



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE

# THE PHOENIX MUSIC SOCIETY



THE  
PHOENIX SOCIETY

**The Phoenix Music Society Conference 2022**  
#phoenixconference2022

***New Music and Society***

27<sup>th</sup> June 2022, 9:00am-5:00pm  
Gonville and Caius College  
Bateman Auditorium  
Cambridge

**Conference Organisers**

Oliver Rudland  
Rajan Lal

**Keynote Speaker**

Jonathan Dove



## **The Phoenix Music Society Conference 2022**

#phoenixconference2022

**Conference Theme:** *New Music and Society*

**Date and time:** 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022, 9:00am-5:00pm

**Location:** Gonville and Caius College Bateman Auditorium, Cambridge

**Conference Organisers:** Oliver Rudland, Rajan Lal

**Keynote Speaker:** Jonathan Dove

Even if the moment of inspiration comes when the creator is in the bathtub or gardening, it may have come only as a result of a prior encounter with a colleague, or exposure to some new ideas at a recent conference. Thus, creativity research has shifted to a concern with group creativity, and an interest in the role that group creativity plays in individual creativity.<sup>1</sup>

R. Keith Sawyer (2003)

I developed a more playful way of working, finding different ways of getting groups improvising together in song (while stamping and clapping and even dancing), splitting into groups to try out several different ways of singing just one or two lines of a libretto, then all gathering around the piano to stitch the fragments together: this process often led to surprisingly organic melodies. Obviously, from the piano, I had a hand in shaping the music, but there was always a sense of collective achievement, and shared ownership.<sup>2</sup>

Jonathan Dove (2020)

This conference will consider the ways in which encounters with musicians, participants and society at large can influence the idea-forming processes of composers. These might include activities in a community or teaching setting, an improvisatory setting, or even a musicological setting. In general, this conference seeks to explore how wider society or groups engaged in shared activities can help shape and impact upon the composition of new music and, in doing so, how new music can be written to be tailored to reflect the interests of modern society.

Oliver Rudland (2022)

We wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to Matthew Martin and the Fellows of Gonville and Caius College for allowing us the use of the Bateman Auditorium for this conference.



DERIVATIONES MELIUS QUAM UTOPIA

---

<sup>1</sup> Sawyer, R. K. (2003). *Group Creativity: Music, Theater, Collaboration*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Dove, J. (2020): <https://www.traction-project.eu/who-needs-community-opera-part-one-lets-take-over-a-whole-town/>

THE PHOENIX MUSIC SOCIETY CONFERENCE 2022: NEW MUSIC AND SOCIETY  
*Conference Schedule*

**WELCOME:** 9.00am

9:30am

**Nacho Mana Mesas**

*Paving the way for a 'folk opera': Encounters with Galician Society in 'María Soliña'*

10:00am

**Samuel Huston**

*Contrasting Approaches to the Same Piece: Adapting Modest Mussorgsky's 'Pictures at an Exhibition' for Different Ensembles*

**BREAK:** 10:30am

10:45am

**Rajan Lal**

*Inspiration from Composers at the Precipice of Tonality: Liszt, Scriabin and New Music Reconsidered*

11:15am

**INTRODUCTION & KEYNOTE: Jonathan Dove CBE**

*Who needs community opera? 'The Monster in the Maze' as an example of participatory work*

**LUNCH:** 12:15pm

2:00pm

**Lucy Walker**

*"Behind the screens": choral composition in the virtual post-pandemic age*

2:30pm

**Oliver Rudland**

*Giving Opera Some Swing: Co-creating a brass band dance number for a large-scale community opera project with the aid of improvisatory techniques*

3:00pm

**Michael Ladouceur**

*Narrative Structure as a Collaborator: Composing for Commercial Media*

**BREAK:** 3:30pm

3:45pm

**Mary Offer**

*Improvising into the Abyss: a collaborative creative process*

4:15pm

**David Paterson**

*The Societal Effect on Compositional Output: An antipodean perspective on composing for the public concert stage*

**CLOSING COMMENTS:** 4:45pm

**EAGLE PUB:** 5:00pm

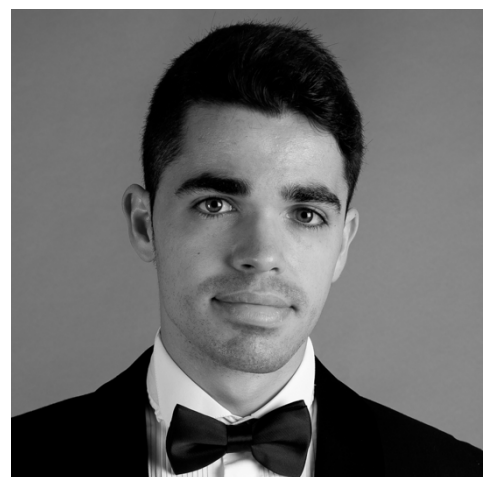
**PAVING THE WAY FOR A 'FOLK OPERA': encounters with galician society in *maría soliña***

Nacho Mañá Mesas, *Royal College of Music*

nacho.manamesas@rcm.ac.uk

**Abstract:** In this presentation, I will explore the compositional and ethnomusicological research that led to my concept of 'folk opera' and the premiere of my work *María Soliña*. First of all, I will focus on the ethnographic fieldwork that I undertook in Galicia (Spain), investigating the links between the *gaita* performance of Galician *muiñeira* and aspects of language and regional identity. Then, I will show how my research conclusions encouraged me to traverse the borders of ethnomusicology and composition and bring them into dialogue through an innovative creative concept, which I have branded as 'folk opera'. The latter emerges as an attempt to fuse stylistic boundaries, bridge the gap between professional and amateur involvement and reach a wider audience through the use of alternative performance spaces. One of the intrinsic aspects of *María Soliña* is the presence of improvisatory and co-creative elements, especially in the form of deliberately unfinished parts that trigger a creative involvement from the performing team, in order to challenge pre-existing hierarchies in both the compositional and performing process. This was partly accomplished by the active participation of folk instrumentalists who had taken part in the preliminary ethnographic research, permeating the 'classical' palette of the accompanying chamber orchestra with the uniquely Galician timbral properties of the *gaita*, *zanfona*, *asubío* and *tambor galego*, among others. In addition, the vocal soloists did not only feature classically trained operatic singers, but also actors without any previous musical knowledge, thus emulating the Galician tradition of *regueifa* by exploring the inherent musicality and rhythm of the spoken word. The composition was also inspired by other Galician rhythms and techniques, such as the *muiñeira*, *alalá* and *cantiga*, which I will analyse through notational and audiovisual examples from recent performances of the work in Pontevedra and Lugo. Finally, I will reflect on the implications of my work on Galician society and identity as a whole, discussing the reactions from the audience and the widespread impact of the premiere on Galician community centres in South American and European countries through the use of live-streaming platforms.

**Biography:** Nacho Mañá is a Spanish composer, saxophonist and educator currently based in London. He studied at Chetham's School of Music and then completed his undergraduate studies in Music at the University of Cambridge (St John's College), specialising in Composition and Saxophone Performance. There, he won First Prize in the Cambridge University Musical Society Concerto Competition and was awarded numerous academic prizes, such as the Earle Prize, Wright Prize and the Donald Wort Prize for the best overall mark in Part IB of the Music Tripos. He graduated from Cambridge in July 2020 with a Triple Starred First, receiving the prestigious Larmor Award as one of the best undergraduate students across all subjects and disciplines at St John's College. During his studies at Cambridge, he was also selected for a fully funded exchange programme at



Georgetown University (Washington, DC), where he wrote film scores and participated in numerous audiovisual projects with American and Chinese filmmakers. Inspired by this experience, he is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Composition for the Screen at the Royal College of Music. Nacho's concert music has been commissioned and premiered by the Choir of St John's College Cambridge, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Sigma Project Quartet, Amatis Trio and Fidelio Trio, among others. Furthermore, his folk opera *María Soliña* was commissioned by the town council of Cangas do Morrazo (Spain) and premiered in May 2021, achieving wide critical and public acclaim and receiving four performances in Spain so far. Upcoming projects include a recording at Air-Edel Studios, a film score for a short Spanish film and a new operatic project in Galicia.

## CONTRASTING APPROACHES TO THE SAME PIECE:

### Adapting Modest Mussorgsky's 'Pictures at an Exhibition' for Different Ensembles

Samuel Huston, *Royal College of Music*

samuel.huston@rcm.ac.uk

**Abstract:** Last year, I was commissioned to create a new orchestration of Modest Mussorgsky's 'Pictures at an Exhibition' for the Royal College of Music Wind Ensemble and to then adapt this for the National Youth Orchestra Inspire Wind Ensemble. This talk will explore how the differing purposes of these commissions dictated the way in which I approached each, contrasting the freedom that I had to create the original orchestration with the far more constrained process of adapting it for the NYO Inspire Wind Ensemble. In creating a new orchestration of 'Pictures at an Exhibition' for the RCM Wind Ensemble, I had very few limitations: I was writing for advanced players and given the brief to create something challenging. And so, after noticing how 'ugly' much of Mussorgsky's musical language is (with dense left-hand textures, obtuse piano writing, and few expression markings), I used this as the main stimulus for my orchestration, seeking to create something more akin to the 'de-humanised' sound world of Stravinsky's 'Symphonies of Wind Instruments' than Ravel's orchestration of 'Pictures at an Exhibition'.

In contrast, when adapting my orchestration for the NYO Inspire Wind Ensemble, my creative process was entirely governed by practical needs. This ensemble is made up of school children who are up to Grade 8, but with a wide variety of standards, and with a limited amount of rehearsal time before scheduled performances. Because of this, I substantially cut down the original into a suite of 'easier' movements, and heavily reworked it, transposing movements and re-registering passages which might be problematic. To bring this talk together, I will conclude by looking at how such 'real world' constraints can be a positive for composers and arrangers, questioning whether we need restrictions in order to create works that have the discipline to appeal to players and audiences alike.

**Biography:** After reading Music at the University of Cambridge, Samuel Huston is currently finishing his postgraduate studies at the Royal College of Music. Whilst studying in Cambridge, Samuel held an instrumental award from the University and two academic scholarships. As part of the Music Tripos, he undertook extensive studies in harmony and counterpoint, which inspired him to begin writing arrangements and creating new editions of early music for his ensemble Dorian Consort.

He graduated from the University of Cambridge with a double first in 2020. During his time at the RCM, Samuel has performed as a section principal with the RCM Symphony Orchestra and been featured in the RCM's 'In Focus' series. He has also created arrangements of challenging repertoire for the RCM Wind Ensemble: his arrangement of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's 'Overture to the Marriage of Figaro' was premiered in July 2021 and his orchestration of Modest Mussorgsky's 'Pictures at an Exhibition' was premiered in November 2021.

Following a commission from the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, Samuel's orchestration of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's 'The Willow Song' was recently performed by the NYO Inspire Wind Ensemble alongside an adapted version of his orchestration of 'Pictures at an Exhibition'.



## INSPIRATION FROM COMPOSERS AT THE PRECIPICE OF TONALITY:

### Liszt, Scriabin and New Music Reconsidered

Rajan Lal, *University of Cambridge*

rs134@cam.ac.uk

**Abstract:** It has long been musicological commonplace to regard the history of tonality as a continuum of progressively greater dissonance emancipation. In this metanarrative, composer to composer teleology is foregrounded to the detriment of considering listeners and the wider society progressively more dissonant works are written into. In large part due to the writings of modernist composers themselves, we hear much about the insularity of Schoenberg, the elitism of Babbitt and the esotericism of Cage, but little about the general public who received their ideas. Certainly pertaining to music post-WWII, reception studies of modernist music are largely confined to the music intelligentsia.

To consider twentieth century listeners and wider society is to consider an unsettling trend. Broadly perceived, twentieth century art music has experienced a steady downwards decline in terms of audience engagement, still commanding a certain intellectual prestige but unable to keep sales pace with popular or even film music traditions. In at least some part, the decline of art music audiences is attributable to listeners finding very dissonant music less aurally pleasant than traditionally consonant music, a feature Dmitri Tymoczko's recent interdisciplinary work (2008, 2011) has explicated through musico-mathematical principles.

With Tymoczko's work in mind, the present paper suggest that composers writing art music today ought to return to the precipice and extensions of tonality explored by several innovative composers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Taking case studies of harmony from the late works of Franz Liszt and NeoTonal experiments of Alexander Scriabin, I compare these two composers to my own work, demonstrating that tonality is not a dead-end (as both composer's music has been described), but a fruitful departure point for composition in the modern world.

**Biography:** Rajan Lal is a pianist, composer and PhD student at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, where he previously completed BA (2020, with distinction) and MPhil (2021) degrees. At Caius, Rajan was formerly a Tammy Chen Graduate Scholar, and is the recipient of a Senior Scholarship and the Compton Wills Prize for Music. Under the supervision of Professor Nicholas Marston, Rajan is presently researching a new analytical/music cognition approach towards the music of Alexander Scriabin; further research interests include the late music of Franz Liszt, Russian music in the early Twentieth Century (particularly Stravinsky) and mathematically oriented analytical musicology (particularly Forte's Set Theory and Scalar Theory). In Cambridge, Rajan supervises all undergraduate years in music analysis, as well as technical papers from harmony to orchestration across five different Cambridge colleges.



Prior to coming up to Cambridge, Rajan studied piano with Nissho Astridge and David Sams, and violin with Julian Milone of the Philharmonia Orchestra. Composition played a key part in this early music education; following studies with Karl Geitzmann at the Kent Academy of Music and the offer of an academic place at Cambridge, Rajan was one of four Phoenix Music Society founding members. He has since seen performances of his compositions by the Phoenix Orchestra and Chorus, the Ligeti String Quartet, the 2020 Chamber Orchestra and several chamber ensembles including players from the Royal College of Music. Rajan is also the founder of the Gonville and Caius College Jazz Band, a keen senior member of the Gonville and Caius Music Society, as well as the head of Oxbridge admissions at Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School, Rochester. Outside of musical and academic engagements, he is a keen weightlifter, food enthusiast and passionate supporter of Arsenal Football Club.

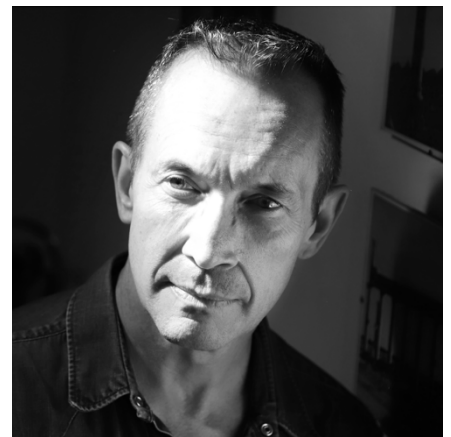
## WHO NEEDS COMMUNITY OPERA?:

### *The Monster in the Maze* as an example of participatory work

Jonathan Dove, CBE

**Abstract:** In this presentation, I will be drawing on over thirty years' experience of writing participatory works that include the community in both creation and performance, notably in a series of large-scale operas typically involving several hundred performers in a single work. I will consider the pros and cons of tailoring large-scale works to the abilities and circumstances of a specific community, the benefits and drawbacks of co-creation, and ponder whether there are necessarily aesthetic limitations to work that is designed to include a large body of amateur performers. I will use *The Monster in the Maze* as an example of participatory work that can have a wide appeal and high status, and be performed around the world. I will explain how it relates to my experiences of co-creation, and the highs and lows of making works of this kind. I will attempt to answer such questions as: What is the purpose of this kind of work? Is there a need for it? Who is it for? What good does it do? Is this suitable work for a modernist or experimental composer? Does it suit a particular kind of composer? What are the challenges for a composer working in this field? What might they get out of it? What does everyone else get out of it?

**Biography:** Jonathan Dove's music has filled opera houses with delighted audiences of all ages on five continents. Few, if any, contemporary composers have so successfully or consistently explored the potential of opera to communicate, to create wonder and to enrich people's lives. Born in 1959 to architect parents, Dove's early musical experience came from playing the piano, organ and viola. Later he studied composition with Robin Holloway at Cambridge and, after graduation, worked as a freelance accompanist, répétiteur, animateur and arranger. His early professional experience gave him a deep understanding of singers and the complex mechanics of the opera house. Opera and the voice have been the central priorities in Dove's output throughout his subsequent career.



Starting with his breakthrough opera *Flight*, commissioned by Glyndebourne in 1998, Dove has gone on to write almost thirty operatic works. *Flight*, a rare example of a successful modern comic opera, has been produced and broadcast many times, in Europe, the USA and Australia. Dove's innate understanding of the individual voice is exemplified in his large and varied choral and song output, and his confident optimism has made him the natural choice as the composer for big occasions. In 2010 *A Song of Joys* for chorus and orchestra opened the festivities at the Last Night of the Proms, and in 2016 an expanded version of *Our Revels Now Are Ended* premiered at the same occasion.

Throughout his career Dove has made a serious commitment to community development through innovative musical projects. *Tobias and the Angel*, a 75-minute opera written in 1999, brings together children, community choirs, and professional singers and musicians in a vivid and moving retelling of the Book of Tobit. His 2012 opera *Life is a Dream*, written for Birmingham Opera Company, was performed by professionals and community choruses in a disused Birmingham warehouse, and a church opera involving community singers *The Walk from The Garden* was premiered at Salisbury Cathedral as part of the 2012 Salisbury International Arts Festival. 2015 brought the World Premiere of *The Monster in the Maze*, a community opera commissioned by the London Symphony Orchestra, Berliner Philharmoniker and Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, performed under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle in three separate translations and productions. *The Monster in the Maze* has since been performed around the world, translated further into Taiwanese/Chinese, Portuguese, Swedish and Catalan, and received a BASCA British Composer Award in 2016's 'Amateur and Young Performers' category. He was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the Queen's 2019 Birthday Honours for services to music.

## **“BEHIND THE SCREENS”:**

### **choral composition in the virtual post-pandemic age.**

Lucy Walker, *King’s School Ely*

lucywalker@kingsely.org

*Today I rise, I rise in splendour*

*As the day keeps unveiling all her grandeur*

*Let the chains of yesterday break away!*

*Today is here, I will not cling to yesterday!*

Ozioma Ogbaji

**Abstract:** Alongside so many facets of society, live music was brought to a halt by the Covid-19 pandemic. Even more devastatingly affected was choral music, due to the increased threat of viral transmission caused by singing, and the prohibition of social gatherings. Overnight, the two requisite elements of this particular musical sphere – singing and collective music-making -- were forbidden. Facing a crisis, the choral community – composers, singers and audiences alike -- was forced to proactively devise alternative methods of musically engaging with each other. The result was an arduous mass-migration to virtual media, which has continued well into the aftermath of the pandemic.

Composed in December 2020 for the Choir of Pembroke College, Cambridge, amid the second UK national lockdown, ‘Today’, a setting of Ozioma Ogbaji’s strikingly resonant words, perpetuates messages of hope and empowerment in times of struggle. Not only does its thematic content recall the resilient community spirit of the pandemic, but its conception, rehearsal process and first performances were all virtual, heavily affected by Covid-19.

Through the case study of ‘Today’, this paper will explore the virtual survival and repositioning of choral music, from conception to performance, during the pandemic, from the perspective of the composer. In a striking parallel with the text, this paper will observe how choral composers have harnessed the post-pandemic age, resulting in a more optimistic and connected community than ever.

**Biography:** Lucy Walker (b.1998) is an award-winning choral composer and music educator based in Cambridge. Since completing her postgraduate studies at Gonville & Caius College in 2021, Lucy has received major commissions from the BBC Singers, Northern Chords Festival and St-Martin-in-the-Fields. Her works, performed frequently across Europe and the US, have been described by BBC Radio 3 as “real emerging talent”.

Lucy is passionate about making classical music, especially choral music, accessible and inclusive, and her compositions reflect this mission. Lucy also enjoys writing for chamber ensembles, and, alongside composing, continues to pursue piano performance. Career highlights so far include performing at the BBC Proms in 2016 and her Carnegie Hall debut in 2019.



## GIVING OPERA SOME SWING: Co-creating a brass band dance number for a large-scale community opera project with the aid of improvisatory techniques

Oliver Rudland, *University of Leeds*

mcowr@leeds.ac.uk

**Abstract:** Community opera projects have often integrated bands of varying types to involve participants in ways other than singing and acting (Dove, 2021) and this has often involved the use of brass bands (Tearle, 1996). Although many community opera projects involve co-creativity (Winterson 2010, Matarasso, 2019) and improvisation techniques (Sawyer, 2014) there is little coverage of how bands, in practice, can be involved as participants in the co-creative process of shaping a new community opera.

This paper documents a practice-led research project with Waterbeach Brass Band based in Cambridgeshire, UK. It records in detail the process whereby aspects of a brass band dance number were devised during co-creative improvisation workshops and provides both audio-visual recordings and notated examples that capture the emergent creative process, alongside a commentary explaining the processes and methodological approaches employed. The paper examines the different ways in which members of the brass band responded to improvisational workshops, and how this fed into the co-creative process. The paper proceeds to examine how such co-creative elements can then form part of a larger musical-dramatic presentation, showing how they can be developed during an extended operatic scene and the rewards of adopting such an approach.

**Biography:** Oliver Rudland is an English opera composer, librettist and artistic director known for his accessible style of modern composition. He was educated at the Royal College of Music, London, and at Cambridge University. His operas include *The Nightingale and the Rose* (a one act romantic opera after Oscar Wilde), *The Owl who was Afraid of the Dark* (a children's opera after Jill Tomlinson) and *Pincher Martin* (a cinematic opera after William Golding), all of which have been highly acclaimed by critics and audience members alike:

'Rudland's compositions are not simply appealing and original. What makes his music so powerful is the way he uses it, whether in his operas or his orchestral writing, to tell a story.'

Simon Heffer, *The Telegraph*



Recent commissions include *Flying Free*, a work for the orchestra of Opera North (March 2020), and *The Christmas Truce*, a cantata for soloists, choir and orchestra for the London Choral Sinfonia (November 2018). His chamber music has been showcased at the Southbank Centre (London) and the DiMenna Center (New York) and performed at many other venues and festivals across Europe and the US.

Oliver is currently undertaking a PhD at Leeds University for which he is composing a new two act opera based on Barry Hines's novel *A Kestrel for a Knave*. His research investigates the use of co-creative and improvisatory techniques in the composition of large-scale community opera projects. He has presented his research at the *International Centre for Community Music* (York St. John's University), Høyskolen Kristiania University (Oslo) the *Biennial International Conference on Music Since 1900* (Royal Birmingham Conservatoire), the *Transnational Opera Studies Conference* (Bayreuth University, Germany), Leeds University Research Symposia, and the Cambridge University Composer's Workshop. Oliver's research has been published by *Sounding Board: The Journal of Community Music* and he has publications forthcoming with *WROCAH Journal* (AHRC), *Tempo Journal* (CUP) and he sits on the editorial board for *CePRA Journal* for practice research in the arts. Oliver teaches at Cambridge University where he founded *The Phoenix Music Society* in 2017.

## **NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AS A COLLABORATOR: Composing for Commercial Media**

Michael Ladouceur, *University of Cambridge*

ml895@cam.ac.uk

**Abstract** In this paper I will discuss the challenges of scoring music to picture and how we can use music to sculpt a narrative in any collaborative medium whether it is for Film, Television, Video Games or others. While working to a narrative structure, we are able to use music to establish story beats and the emotional point of view. Using a re-score that I wrote to an animated clip, I will discuss how I utilized a variety of musical styles and influences to deliver a strong message to the audience.

I will also discuss how the structure of the narrative influenced my composition and demonstrate the solutions I found while dealing with a fixed linear time frame. I will share my experience across many projects in Film, Television, and Video Games and how the particular challenges of each have inspired new compositional approaches.

**Biography:** American composer Mike Ladouceur is among the most exciting and significant talents emerging today, with many high-profile film and TV projects to his name. Renowned on both sides of the Atlantic, his musical style blends orchestral and ambient electronic textures, and has been described by distinguished conductor and orchestrator Jeff Atmajian as “like listening to a beautiful impressionist painting”.

Mike’s notable career highlights are many and varied, and include winning the Angel Award for Best Original Music, Short Film for BirthCloud, and the Tagore Gold Medal for outstanding musical contributions at the Royal College of Music, presented in March 2016 by HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales.



Mike has written additional music and orchestrated for projects including *His Dark Materials* (HBO/BBC), *Mission Impossible: Fallout* (Paramount), *Black Widow* (Disney), *Marcella* (ITV/Netflix), *Love. Wedding. Repeat* (Netflix), *Master Moley* (Nottage Productions), *Ad Astra* (Plan B), *Gemini Man* (Skydance/Paramount), *6 Underground* (Netflix), and many others.

Mike is a passionate educator and holds prestigious teaching posts at two of the world’s leading institutions, London’s Royal College of Music and the University of Cambridge, where he teaches the film music curriculum at both undergraduate and Master’s levels.

## IMPROVISING INTO THE ABYSS: a collaborative creative process

Mary Offer, *University of Cambridge Undergraduate*

mo474@cam.ac.uk

**Abstract:** *The Shallow Abyss* was conceived as a collaboration between myself and several postgraduate performance students from the *Guildhall School of Music and Drama*. I took part in several workshops with each individual performer in the piano quartet, collaborating on new ideas and potential techniques to explore, and eventually forming a new composition. *The Shallow Abyss* makes extensive use of improvisation, inspiring each performer to explore their instrument based on the existing material of the composition and the theme of a shallow abyss, resulting in a collaborative work. It was fascinating to explore the performers' attitudes to improvisation, some of them well-acquainted with the concept from experiences of jazz, and some much more hesitant and likely to repeat existing material from the composition.

The freedom of allowing the performers to improvise created a structure which was bound by pre-existing material yet also had sections which were entirely free from metrical constraints. This is further conveyed by the oxymoronic title *The Shallow Abyss*, since the composition is initially very sparse in texture and motivic ideas, yet the depth of possibility created by the concept of improvisation means the abyss of possibilities is endless. This led to a composition which was a fusion of my own ideas as well as the ideas of the performers, forming a collaborative creative experience towards a piece which will never remain the same from one individual performance to another.

**Biography:** Mary is in her final year at Jesus College, Cambridge, reading Music with a choral scholarship. As a composer, she has won the *Minerva Festival Composition Competition* and the *Homerton College Composing Competition*, and her pieces have been performed by *BCMG*, *Isleworth River of Music*, *The Ripieno Choir* and featured on *CamFM*. She has recently received commissions for new works from *The Ripieno Choir* and *The Choir of Jesus College Cambridge*, and her opera *Esther: a voice for the voiceless* was premiered by *Cambridge University Opera Society*.

Mary was the organiser of the Jesus College Music Society's *New Music Festival 2022*, which premiered several new works by student composers, and her work has been selected for masterclasses with Diana Burrell and Nico Muhly. As a conductor, she has been Musical Director of *The Tempest*, *Antigone: the Musical*, *Esther: a voice for the voiceless*, conductor of the *Orchestra-on-the-Hill* and Jesus College Orchestra, and director of the Upper Voices of Jesus College Choir. Mary has also been selected for conducting masterclasses with Ben Glassberg, Paul Brough and Nicholas Cleobury. She looks forward to studying an MMus degree in composition at the *Royal Academy of Music* with a scholarship next year.



## THE SOCIETAL EFFECT ON COMPOSITIONAL OUTPUT:

### An antipodean perspective on composing for the public concert stage

David Paterson, *University of Adelaide*

david.paterson@adelaide.edu.au

**Abstract:** Almost all funding for arts projects in Australia are chosen based on criteria that ultimately has little to do with the art that is purportedly being supported (Were, 2020). When this occurs, it renders the arts primarily as a conduit for servicing non-musical agendas, ultimately lowering the standard of art being produced (Dirt, 2021). Should the current trend of decisions made based on extra-musical criteria continue? And if so, how long until the art primarily produced within a society eventually deviates entirely from the fundamental function of art? During a time of declining audience numbers (Manley, 2020) and continual cuts in funding to music education (Ewing, 2020), should music instead be written as a way of educating and reminding its audience of the crucial elements in retaining a sustainable, culturally rich society in the modern age?

The proposed presentation will discuss my String Quartet No.1 *“The Australian”*, which was commissioned by the Australian String Quartet and has received considerable critical acclaim after being toured nationally, ‘Paterson’s new work proved a revelation - attractive tonal music that seems to spill off the page’ (Moffatt, 2022). It will examine the ways in which I composed the quartet to both showcase the strengths of the ensemble, my craft and, crucially, in such a way as to educate society on the value and intricacies of purely absolute music. I will also elaborate on the work’s underlying surreptitious protest which addresses the societal effect on compositional output in Australia. In doing so this paper will aim to consider how the current societal climate has affected the art music scene and music education in Australia from the perspective of the performer, educator, and composer.

**Biography:** As a former protégé of the late Richard Gill and an alumnus of the Royal College of Music (London), Australian National Academy of Music (Melbourne), Sydney Conservatorium and Elder Conservatorium, David continues to work extensively as a pianist, composer, researcher, and educator. Having recently completed his MPhil research thesis, David is currently progressing to a PhD in composition with a Research Training Program scholarship at the Elder Conservatorium, University of Adelaide, under Graeme Koehne as Principal Supervisor.

David has become established as one of the next generation of critically acclaimed Australian composers with past commissions including: *Introduction and Rondo* for small orchestra (Sydney Symphony Orchestra Sinfonia) 2009, *The Legend of Nintendo* for String Quartet (Ensemble Urbane) 2012, *Tasting Notes* (Tarrawarra Estate, Yarra Valley) 2014, *Septet* (Melbourne Ensemble for ABC Classics) 2020, *Quartettsätze, Scherzo, and String Quartet No.1* (Australian String Quartet) 2016, 2020, and 2022 respectively.



## THE PHOENIX MUSIC SOCIETY:

Senior Musical Associate: Timothy Brown

Senior Treasurer: Dr Alan Howard

Artistic Director: Oliver Rudland

President: Rajan Lal

Junior Treasurer: Maxim Meshkvicev

Secretary: Richard Woods Rogan

Publicity Officer: Rebecca Doherty

*The Phoenix Music Society* was founded in 2017 at the University of Cambridge. We are a group dedicated to the discussion, creation and performance of new music who aim to create an open and viable environment for the creation of music, which is rooted in the past, whilst looking to the future. The society takes it lead from thinkers such as the American composer Steve Reich, who has written, 'the reality of cadence to a key or modal centre is basic in all the music of the world – Western and non-Western'. So far, the society has produced six events and concerts:

***Musical Fables: Five Symphonic Poems:*** a concert of new orchestral music at the Fitzwilliam College Auditorium conducted by Mark Biggins, chorus director for English National Opera (March 2018).

***Encounters with Persian Verse, Art & Music:*** a festival of Islamic artwork, Persian music, and new vocal chamber music with the Iranian Duo, Nasim-e Tarab, Cambridge choral scholars and the Ligeti String Quartet (May 2018).

***WWI Armistice Centenary Concert:*** a commemorative concert of new choral and orchestral music with choral scholars from Gonville & Caius, St John's, Queen's, Homerton and Selwyn Colleges at Great St. Mary's, the University Church, Cambridge (November 2018).

***New Chamber Music on Romantic Themes:*** a chamber concert at the St John's Old Divinity School performed by Instrumental Award Scheme holders and other chamber musicians from across the University (June 2019).

***Concerto Concert:*** a concert of three new orchestral concertos at St John's College Palmerston Room, featuring soloists from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the Royal College of Music and Cambridge University (February 2020).

***Phoenix Songs:*** an outdoor gala of ten new songs by ten composers with singers and composers from ten colleges at Gonville and Caius College, Harvey Court Gardens (June 2021).



*The Phoenix Music Society* was founded in 2017 at the University of Cambridge to nurture the composition, performance and promotion of new music – music rooted in the past, whilst looking towards the future.

Our society primarily organises concerts for student composers to write freely in a wide variety of different styles, and to create performance opportunities for themselves.

We also hold an annual dinner for members who compose and/or perform for our concerts, which is always a fun and social occasion, filled with interesting debate and discussion!

We encourage freshers to get in touch and share their music with us if they would like to join the society.

For more information, please email us at:  
**[thephoenixmusicsociety@gmail.com](mailto:thephoenixmusicsociety@gmail.com)**

or visit our Facebook page:

**[www.facebook.com/thephoenixmusicsociety](https://www.facebook.com/thephoenixmusicsociety)**

or our **[@phoenixmusicsoc](https://twitter.com/phoenixmusicsoc)** account on Twitter

\*\*\*

We receive no departmental funding from the University and, therefore, require external support to fund our concerts.

If you would like to donate to our society,  
your support would be greatly appreciated.  
All donations small or large are welcome.

If you wish to offer more longstanding support,  
you can become a **Friend of the Phoenix Music Society**  
which comes with a variety of benefits  
such as attendance at the society's annual dinner.

If you would like to support us,  
or for more information, please visit:

**[www.thephoenixmusicsociety.com/support-us](http://www.thephoenixmusicsociety.com/support-us)**



**THE  
PHOENIX SOCIETY**

**[WWW.THEPHOENIXMUSICSOCIETY.COM](http://WWW.THEPHOENIXMUSICSOCIETY.COM)**