and characteristics of different types of devil from the litany of traditional Carnival characters: blue devils, red devils, and jab molassies.

³⁹ Biscuit tins are the aluminium boxes that form the packaging of a local brand of crackers available in supermarkets. In devil mas, while masqueraders paint themselves with body paint, bonfires are lit inside the tins to tighten the metal and give them the required resonance when hit with wooden sticks by musicians in the mas band. This is a further example of transformation in Trinidad: here, an everyday object is transformed into something ritualistic and integral to a visceral Carnival tradition.

Another motivic figure in the score is a rhythmic one derived directly from the biscuit tin bands that accompany devil mas. The true figure is defined by rhythmic inflections that render it difficult to notate using the western classical system. A close approximation is given below:



Ex. 24: Traditional devil mas rhythmic motif as played by biscuit tin bands.

In *Lament* I quote the first four notes of this repeated figure but transform the second half of it to incorporate some rests and thereby not overwhelm the string lines:



Ex. 25: Transformed devil mas drum rhythm beginning in bar 25 of *Lament*.

3. Response to Moving Images

My first response to watching the final scene was how beautifully it conveyed two stages of grief – here, anguish followed by resignation – with Trinidad’s devil mas and rainforest forming the backdrops. The high quality of cinematography and the committed acting of the lead character combined with the strangeness of the devil mas context result in a particularly emotive finale to the film and, given that this was my first attempt at writing a movie score, I felt some considerable pressure to write something suitably expressive. I was therefore pleased that the director was satisfied with my approach of using long held string notes – which I felt were an appropriate sonic

reflection of the slow-motion effect – underpinned by the chant-derived figure on steelpan.

The absence of syncopation in the steel pan part in *Lament* was a deliberate response to the absence of dance and the absence of joy in the protagonist. This symbolism would be clear to people familiar with the sort of syncopated rhythmic gestures that typify Trinidadian steelpan music. Consciously avoiding these gestures was a sort of inverted way to reference the celebratory nature of Carnival, and I was pleased with the resultant impact of this concept on the score when heard in conjunction with the images.

4. Structure and Motivic Development

The structure of the final scene of *Play the Devil* is bipartite: first there is the sequence filmed at night in the midst of devil mas, and then there is the walk – in daylight – of the two protagonists to a waterfall where they metaphorically wash away their misdemeanours. Although both sections share an intensity resulting from the on-screen slow-motion effect, what might be called the ‘emotional temperature’ changes with the cut to the scene in the rainforest, so I chose this point to begin developing the material established previously.

I identified several hit points in the scene and aimed to structure my music to correspond to these moments. In order to avoid predictability in the way that the images and music interact, I chose for some of these hit points to coincide precisely with edit points, and for others (especially from bar 38) to blur over the edits.

| Hit Point Number | Bar Number | On-Screen Event | Musical Interpretation |
|------------------|------------|---|---|
| 1 | 9 | Protagonist 1 assumes 'centre stage'. | Dotted rhythmic motif introduced in violin. |
| 2 | 25 | Protagonist 2 turns his head. | Dynamic reaches <i>forte</i> ; increased range between violin and bass; piano and drum enter. |
| 3 | 31 | Fire-blower. | Change of chord (D in the bass gives increased sense of harmonic direction after the previous six bars of E). |
| 4 | 38 | Cut to rainforest. | Dynamic fades to the <i>piano</i> reached in bar 41. |
| 5 | 64 | Cut to waterfall. | Rising steelpan motif followed by falling piano notes; reduced texture. |
| 6 | 71 | Protagonist emerges from shadows and walks into light. | Dotted motif in viola and piano; <i>mezzo-forte</i> dynamic reached. |
| 7 | 76 | Protagonists begin walk towards waterfall. NB The director asked for the music to finish before the end of the on-screen sequence in order that the forest sounds be heard alone. | Final cadence in <i>diminuendo</i> to <i>pppp</i> . |

Table 5: Hit points identified in order to structure the music of the final scene of *Play the Devil*.

5. Harmonic Language

The music is entirely diatonic within the Aeolian mode and its expressive quality is in part derived from the interplay between the string harmonies and the steelpan ostinato. A piece by film composer Johann Johannson was a direct influence in this regard. In this untitled work listed on YouTube as *Johann Johannsson & String Quartet* –

*Contemporanea 2012 Arco di Trento*⁴⁰, the composer sets up a simple keyboard ostinato whose notes are subsequently defined by the diatonic string lines.

The other harmonic device in *Lament* is the use of elongated dissonance in long, sustained chords. I found this technique to be particularly effective as it gave my music an expressivity without the need for much movement in the individual instrumental lines, thereby ensuring that it supported – rather than distracted from – the images.

Discussion

During the composition of *Lament* it became apparent that the film director had a preference for very minimal musical movement – ‘drone-like’ music, really. The score originally included more melodic movement in the violin line, but the director requested that melodic movement be minimised so as not to distract from the images. The result is a texture of long notes punctuated by melodic fragments that are remnants of the more developed material I wrote in my initial attempts at this cue. This was a lesson in restraint for me and, as a result, the score stands in contrast to the far more contrapuntally-conceived music of *River of Freedom*.

The images in the movie at the end of *Play the Devil* show several levels of the concept of transformation working simultaneously. The costumes and movements show the transformed reality that is masquerade, and the slow motion of the scene further heightens this impression. Also, the protagonist is undergoing an emotional transformation having just accidentally caused the death of a loved one. Finally, there is

⁴⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gfo0NPO2jbQ>

the transformation of emotion from grief to something suggestive of acceptance. In the ways explained above, I tried to reflect these transformations in music in terms of texture (by transforming the steelpan's role from its habitual one as vehicle for virtuosity to one that carries a simple ostinato) and structure (changing the emotional temperature of the music by means of dynamics, register and motivic development in the second half of the sequence).

Whilst *Lament* draws principally on musico-emotive gestures widely understood as a result of the widespread use of western classically-derived music for film, the sound of the steelpan roots the piece in Trinidad and I am satisfied with how using it in such an unusually uncomplicated fashion – the avoidance of syncopation and virtuosity – evokes the sense of grief intrinsic to the movie scene. I drew upon the well-understood emotive cues given by long, sustained notes in strings to give the scene an appropriate character, and the steelpan timbre and drum/piano rhythmic figure, for their parts, hint at the geographic location.

The process of writing my first film score was instructive, and I quickly learned the importance of remaining calm and focussed when deadlines were drawing near.

Comments from the director sometimes meant that I had to work within very narrow parameters and I had to find creative ways to retain my own musical integrity within these. I learned a lot from the way the director and producer thought and spoke about music; often I needed to interpret their non-specialist terminology in order to better understand what they were hoping for.

The director often felt that my music for cues was “too busy” or “emotionally leading”. In retrospect I realise that there was a disconnect between my wish to write music that I felt was faithful to my style and her desire for something more immediately

communicative. Despite the anxiety that this caused me at the time, I am grateful for the experience of having to reduce the complexity of my music to achieve an emotive clarity suitable to underpin moving images. *Lament* and *Prayer* (the next piece in this portfolio) are both a direct result of this experience.

iv) *Prayer* (2016)

For trombone, steelpans (tenor and double seconds (one player)), loop machine, backing track and pre-recorded birdsong.

Background and Aims

Trombonist Aidan Chamberlain – a colleague of mine at APA – commissioned me to write a piece for him that would be clearly rooted in Trinidad and that would employ his newly-acquired loop machine. I took this as an opportunity to explore a more contemporary approach to composition and used a DAW – Logic 9 – to create a backing track to be relayed in live performance. I also decided to experiment with the inclusion of pre-recorded birdsong as a decorative backdrop against which the music would unfold. Aesthetically this dawn chorus (recorded in Port of Spain's mountainous region of St Ann's) adds an authentically Trinidadian element to the piece and tangentially is a reference to Aidan himself as it was he who recorded it on the balcony of his home on his birthday in September 2016. The use of steelpan was another way to refer explicitly to Trinidad.

The musical character of this piece evolved organically during the compositional process as the different elements began to suggest a scenario that combines references to the following defining aspects of Trinidad:

1. its natural landscape (birds in the island's rainforest);
2. its pre-eminent cultural tradition (Carnival);
3. one of its religions (Christianity).

I described my imagined scenario in the following words at the premiere performance:

“A protagonist sits on a forest hillside in Port of Spain early in the morning of Carnival Monday. As birdsong is heard, rhythmic patterns on steelpan suggest fragments of sound floating up the hill from steel orchestras playing downtown. The trombone evokes a chorale and synthesised sounds start to rise out of the texture, suggestive of a prayer being offered up.”

A further aim of this piece in performance was to experiment with using sound sources located in different parts of the auditorium to give the audience an immersive sonic experience derived from that of being surrounded by local birdsong.

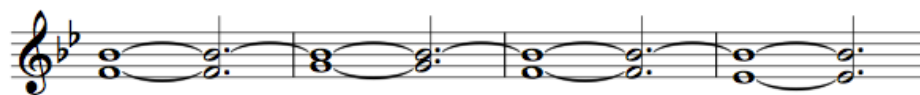
Aspects of Composition

1. Reductive Elements

In order to facilitate the live performance of *Prayer*, I decided to keep the use of the loop pedal simple. The trombonist operates the pedal to initiate the loops for both the trombone and the steelpan and the loops are staggered so that one pedal will suffice. This staggering of the entries means that material is introduced every four bars rather than every eight bars, the piece thereby developing at a rate I judged to be appropriate.

The loop pedal also led me to choose a harmonic structure that employs just two alternating major chords – B-flat major and E-flat major – throughout the piece. I aimed to embrace this harmonic limitation and to use it to evoke an atmosphere of calm.

The synthesiser ostinato established in Bar 5 is a further example of what was essentially a reductive approach to composing elements of *Prayer*. I selected the Apple Library’s sound ‘Electric Slumber’ both for its transparent quality and for the way it blends with the trombone, contributing to the texture of the chorale.



Ex. 26: Electric Slumber ostinato in *Prayer*.

2. Development Within Restriction

I felt that the repetition imposed on *Prayer* by the loop pedal necessitated the incorporation of developmental elements in the music in order for it to retain a level of interest over the course of the piece. The two live performers therefore play extended material over the loops, and the synth lines in the backing track are also developmental.

An example of such development is the rising theme introduced by trombone in bar 25 which is used contrapuntally to unite the instrumental lines of the two live musicians and the lines of the synthesisers. Developing this theme was the key to giving the piece its arc-like structure (culminating at bar 41).



Ex. 27: Theme of *Prayer* as it initially appears in bar 25 on trombone.

Other compositional choices intended to add layers of interest to the music include the 7/4 time signature (to help blur the barlines during the contrapuntal passages) and the use of diatonic non-chord tones into the other steelpan loops. I also chose to increase the rhythmic interest of the steelpan motifs as the piece unfolds, and the triplet-based figure in bar 37 is a reference – albeit in an atypical guise – to the calypso-derived rhythms ubiquitous in the steelpan orchestra pieces performed at Panorama.



Discussion

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piece a truthful, representative quality *vis-à-vis* Trinidad's soundscape. Other new approaches for me in this piece include the use of synthesised sounds in a DAW to create a backing track, the use of a loop machine and, in live performance, locating speakers around the audience.

In the end, this piece feels to me more comfortable as a recorded, produced track than as a work for live-performance. Recording the steelpan and the trombone individually gave me complete control of the final mix of the piece and enabled me to reduce the dynamic level of the trombone part to ensure that the long-note ostinati at the beginning were very much in the musical background. In live performance, even with Aidan playing quietly, the trombone was too present for the understated effect I was aiming for.

The compositional techniques used in this piece share several similarities with those used in *Lament*, namely the focus on steelpan ostinati, uncomplicated diatonic harmonic progressions and irregular time signatures to help reduce the predictability of the music. I found that writing in this style was a useful exercise in restraint, and that with attention to the pacing of the music I can compose music that has developmental interest whilst being rooted in simple and repetitive harmonic and rhythmic frameworks.

Generally in my writing, I am careful to avoid crossing of instrumental lines unless for some intended effect. In *Prayer*, however, I decided to allow myself freedom from such a restriction and allow the parts to cross more freely. In this I was inspired by Panorama arrangements by Leon "Smooth" Edwards in which middle parts cross one another frequently. I have learned from Edwards' writing that this approach can be successful as long as the individual lines have their own separate identities. As an allusion to this in

Prayer, the trombone parts are often clustered in the same range, as are the steelpan parts.

The image displays two systems of musical notation, labeled 41 and 42, representing bars of a piece. Each system consists of four staves, all in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). In both systems, the first three staves feature long, horizontal lines spanning the width of the system, indicating sustained notes or glissandi. The fourth staff in each system contains more discrete notes. Below the first system, the marking 'mf sost.' is present. The notation illustrates the proximity of the ranges for the trombone parts, as mentioned in the text.

Ex. 30: Bars 41 and 42 of *Prayer* illustrate the proximity of ranges of the trombone parts.

Prayer is significant in this portfolio for being the one piece that explores the fusion of electronic sounds, pre-recorded material and live performers. These elements (as mentioned above in Background and Aims) are derived from very definite aspects of Trinidad – its natural landscape, its Carnival, and one of its religions. Yet the fusion of the musical representation of these elements results in a sound world that is aesthetically far-removed from music generally recognised as being Trinidadian. *Prayer* is arguably the piece in this portfolio that is the most difficult to define stylistically, and, insofar as it is a direct response to clear characteristics of Trinidad, I feel that this quality is its greatest strength.

v) *Engine Room* (2017)

For body percussion ensemble, cow bell, congas and bass drum.

Background and Aims

Kwamé Ryan, Director of the APA, asked me to write a piece for students to perform as a body-percussion group in order to hone certain transferable skills of ensemble playing. He envisaged the work as an energetic showpiece to begin the second half of APA's end-of-year concert. More specifically, he had in mind that the standard Panorama 'count-in' rhythm would be played on cowbell at the start in order to set up an expectation of a piece for steelpan – an expectation that is immediately thwarted when the music begins. A requirement for the piece was that it needed to be memorised by the performers for immediacy of impact in performance.

The term 'engine room' is used in the steelpan fraternity to refer to the percussion section (that is, the non-pitched instruments) of a steel orchestra. Such percussion groups – such as the famous Laventille Percussion Section – are also popular in Trinidad as entities in their own right, often heard accompanying masqueraders during Jouvert celebrations at the start of Carnival and hired by event organisers as featured performers. In addition to the local meaning of the term, the idea of an engine appealed to me as a subsidiary idea in writing the piece, and in parts of the score I set out to evoke the sounds of a machine using vocalised and non-vocalised sounds.

A piece that showed me the potential for a large-scale body percussion work was Anna Meredith's *Handsfree*, premiered by the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain at the Proms in 2012. This highly inventive work is built from blocks of rhythmic and textural gestures with physical movements assigned to them. The repetitious nature of the

material, I could see, clearly facilitated memorisation, so I felt that this was an apt way to construct my own composition.

There are many parallels between the techniques used by arrangers for Panorama and composers working in the western classical tradition, so whilst *Engine Room* is, on the surface, a fun novelty of a showpiece, in writing it I wanted to explore three particular parameters that Panorama arrangers and western classical composers both emphasise in their writing: rhythmic counterpoint, motivic development and textural contrast.⁴¹

Aspects of Composition

1. Structure

It was important to me to structure *Engine Room* in a way reminiscent of the structure of steelpan arrangements for Panorama. Speaking to APA percussion instructor Josh Watkins and studying past arrangements by Leon “Smooth” Edwards, I came to understand that the following is typical:

Introduction

Melody (Verse and Chorus)

Bridge

Variation

Bridge

⁴¹ It is striking that these techniques represent a point of commonality between the aural tradition of steelpan and the tradition of western classical art music, two musical contexts that are in many ways very different from one another. Panorama arrangers such as Leon “Smooth” Edwards, inventing music in situ with no need for a written score, are fluent in these musical methods which are widely – yet mistakenly – considered to be the exclusive preserve of ‘art music’ composers in the western classical tradition.

Jam 1

Jam 2

Jam 3

Variation 2

Outro

The structure above, however, is by no means a set template for Panorama, and so in *Engine Room* I allowed myself the same creative freedoms that steelpan arrangers do, and followed my instincts for developmental sections and contrasting sections as I wrote.

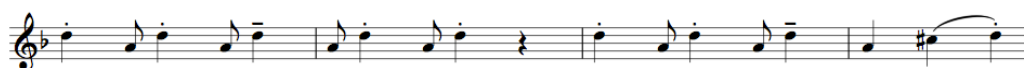
2. Rhythmic Influences

My time playing steelpan in All Stars Steel Orchestra has given me a familiarity with the types of rhythms that typify the Panorama style and in writing *Engine Room* I had the opportunity to draw upon these patterns and combine them with atypical sounds. The following table details the derivations of three key rhythmic units in the verse.

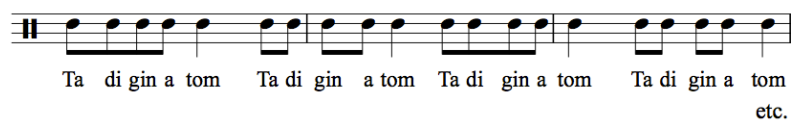
| Element | Bar and Group | Notated Extract |
|--|------------------------|--|
| Calypso rhythm | Bar 1, Groups 4 & 5 |  |
| Oft-heard rhythmic phrase in calypso ⁴² | Bar 9, Group 1 |  |
| Rhythm played by congas: ubiquitous in Panorama arrangements | Bar 13, Group 4 |  |

Table 6: The principle rhythmic units of the verse of *Engine Room*.

⁴² This rhythmic pattern is heard in many calypso songs and Panorama arrangements. Perhaps most famously, it is the rhythm of part of the theme associated with the traditional Carnival character Dame Lorraine:



Also included in the verse (and also a prominent feature of the chorus) is a rhythmic gesture that is often heard as a cadential pattern in Indo-Trinidadian music and dance. I ascribed to this figure the *bol*s (syllables) that are used to learn rhythmic patterns in the Indian classical tradition:



Ex. 31: *Engine Room* bars 21-23 illustrating cadential rhythm and *bol*s.

I chose to include this triple pattern not only for the cross-rhythms it creates with the concurrent duple rhythms in other parts, but also to refer to a typical Indo-Trinidadian figure within a piece that evokes the steelpan tradition whose roots are closely associated with the African-Trinidadian community.

One final specifically Trinidadian sound in the score that I use in a rhythmic way is the ‘steups’ that first occurs in bar 34. A steups is the sound made by sucking air through the teeth when someone is displeased.

3. Rhythmic Development

Knowing that the performers were required to memorise *Engine Room*, I realised that parts would need to strike a balance between being, on the one hand, varied and interesting and, on the other, being sufficiently repetitive to aid memorisation. One approach I used to achieve this was to devise atypical phrase lengths from the Panorama-type rhythms and to superimpose these onto regular four-bar patterns played by other groups. In the extract below, the pattern played in the lower part (Group 5) is derived from the calypso rhythm.

4-bar phrase

4-bar phrase

mf

Loud sigh

Stacc. sigh

ha!

mf

3-bar phrase

3-bar phrase

3-bar phrase

etc.

Ex. 32: Bars 73-79 of *Engine Room* showing different phrase lengths between Groups 4 and 5.

Another example of rhythmic development in *Engine Room* is the increasing frequency with which the syllable “Hey!” is shouted from bar 125:

Grp 1

Grp 5

bi dam bi dam Hey!

Hey!

bi dam bi dam Hey!

Hey!

Bam bi dam bi dam

Hey!

Bam bi dam bi dam

Hey!

Bam bi dam bi dam

Grp 1

bi dam bi dam Hey!

Hey!

Hey!

Hey!

Hey!

bi dam bi dam Hey!

Hey!

Grp 5

Hey!

Ch kh ch kh ch kh ch kh

Bam bi dam bi dam

Hey!

Bam bi dam bi dam

Grp 1

bi dam bi dam Hey!

Hey!

bi dam bi dam Hey!

Hey!

Hey!

Hey!

Hey!

Grp 5

Hey!

Bam bi dam bi dam

Hey!

Ch kh ch kh ch kh ch kh

Hey!

Ex. 33: Bars 125-140 of *Engine Room* showing rhythmic development (increasing frequency) of “Hey!”.

The effect of this passage, especially combined with the choreographed hand movements, is a dialogue between Groups 1 and 5 that works on both a musical and a physical level.

4. Other Influences from the Western Classical Tradition

Whilst *Engine Room* is shaped predominantly by a rhythmic language familiar in Trinidad, the rhythmic approaches described in 2. and 3. above are ones common to western classical compositional practice also. In addition to these is the manipulation of two musical parameters rarely emphasised in Panorama arrangements to any great degree but that are readily associated with the western classical tradition: textural and dynamic variety.⁴³ The beginning of the chorus, for example, represents a sudden contrast with the end of the verse:

The musical score for bars 59-64 of *Engine Room* is presented across five staves. The first staff features a vocal line with lyrics 'bam bi dam bi dam' and a 'Clap' instruction above the first bar. The second staff has lyrics 'Doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo doo' and a 'Shoulders' instruction above the first bar. The third staff contains the lyrics 'Ta di gin a tom Ta di gin a tom' and a 'Clap' instruction above the first bar. The fourth and fifth staves also feature the 'bam bi dam bi dam' lyrics. The score is divided into two sections by a double bar line. The first section (bars 59-62) is marked with a 'Chorus' box and includes instructions for 'Inhale', 'Loud sigh', and 'Staccato sigh'. The second section (bars 63-64) is also marked with a 'Chorus' box and includes 'gliss.' instructions. The notation includes various rhythmic values, rests, and dynamic markings like 'ff'.

Ex. 34: Bars 59-64 of *Engine Room* showing textural contrast
(and resultant dynamic contrast) between sections.

Varying the dynamics and texture in *Engine Room* allowed me both to integrate compositional considerations of texture and dynamics into a piece that is otherwise very clearly derived from Panorama, and thus to justify it as an example of musical fusion. Additionally, this variety felt to me necessary in terms of the function of a piece

⁴³ It must be emphasised that these observations are specifically about arrangements for Panorama. In other contexts – such as in performances of arrangements of western classical repertoire – steel orchestras pay great attention to details of dynamics.

intended to be heard in a concert hall. Whereas a function of a genuine Panorama arrangement is to generate musical energy to incite dance and excitement, a function of the western classical style is to retain an audience's interest through varying musical textures and dynamics, so in the writing of *Engine Room* an important part of the fusion was the combination of the two.

5. Shaping Music Through Collaboration

Whilst the score that I initially presented to the performers was a strong starting-point for *Engine Room*, much of the piece's final character was developed during the rehearsal phase in collaboration with choreographer LaShaun Prescott, conductor Kwamé Ryan and the student performers themselves. Embracing different creative voices in this way allowed for cultural insiders to contribute to the piece, and was, I feel, hugely significant in the enthusiastic reception the piece enjoyed.

The jam sections evolved considerably in rehearsal. My original idea was for each jam section to feature a body percussion soloist whilst the ensemble maintained a quiet background ostinato. When we heard the music, however, Kwamé Ryan and I felt that by the time the jam sections occur there was a need for new timbres to be brought into the ensemble, so the idea of three body percussion soloists was discarded in favour of incorporating improvised solos on cowbell, bongos and bass drum. The soloists were APA percussion students steeped in the rhythmic and stylistic gestures of Panorama, so the sections with these instruments became a more literal representation of a steel orchestra's engine room than I had originally imagined.

Additionally, inviting the students to contribute musical ideas to the jam sections resulted in adding layers of energy, surprise and humour that enlivened the piece

considerably. The fact that the students had contributed to the musical material meant that they came to feel a sense of ownership of the piece that can be seen in their commitment to the performance. The students' contributions were light-hearted, and three of the six ideas (asterisked in the table below) made direct reference to local music: Group 1 quoted the national anthem of Trinidad and Tobago, Group 5's phrase "Band yuh belly!" (a local colloquial expression meaning "prepare for the worst") is heard shouted by spectators at stick-fighting tournaments, and the tutti singing of "Jouvert" is a quote from the beginning of the popular 2015 Carnival hit *Master of Mas* by soca artiste Blaxx (a song that also contains the words "Band yuh belly!").

| | |
|----------|---|
| Group 1* | Singing of opening fanfare of the national anthem. |
| Group 2 | Vocalised trilling sound from group echoed in tutti. |
| Group 3 | Solo siren impression followed by tutti "shhh!" |
| Group 4 | Sung rhythmic phrase followed by tutti "Boing!" |
| Group 5* | Sung rising phrase from group followed by tutti "Band yuh belly!" |
| Tutti* | All three percussion instruments plus singing of "Jouvert" including one student imitating the sound of a conch shell as often heard in broadcasts of soca music at Carnival. |

Table 7: Students' contributions to the jam sections of *Engine Room*.
(Asterisks denote ideas drawn directly from local music.)

In rehearsal we also decided to reintroduce the percussion instruments at the end of the piece to help build to a strong conclusion. I felt that this gesture needed to be a response to something else, so one of the students suggested shouting "Bacchanal!" – often used in Trinidad to describe the joyful singing and dancing central to mas – and this provided the perfect impetus for the reintroduction of the percussion in the last few bars.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ These last bars (from Bar 253) were inspired by the endings of several songs I have heard performed by Bulgarian women's choirs. In such pieces, there is a momentary change from singing to animated speaking suggestive of happy interaction between the performers, a notion that seemed entirely appropriate in a piece derived from Trinidad's Panorama/Carnival tradition.

6. In-Rehearsal Revisions

After hearing the students in rehearsal, I revised some of the sounds in my original score. For example, I had initially envisaged the hand-clapped ‘theme’ beginning at bar 13 in Groups 1 and 5 to be played by beating the chest. But it was immediately clear that, even with two groups assigned to this, the sound did not produce enough resonance.

Also, the simultaneous *bols*- and congas-derived figures on voice (beginning in bar 21) was at first cacophonous. In an attempt to resolve the conflict between these two elements, I suggested that the *bols* be rendered in a high-pitched falsetto voice in order to differentiate the voice ranges. This proved to be an effective solution and resulted in a bizarrely comic effect.

Discussion

Engine Room is the portfolio piece that most explicitly represents the outcome of immersing myself in one of Trinidad’s indigenous musical traditions – Panorama. The long hours I spent playing in steelpan orchestra rehearsals provided me with insights into rhythmic gestures that typify the style and with a working knowledge of which rhythmic units work well concurrently. *Engine Room*’s resultant rhythmic drive gives it a predominantly Trinidadian aesthetic, and this was amplified by the energetic rendition given by young people familiar with Trinidad’s Carnival culture. In this respect *Engine Room* stands in opposition to a piece such as *Lament* whose aesthetic is derived from western-classical-type film music in which the Trinidadian influence is apparent in relatively hidden details of rhythm, instrumentation and motif.

In the jam sections and in the Outro of the piece, the students evoked the atmosphere of Carnival celebrations extremely effectively. One characteristic of the performance that aided this resulted from the spontaneous vocal interjections and shouts of encouragement to the soloists during the percussion solos. Further, the culturally-specific approach of the percussionists to their solos was something that was quintessentially Trinidadian. Of particular note are the nuances of phrasing in Denilson Gulston's cowbell playing; himself a member of the engine room of All Stars Steel Orchestra, Denilson is a cultural insider who brought to the piece an authenticity of style that would have been difficult to reproduce in any other way.

Embracing the students' understanding of local musical gestures in the improvised sections of *Engine Room* was a new approach for me and I was very happy with the result; the committed and energetic performance of the students and the positive reaction of the audience suggested that the piece really did find resonance locally. Perhaps helpful to this success was the fact, mentioned above, that percussion ensembles are a feature of the musical landscape in Trinidad; the idea of creating sounds with the body would therefore have been a novel variation on a familiar form.

The collaborative approach to creating *Engine Room* meant that my role as composer was altered. In devising a piece that draws upon local rhythms and very clearly references a local musical form (namely Panorama), I set up a musical situation that the Trinidadian performers recognised. Whilst I did not myself compose the jam sections, the performers easily understood the musical context I established at the start of the piece. Their response to that context in the jam sections was to choose material and style that served to reinforce *Engine Room's* connection with the tradition that inspired it.

A collaborative approach that sees musical input from other artistes to the extent seen in this piece was new to me, although I had experimented a little with this idea before in *River of Freedom*.⁴⁵ The experience of writing *Engine Room* showed me that the musical input of local practitioners can be of great significance to the success or otherwise of a composer's response to that culture.

5 – Conclusions

My research for this portfolio centred around developing strategies in my approaches to composition in the context of responding to the particular context of Trinidad. These strategies are arguably as much impacted upon by socio-historical considerations (such as trying to determine the most pertinent and pervasive aspects of Trinidad's culture) as by musical ones. Acknowledging and embracing the notion of the emotional self in response to fieldwork and research trips is in line with the type of ethnographic enquiry exemplified by Amanda Coffey, and the concept of my approach as an 'ethnographic composer' has been fundamental both to the preparatory stages of the creative process of all the pieces presented here and to the music that resulted from this process.

Collaboration has been an important common thread in all of these pieces, and the distinct nature of each collaboration has impacted on my music in different ways. In *The Temple in the Sea* and *River of Freedom* the music was structured according to the texts by my collaborators but musical choices were left to me alone. Working with a film director, the music of *Lament* was far more directly impacted upon by this collaborator's

⁴⁵ In *River of Freedom* the instruction to the singer to improvise in a Spiritual Baptist style allowed for a stylistically informed soloist to bring something authentic-sounding to the *Hello* chorus.

demands, whilst the collaboration with Aidan Chamberlain in *Prayer* centred around resolving technical issues of performance rather than compositional ones. Finally, *Engine Room* includes sections devised by the performers themselves. This portfolio therefore explores approaches that represent varying degrees of creative dialogue with others also invested in expressing aspects of Trinidad in performance. Collaborations – whether purely musical or cross-disciplinary – can help situate a work inside its culture and can emphasise its relevance to an audience. Such an approach works well in Trinidad where a strong sense of pride in national culture is widespread.

This portfolio begins with a piece whose overarching musical syntax has little commonality with mainstream musical genres in Trinidad, and ends with a piece whose syntax is defined by one. Expressed another way, the first piece is rooted in the western classical tradition and is infused by Trinidadian references, and the last piece is rooted in a Trinidadian tradition and is infused by compositional traits more associated with the western classical tradition. This therefore represents an arc beginning with my writing very much as a cultural outsider in Trinidad, and ending writing with the benefit of experiential knowledge that has enabled me to draw upon local musical gestures (and approaches) more confidently and more convincingly. Certainly, I feel that my relationship with Trinidad has evolved to a point that is beyond that of participant observer; whilst I will never be a true cultural insider, I am confident that I can now claim enough of an understanding of context to feel that my compositions meaningfully combine salient features of Trinidadian and European forms of musical expression.

Infusing a musical language rooted in the western classical tradition with salient features of Trinidad's culture has resulted in the creation of new repertoire (beginning with pieces I wrote before this portfolio) that demonstrates an exploration of ways to represent (to 're-present') local themes and narratives. By immersing myself in certain

Trinidadian musical traditions and studying their characteristics, I have strived to give an honest and respectful musical response to context, and this has enjoyed a positive reception amongst musicians and audiences. Within a currently energised art music scene in Trinidad – in part thanks to the Ibis Ensemble’s ongoing project to champion locally-inspired works – I am confident that the works presented here will receive continued exposure.

I have continued to write music in Trinidad since completing *Engine Room*. Part of my *Trinidad Rhapsody* for steelpan orchestra, solo violin and solo trombone has already been performed and I have also been commissioned to write a Trinidad-inspired work for solo percussionist and backing tape made up of local ‘found sounds’. These pieces continue my exploration of different approaches to cross-cultural musical fusion in a Caribbean context in an investigation that has infinite possibilities. Whilst I have focused on certain Trinidadian musical styles, there are many more that I could have turned to; this project is far from exhaustive. Certainly, I feel that further experimentation in integrating locally-derived electronic sounds into my music would be a way to invigorate future compositions.

Beyond the Trinidadian context, I see great potential in writing music that results from researching salient features of other cultures and infusing these with a style derived from the western classical tradition. As I complete this commentary I am exploring funding options for writing an orchestral piece that draws upon the traditional repertoires of the various communities of the ethnically-diverse Walthamstow area of London. A project such as this would be a logical next step for me as a composer, a step that would allow me to build on this research by continuing to explore different musical cultures and letting these inform and shape my work.

6 – Appendices

Appendix A

i. ‘Art music’ as defined by Gangelhoff and Legrand (2013a, p.2)

- Art music descends from the western classical tradition.
- Art music may draw inspiration from or make use of melodies from folk music or dance tunes, as composers have done throughout history. But, while the subject matter may be borrowed from the folk or popular traditions, the style remains formal, often with advanced musical structure.
- Art music is fully composed. Parts are arranged and written in western staff notation. Music preserved only by oral tradition and not fixed in a written medium does not qualify. (This criterion serves to distinguish classical music of non-western traditions.)
- All parts are played as written. Interpretation, as opposed to improvisation, is the dominant focus of the performer. (Accordingly, music played from a lead sheet or a jazz chart is excluded under this definition.)
- The composition and performance or interpretation of art music requires specialized skill and knowledge, unique to the classical style.
- The experiential focus of art music is on listening to the performance as opposed to physical engagement such as dancing.

ii. 'Art Music' and Concert-Going in Trinidad

Unsurprisingly for a country with so much interest in the performing arts, Trinidad has a long tradition of classical music concert-going. Concert series such as Massy All Stars Steel Orchestra's *Classical Jewels* are showcases for transcriptions of symphonic repertoire. Steelpan players are often exposed to this type of music from a young age, playing in youth bands that exist across the country. An example of twentieth-century repertoire being played by steelpan orchestra is the live recording of Pamperi Steel Orchestra's remarkable rendition (also from memory) of a significant portion of *The Rite of Spring* as the group's selection for the 1986 Steelband Music Festival.⁴⁶

Audiences listen to art music on orchestral instruments at the biannual Music Festival (a music performance competition in which soloists and ensembles compete in many different categories), at performances by the young instrumentalists of the St Augustine Chamber Orchestra (equivalent to a national youth orchestra), at Birdsong Academy and, since 2010, by faculty and students at UTT's APA. Additionally, groups such as The Alternative String Quartet and Xavier Strings give regular performances around the country.

The National Philharmonic Orchestra of Trinidad and Tobago was established in its present form in 2014. In addition to performing standard repertoire from the western classical tradition, the orchestra promotes compositions and arrangements by local musicians such as Roger Henry and Rellon Brown.

⁴⁶ This recording is available on the CD *Classics in Steel* (Caribbean Music Group, 2009) ASIN: B002PQRGAO.

Appendix B

i. Overview of Traditional Musical Influences on this Portfolio

Resulting from its unusually high degree of cultural diversity, Trinidadian musical styles are fascinatingly plentiful and diverse. Popular styles include calypso (whose beat is ubiquitous and heard in settings from churches to night clubs), soca (a modern, upbeat incarnation of calypso whose name derives from the words ‘soul of calypso’) and chutney (an Indian-derived form of dance music).

The compositions in this portfolio, however, are influenced above all by the music I have heard in certain religious and ceremonial contexts, and by the steelpan. An overview of these genres is therefore provided below.

ii. Spiritual Baptist Music

During the course of my research I became fascinated by the music-making in Trinidad’s Spiritual Baptist churches, most especially in St Ann’s Church of the Spiritual Metaphysics in Couva, and St Michael’s Spiritual Baptist Tabernacle in Third Company Village, Moruga District. The Spiritual Baptist faith is a syncretic religion that fuses Christian belief with African forms of worship. Significantly in terms of this portfolio, this is the religion that was practised and developed by a group of former enslaved men who won their freedom after fighting alongside the British Army in America’s Second War of Independence in 1812. These people called themselves the Merikins (a corruption of the word “Americans”).

Music is a fundamental part of worship for the Spiritual Baptists and their lengthy services are driven by singing and drumming. The numerous services I attended as research for the soundworld of *River of Freedom* were each between three and nine hours in duration. Anthropologist Steven Glazier, who recorded Spiritual Baptist music in Trinidad between 1976 and 1979, observed “that there is seldom a period in Spiritual Baptist ritual when no one is singing and/or clapping. Sometimes music is in the background ... but it is always there” (Glazier, 1997, p. 47). My experiences confirm that this is still the case today in those churches which embrace more fully an African form of worship very similar to the aesthetic of ceremonies of the Orisha faith.

The sounds that typify Spiritual Baptist services include singing, shouting, rhythmic hand-clapping, hand bells, drums (most often between one and three djembe), maracas and tambourines. The repertoire consists of hymns and choruses (variously known as ‘trumpets’ and ‘Sankeys’). At certain moments (such as during the ‘surveying’ at the start of a service when oil and rice are scattered at each entrance to the church building), voices are raised up with euphoric religious passion. At these times, the music is often overwhelming in its intensity. Impassioned singing and hypnotic rhythmic energy from percussion and handclapping prompt many congregants to dance and often lead to them ‘catching the spirit’ and ‘speaking in tongues’. Such occasions make for a successful church service as they mean that the Holy Spirit has been made manifest through those worshippers. In contrast, certain parts of a service are characterised by quiet reflection when congregants take turns to offer up prayers as other church members hum hymn tunes or sing them very softly.

I documented the rhythmic patterns I heard in the churches I visited and found that the calypso rhythm was the most prevalent. Other commonly-used rhythms include the

yanvalou and the *carib* as well as hybrid rhythms that constitute a mixture of elements of these and other standardised patterns.

The soundscape of a Spiritual Baptist service is characterised by a combination of structured sounds – hymns, choruses and rhythmic patterns – and spontaneous interjections from congregants improvising vocal lines, shouting, ringing the hand bell, and often by extraneous sounds from the local environment such as the sounds of farm animals and birds.

iii. *Tassa* Groups

Tassa is a traditional musical style played in Trinidad most especially by musicians of Indian heritage. An ensemble typically consists of *tassa* drum (a small kettle drum), *dhal* drums (bass drums) and brass cymbals. *Tassa* groups are often engaged to play at weddings and are featured prominently in the annual celebration of the Muslim festival of *Hosay* in the St. James area of Port of Spain when large percussion groups play with choreographed movements as large mosque-shaped models are paraded along the street.

In *tassa* drumming, repeated patterns or grooves are complemented by rhythmic patterns known as ‘hands’ played on the *tassa* drum. Patterns on the lead drum are also used to indicate a change from one tempo or groove to the next. The grooves incorporate idiosyncratic syncopated rhythms decorated with fast rolls on *tassa* drum that are facilitated by using long, flexible sticks.

iv. Steelpan - the National Instrument of Trinidad and Tobago

The history of the steelpan is as rich as the repertoire that now exists for the plethora of steel orchestras based in panyards across the country. After the British colonial authorities banned the African drum in an attempt to silence non-European musical expression, bamboo became an alternative percussion instrument and was played in ensembles called *Tambo Bamboo*. This led ultimately to the birth of the steelpan itself. The instrument today is ubiquitous in Trinidad: from the sounds of the state-funded National Steel Symphony Orchestra to the steelpan-inspired pendants and earrings sold by jewellery vendors in craft fairs, the sound and shape of the instrument is a major national identifier.

The culture of steelpan is nothing less than a national phenomenon. The symbolism of a form of expression having been born out of oppression is fundamental to understanding its significance, and so too is the fact that the panyard (the home and rehearsal space of a steel orchestra) has become such a positive, aspirational community space in a county that frequently struggles with violent crime stemming from poverty, injustice, and a lack of opportunity for young people from poorer backgrounds to advance socially. Steelpan orchestras, however, are unusually inclusive organisations. In the words of Trinidadian author and commentator on pan Kim Johnson, “Pan is perhaps the only sphere in which anyone who can make a contribution is welcomed, regardless of race, class, education, sex, nationality, age or moral rectitude.”⁴⁷

Panorama – the national steelpan orchestra competition that forms part of the annual Carnival celebrations – is a major date in the national calendar and showcases not only the virtuosity of thousands of steelpan-playing participants but also that of the arrangers

⁴⁷ From Kim Johnson’s article *Forged From the Love* published in the Trinidad Guardian, 1st April 2003.

who prepare the music for their band to play. Steelpan arrangers are widely admired and celebrated for defining their bands' musical style, and the names of the more successful practitioners have become synonymous with their bands – for many fans, for example, Leon “Smooth” Edwards *is* All Stars, Len “Boogsie” Sharpe *is* Phase II, Seion Gomez *is* Buccooneers. Arrangers for Panorama are therefore very present in the minds of those following the competition, a fact that stands in contrast to the relative anonymity accorded to arrangers of orchestral music in the United Kingdom, for example. In Europe and the US the word ‘arranging’ is often mistakenly used to mean ‘transcribing’ whereby an extant piece of music is written out to be played on different instruments. In the Panorama context, however, arranging is far closer to the creative act of composition: a calypso or soca song is the starting point from which arrangers explore the melodic, rhythmic and harmonic potential of the source material. Arrangers for Panorama are highly imaginative inventors of music who develop and transform their chosen song with virtuosic application of techniques that have much in common with those used by composers in the western classical tradition.

Outside of the Panorama context, many composers are writing new music for the steelpan. Works by Liam Teague for solo performer such as *A Visit to Hell*, *El Rio*, *Raindrops*, *Trying ab Ting* and *Cell O Vibes* require great technical command and represent a substantial contribution to a canon of work being written to help the steelpan gain more widespread recognition. Many of the steelpan students in my composition classes at APA write in a chromatic style clearly derived from that pioneered by Teague.

American Andy Akiho is another prolific composer for steelpan and his concerto for steelpan *Beneath Lighted Coffers* – written for Liam Teague – was premiered to great acclaim in 2015. Akiho is notable for including steelpan in ensembles with orchestral instruments and so his music has been of particular interest to me during my research.

Steelpan-playing composers Atiba Williams and Vanessa Headley have also contributed to the steelpan repertoire, writing pieces for the concert hall. Williams' Brahmsian *Impressioni d'Inghilterra* and Headley's *Call Me Hero* are examples of pieces currently being written in 'classical' and popular styles respectively. Such pieces, considered alongside Akiho's experimentalism and Teague's étude-like pieces, further illustrate that the repertoire currently being written for pan is in no way restricted by genre.

Appendix C

Review of the Premiere Performance of River of Freedom

From The Trinidad Guardian
19th May 2015

River of Freedom brings rhythm to Merikins story

Wesley Gibbings

Published: Tuesday, May 19, 2015



UTT music lecturer Adam Walters, centre, takes the applause of his cast members and the audience at the end of River of Freedom, the musical treatment of the Merikins coming to Te&T 200 years ago. PHOTOS: MIKHAIL GIBBINGS

Nobody remained seated when the cast of the world premiere of Adam Walters' River of Freedom took their bow at the end of a May 15 performance many will remember for a long time to come.

This musical treatment of the coming of the Merikins to Trinidad close to 200 years ago clearly struck intimate chords, both among those who journeyed far from other parts of the island and Fifth Company residents who came out to wrap up a week of activities to mark the arrival of freed slaves who had fought on the side of the British during the War of American Independence and other military conflicts.

The former soldiers had been rewarded with their freedom, a free trip to Trinidad and up to 16 acres of land in Moruga—a safe distance from African compatriots who had arrived long before, for fear they would spread militancy and dissatisfaction. The audience assembled in the hall of the St Mary's Primary School along the Moruga Main Road was provided an encounter with musical excellence.

On the tenor pan was Mia Gormandy alongside Walters himself on the French horn; Simon Browne on the violin; clarinetist, Yevgeny Dokshansky; Aidan Chamberlain on the trombone; percussionist, Josh Watkins; Katy Gainham on the flute and Caitlyn Kamminga on the double bass. Against the stark backdrop of a school assembly stage were Che Lovelace's projected artistic images crowned by a round skylight like a dark, low-hanging moon.

Baritonist, Krisson Joseph, was the audience favourite on the night, his huge voice filling the acoustically challenging hall and inspiring ambitious echoes from male members of the crowd even as the show came to an end. For the production, Walters teamed up with Kamminga who scripted a sometimes exhausting narrative masterfully delivered by dramatist, Michael Cherrie and conducted by Kwame Ryan.

The score comprises musical sets to represent three essential scenarios. The first is located in colonial America where weary British troops engage a recalcitrant population intent on establishing its own independent republic. If you listen well you hear shades of Yankee Doodle and 19th century American folk songs as the tale is told of strife and disorder in the colony.

The second set introduces elements of European orchestral music. Walters admits to a reliance on Igor Stravinsky as this section attempts to reference what it must have been like for the freed African slaves to align themselves with the British colonials against their former masters. A vague familiarity set against the newness of a relationship that might bring either victory or death.

Those who attended the March trial run at Napa would not have been familiar with the third section which attempts to locate the music and the action in colonial Trinidad. The Merikins are credited in some circles with introducing the worship of the Spiritual Baptists and Kamminga's script invokes the choice of "conjuring" (magic) versus Christian worship.

So, when Joseph makes his way from the back of the audience, up the aisle, bell in hand and Gormandy takes hold of the tambourine and Watkins goes on the djembe drums, there was a collective breath in the audience and somewhere someone was humming along and the feet began tapping.

Walters had explained back in March that when he first started listening to Baptist worship, "I'd experienced nothing like this before." He said it made "a deep impression" on the way he decided to approach the score of *River of Freedom*. This was among the more memorable moments of the performance—Joseph's voice, the hypnotic refrain of the band and the buzz of an audience hearing another interpretation of its own story.

Community organiser, Carl Burton, described the performance as a significant part of a week of activities marking 199 years since the arrival of the Merikins. "This is most important because we try to get people to understand a story that not many people know," he said. On more than one occasion during the evening, the audience was reminded that the story of the Merikins was of one of the untold chapters of the country's history.

The UTT Musicians clearly provided a version that will not be easily forgotten by those who were there in the heartland to hear and see it.

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